

# JUMPER

YOUTH DISCIPLESHIP

A stylized black and white illustration of a lit lightbulb with rays emanating from it, positioned to the right of the word 'JUMPER'.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.

JESUS  
Mark 12:30



Vol. 1

# READ FIRST

Before you go browsing through this manual please read the following, which is also contained in the introduction of the materials. It is absolutely critical to the success of Sumpherō in your church. Thanks.

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**Committed Leadership** – Sumpherō leadership will need to be committed to long-term, ongoing discipleship. Not only will dedicated, core students be pushed by a 32 week commitment, but youth leadership will be as well. However, consider this statement: “Students will live up to, and even exceed, the high expectations of those they trust and love, and those whose life is an example of the benefits of such expectations.”

**Vital Preparation** – In any experience-based method of instruction the key is preparation. If students are to encounter God and His Word in new and meaningful ways, we must be prepared to spend the time necessary to create the environments for those encounters. Each lesson will require a good deal of preparation time in advance of the meeting. The exciting part of this preparation will be the time spent working with your youth discipleship team in anticipation of what God will do in the hearts of students during and/or following each session. Without this preparation Sumpherō will fail, because each session is dependent on planned experiences.



## **Sumpherō Introduction**

We are pleased that you have considered using these materials with your students. Sumpherō Youth Discipleship started with this thought, “What if students stopped spending all of their time at church in a static classroom setting, and began to engage themselves in meaningful spiritual disciplines during that time? Would it be that learning and growing become acts of desire instead of disdain? Do we really

believe that God’s word is “living” and can capture students’ attention and make them thirst for more? The compilers of these materials believe students want to know God, serve Him more fully, and be actively engaged in a deepening relationship with Him. As you read through these materials don’t ask yourself “will students like this,” instead ask, “am I willing to stick this out and watch God work.” May God reward your diligence and your faith in Him, His word, and His students.

*The Sumpherō Task Force*

### **The fact of the matter is (a quote from George Barna)...**

“It is also quite striking that the aspect of church life that receives the greatest amounts of time, attention and energy – that of teaching people the content of the Bible – is one of the two areas in which people feel least well-developed. The recent trend toward the adoption of technology to help in the teaching of important biblical truths is a welcomed addition to the toolbox of our preachers and religious educators. The research suggests that most people do not feel as if they are learning enough about God, the Christian faith, or their role in the world – and most of them don’t seem to care.” George Barna, Sept. 2005

### **“Now, what’s that word again?”**

Sumpherō (Some – fair – o) is the Greek word translated “good,” which literally means, “to bring together or bear together for the benefit of another.” It is used in Hebrews 12:10 where the Word says, “But He disciplines us for our *good* that we may share in His holiness.” God’s discipline, therefore, is designed not to punish us, but to direct us away from our self-destructive tendencies and bring us in line with His perfect plan and intentions. God’s encouragement is designed to accomplish this same goal. His love, mercy, faithfulness, and every other active quality of God are also designed as agents of *this* truth: the benefits of God are God Himself. No one is good, but Him, and no way is right, but His.

### **“What’s the point?”**

It is critical that this generation of students and the generations to come understand this intrinsic motivation for loving God. We do not study the Bible, have a Quiet Time, pray, meditate, memorize scripture, fast, minister, or engage in any other spiritual discipline for any other reason except that He is worthy of our worship, or for any other reward than for God Himself. We do not apply the disciplines thinking, “what will God owe us?” but rather, we apply the disciplines because we owe God everything; and the fruit of those disciplines is our sharing in His holiness.

## “What’s the plan?”

Sumpherō has been designed around this compulsion: loving Jesus. Jesus told us in Mark 12:30 that the greatest commandment for an individual life is to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.”

Why did Jesus mention these four areas of focus?

Sumpherō has been developed from an understanding that these are four core areas of a consuming love for God.

### HEART – SOUL – MIND – STRENGTH

The following is a brief explanation of the uniqueness of these core areas of loving God:

**Heart:** Anytime a person says, “I love you with all my heart,” he is saying he loves you with all of his capacity to do so. Heart refers to capacity; capacity for emotion, capacity for commitment, and capacity for devotion. It is an inner quality that relates to the deepest aspects of who we are. Loving God with all your heart reflects a complete allegiance to Him.

**Soul:** A person is not a body that has a soul, but rather a soul that has a body. The soul is that uniquely “you” creation of God which will live in eternity. To love God with all your soul means to love Him as only “you” can. It is recognition of the fact that God has uniquely crafted you and designed you for a purpose, and your commitment to love Him by pursuing that purpose fully.

**Mind:** To love God with all your mind is to obediently follow Romans 12:1-2, Psalm 119:11, and many other such passages. We must develop a Biblical worldview, which enables us to process each occurrence of life through the filter of truth. If you are to love God with all your mind, then you must value His Word more than your own opinions, and seek to conform your thoughts to His.

**Strength:** Time seems to pass quickly the older you get, but teenagers often feel there is plenty of time for everything. Students need encouragement to make the most of each day. Loving God with all your strength is an exercise in focus, attention, and effort. It is living with the realization that tomorrow isn’t promised and God desires and deserves my fullest measure today. Loving God with all your strength is the outward manifestation of the other three “inner” devotions.

Each core area displays a unique quality in its approach to loving God. Sumpherō desires to engage students in targeted spiritual disciplines that foster these unique qualities. The design and hope of this ministry is for students to be actively involved in the disciplines of Christian living and thus encounter Jesus in new and meaningful ways that create a deepening love for Him.

### The Disciplines and Consuming Love

All eight spiritual disciplines used by Sumpherō will be targeted to strengthen different areas of a consuming love for God. We recognize the impact of these disciplines cannot be limited to the areas prescribed by Sumpherō, but they have been assigned as a tool for illustration and development (see chart below). For instance, when a student is engaged in *meditation*, the lesson will unfold from the perspective that the student is participating in a spiritual discipline that will help him to love God with all his *soul* and *mind*. Prayer

is the discipline that under girds every area of loving God, thus, this teaching point will be emphasized during each session on prayer.

<b>Core Areas ►</b>	<b>HEART</b>	<b>SOUL</b>	<b>MIND</b>	<b>STRENGTH</b>
<b>Disciplines ►</b>				
<b>Evangelism</b>	■	□	□	■
<b>Ministry</b>	■	□	□	■
<b>Scripture Memory</b>	□	□	■	■
<b>Bible Study</b>	■	□	■	□
<b>Meditation</b>	□	■	■	□
<b>Fasting</b>	□	■	□	□
<b>Worship</b>	□	■	□	□
<b>Prayer</b>	■	■	■	■

## **Schedule**

Sumpherō is an ongoing method of youth discipleship. Each of the eight spiritual disciplines will have four sessions devoted to them, for a total of 32 sessions.

(Note: At the conclusion of each year, students and leaders from participating groups will be solicited to provide video testimonies of what God did during the year. These video testimonies will be used at Falls Creek each summer to invite other students to begin the engaging experience of Sumpherō Youth Discipleship.)

### ***Planning Your Sumpherō Schedule***

#### ***Enlistment & Kick-Off Party, Early August***

This event should be held at your discretion and be used to promote Sumpherō to your students and to enlist them to participate. It is recommended that you host a party, prepare an element from the year for the students to experience, and then serve refreshments and answer questions. Students should then be given the opportunity to sign-up.

#### ***Regular Sessions***

Regular Sessions should continue meeting once a week, breaking for holidays and other special occasions. With 32 sessions, Sumpherō should conclude in late April.

## **The Sessions**

The thirty-two sessions of Sumpherō have been organized on a rotational basis. This means, each week students will be engaged in a different one of the eight spiritual disciplines until each of the disciplines has been experienced four times.

The lesson plan for each of the sessions will vary from students experiencing a standard Bible Study format to unique prayer experiences to actively sharing their faith away from the church. The lessons will focus more on creating experiential encounters with God and His Word than on static classroom study. These lessons will require *committed leadership* and *vital preparation*.

- **Committed Leadership** – Sumpherō leadership will need to be committed to long-term, ongoing discipleship. Not only will dedicated, core students be pushed by a 32 week commitment, but youth leadership will be as well. However, consider this statement: “Students will live up to, and even exceed, the high expectations of those they trust and love, and those whose life is an example of the benefits of such expectations.”
- **Vital Preparation** – In any experience-based method of instruction the key is preparation. If students are to encounter God and His Word in new and meaningful ways, we must be prepared to spend the time necessary to create the environments for those encounters. Each lesson will require a good deal of preparation time in advance of the meeting. The exciting part of this preparation will be the time spent working with your youth discipleship team in anticipation of what God will do in the hearts of students during and/or following each session. Without this preparation Sumpherō will fail, because each session is dependent on planned experiences.

### **A last word...**

We hope you have a great year of discipleship. As you work through these materials, be mindful that we are always looking for feedback and would love to hear from you. If there is an instruction you don't understand or any question at all, just email Andy at [aharrison@bgco.org](mailto:aharrison@bgco.org). And a big thanks for your church's gifts to the Cooperative Program. They make this all possible.

## Session One

**Session Discipline:** Worship

**Session Verse/Passage:** Psalm 51

**Session Purpose:** To gain a more complete understanding of worship.

### Preparation:

- Write out Psalm 51 on newsprint. Make it large enough that you have no more than one verse per sheet of paper. Tape the scripture (newsprint) sequentially around the walls of the classroom
- Print and cut out the discussion cards (Item 1). These cards will be given to students for discussion during the session. You will need a set of discussion cards for each group of students formed in Step Two of the Teaching Plan.
- On poster board or large newsprint, print the letters to W-O-R-S-H-I-P. One letter per poster board. Place these randomly on the floor of the classroom.
- Gather several small rocks, enough that each student can have one.

### Session Teaching Plan:

- **Step One – 10 min.** As students arrive, give a rock to each one and tell them to hold on to it throughout the lesson and you will give them further instructions later. Direct their attention to Psalm 51 on the walls. Instruct the students to walk around the room and read the entire Psalm. After everyone has finished reading the Psalm, ask them to go stand by their favorite verse in the passage. Spend a couple of minutes discussing why students chose the verses they picked. After the discussion say, “Today we want to expand our concept of worship. Worship is more than music and it is more than a prayer. It is an attitude and a lifestyle and contains many elements, several of which are found in Psalm 51. We want to look at some of those today.”
- **Step Two – 40 min.** Ask students to form groups of three or four and then distribute a set of discussion cards to each group of students. Tell the student groups to randomly choose a letter on the floor and stand on or near it. (If you have a large group, you may want to make a second set of W-O-R-S-H-I-P letters to place on the floor.) Ask the students to find the corresponding card in their discussion cards and take a few minutes to read the verse or verses on the card (if they don’t have their Bible, the verses will be on the wall) and discuss the questions on it. Encourage each student to participate. Tell students you will cue them when it is time to move to another letter. Rotate groups every five minutes until they have discussed each letter (Starting letter and six rotations.) About halfway through the rotation, call attention to their rock. Make sure they have it with them. Tell them they will need them in just a few minutes.
- **Step Three – 10 min.** Read the Psalm to the students and ask, “Which element of worship that you discussed today was new to you? In which one do you most often participate and which one do you least often consider? Give students time to respond to the questions and then ask them if they have their rock. Tell them to get it out and hold it in their hand. Say, “Psalm 51 is a confession of sin on behalf of David. It was the sin of adultery, he had committed with Bathsheba. This sin was kept hidden for some time, but God loved David enough to not let him get

away with a sin that would ultimately destroy him. Once the sin was exposed, David acknowledged his guilt and asked God for forgiveness. Your rock represents some sin in your life which is keeping you from worshipping God in fullness. I want you to pray silently and ask God for forgiveness of this sin.” Ask students that if they pray for forgiveness to place their rock on one of the letters on the floor, signifying that they are letting the sin go. If they can’t, at this point in their life, in sincerity pray for forgiveness yet, instruct them to hold on to the rock and let it be a constant reminder that God is calling them to let it go and seek His forgiveness. Tell students that you will give them a minute for silent prayer and then you will close in an audible prayer. Have them place their rocks and then dismiss.



## **W**illingness to meet with God (vss. 11-12)

- Why is worship predicated by a willingness to meet with God?
- How does it make you feel to think that God could banish you from His presence?
- What tends to happen to the initial joy that comes with our salvation?
- How does that affect our long-term willingness to meet with God?

## **O**ffering of praise (vs. 15)

- If worship is a lifestyle, and it is also an offering of praise, then do the words of your life reflect a greater love for God or for yourself?
- Why is God worthy of praise in your life?
- What is the number one thing you praise God for in your life?

## **R**epentent spirit (vss. 1-4)

- How often do you approach God with a truly repentant spirit?
- What impresses you about David's spirit as he approaches God in the first four verses of this psalm?
- Should you expect that God will hear your prayers if you continue to hold on to sin in your life?

## **S**inging (vs. 14)

- Why do you think singing is such an important part of worship?
- What is currently your favorite praise and worship song and why?
- If you were to write your own song to or about God, what is one line or phrase that would definitely be in it?

## **H**onesty (vs. 6)

- Is God more interested in words of worship or motives? Why?
- In what ways do our lives illustrate the sincerity or insincerity of our worship?
- How is being honest with God sometimes a very difficult thing to do?
- Why should we have confidence (instead of fear) in terms of being honest with God?

## **I**ntimacy with Christ (vs. 10)

- How does it make you feel to know that there are certain things that only God can do for you?
- David realizes that he can be fickle-hearted, so he asks God for a steadfast spirit. What are the top two or three things that most often keep you from following Christ steadfastly?
- Why is a clean heart mandatory for intimacy with Christ?

## **P**rayerful brokenness (vss. 16-17)

- Why do you think God is so opposed to the proud?
- What do you think God desires to do for the humble of heart?
- Why do you think a "broken spirit" is more pleasing to God than a sacrifice or burnt offering?

# Discussion Cards

## Session Two

<b>Session Discipline:</b>	Prayer
<b>Session Verse/Passage:</b>	1 Thess. 5:17, Phil. 4:6-7, James 5:16
<b>Session Purpose:</b>	To help students expand their prayer life.

### Preparation:

- Locate a spot for and prepare each of seven prayer stations. These stations can be set up inside a single room, throughout the church, or even on both the inside and outside of the church. Use your imagination and whatever flexibility your church will allow.
  - Prayer Station #1 – A chair or desk. Students will pray at this station for fellow classmates.
  - Prayer Station #2 – A locker. Students will pray for those they pass in the halls every day, but with whom they don't have a relationship.
  - Prayer Station #3 – Extra Curricular Activities (Band instruments, sports equipment, etc.) Students will pray for those with whom they share common interests or activities.
  - Prayer Station #4 – Chalkboard/Office Door/Office Chair. Students will pray for teachers, school faculty and administrators.
  - Prayer Station #5 – School Bus/Lunch Table. Students will pray for God to use them as an influence wherever they encounter other students each day.
  - Prayer Station #6 – A copy of the U. S. Constitution. You can download high resolution copies of the Constitution at: [http://www.archives.gov/national-archives-experience/charters/constitution\\_zoom\\_1.html](http://www.archives.gov/national-archives-experience/charters/constitution_zoom_1.html) Students will pray for boldness to share their faith with other students.
  - Prayer Station #7 – A pair of glasses/binoculars. Students will pray that God will cause them to see people they don't normally see or pay attention to and begin to care for them as Christ does.

### Session Teaching Plan:

- **Step One – 10 min.** After students arrive, tell them they will be participating in the discipline of prayer. Ask students, “God instructs us in His word in 1 Thess. 5:17 to ‘pray without ceasing.’ How does a person pray without ceasing?” Allow students to respond. After some discussion, tell them “God expects us to live in an attitude of prayer, ready at any moment to speak to Him. He is our constant companion, our father and friend, and our God. One of the main ways we build and mature our relationship with Him is through prayer.” Instruct the students to break into groups of 3 or 4.
- **Step Two – 40 min.** After students have formed their groups, tell them they are going on a prayer walk. They will be stopping at seven different places to pray about some specific things.
  - Instruct them that they will be praying for five minutes at each stop. You will blow a whistle or come around and move each group at the proper time. Let them know that they should not move on to the next stop until you give the signal.

- Encourage them to pray out loud in their groups at each stop.
- Each student (in their group) should be encouraged to pray at each location. Tell the students that there will be a prayer card at each location which will give them four specific things to pray for during their prayer time. They may want to give each person in their group a specific item on the list to pray for or they may want everyone to pray for the whole list. (This is something you, as a leader, can decide.)
- Assign starting prayer locations for each group and then have them rotate to a new location every five minutes.
  - The best way to achieve this is to number the prayer stops and just have the students rotate to the next number after each prayer time.
  - Those groups which arrive at stop number seven before they have completed all the stops will simply rotate to number one and then complete the rest of the rotation.
- Students will return to the classroom after completing their last prayer stop.
- **Step Three – 10 min.** Gather the students together and read Philippians 4:6-7. Say to students, “You just spent 35 minutes in prayer for yourself and the needs of others. Do you feel more anxious or less anxious about the things you prayed about? What do you think it is about prayer that brings such peace?” Read James 5:16. Say to students, “Which of the prayers you just prayed are you most excited to see God answer? Why?” Gather the group in a circle and have students pray silently for the person on their right and left and then close the time with your own audible prayer for the students.



## prayer for classmates

- Pray that God will move amongst the student body this year at your school.
- Pray for a united spirit and purpose among the Christian students.
- Pray that God will grant safety and well being for all students throughout the school year.
- Pray that current friendships will be strengthened even further and that Christ would have a central place in each of them.

Prayer Station 1



## prayer for the unnoticed

- Pray that God will help you begin at least two new friendships this year.
- Pray that God will not allow divisive cliches to form in your school.
- Pray that God will give you favor with students that you don't normally hang out with.
- Pray that God will soften your heart toward those students that you don't get along with very well.

Prayer Station 2



## prayer for those with similar interests

- Pray that God will give you witnessing opportunities with those students with whom you share extracurricular activities.
- Pray that your attitude would reflect Christ in your response to the leadership of those activities.
- Pray that you would do your best at each of the activities in which you participate.
- Thank God that he has made you able to perform in band, sports, etc.

Prayer Station 3



## prayer for school leadership

- Pray for your school teachers, counselors, and substitutes. Pray by name for as many as possible.
- Pray for the administration of your school: principle, vice-principle, superintendent and board of education.
- Pray for all the workers in your school: custodians, cafeteria workers, nurses, etc.
- Pray for student leadership: student counsel, class leadership, etc.

Prayer Station 4



## prayer for awareness

- Pray for God to use you as an influence wherever you encounter other students each day. At the school bus, lunch table, etc.
- Pray that your attitudes are consistently Christlike day to day.
- Pray that your words would reflect that your heart belongs to God.
- Pray that God would not allow any opportunity pass you by because you are unaware.

Prayer Station 5



## prayer for boldness

- Pray that God will give you boldness to share your faith with other students.
- Thank God that you live in a place where you have the freedom to share your faith.
- Pray that you would not take advantage of that freedom and miss out on opportunities to share with those in your school.
- Pray that God would give you recall of scripture to use as you share your faith.

Prayer Station 6



## prayer for vision

- Pray that God will cause you to see people that you don't normally see or pay attention to and begin to care for them as Christ does.
- Pray that God will give you the vision to see what anyone can become through Christ.
- Pray that God would fix your heart on one or two students who seem friend-less and that you might respond to them with Christlike love.
- Pray that God will allow you to see people's hearts and not what is just on the outside.

## Session Three

<b>Session Discipline:</b>	Scripture Memory
<b>Session Verse/Passage:</b>	Psalm 73 (Memory verses – 73:25-28)
<b>Session Purpose:</b>	To have students encounter scripture in a new way that enhances understanding and encourages memorization.

### Preparation:

**(NOTE: This will be the most complicated set up of the year, but may also be one of the most rewarding and fruitful. Feel free to even enhance this session further with your own imagination, however, be careful that increased visuals do not detract from the message of the scripture.)**

- Gather all the materials listed on the Psalm 73 Needs List and prepare as instructed.
- Assemble the room according to the Psalm 73 Sample Room Set Up Chart and the Psalm 73 Guide Sheet. Be sure and look at the sample set up chart as you read through the Guide Sheet. You will need to do both in order for everything to be clear.
- Print copies of the Psalm 73 Guide Sheet. You will send students through the experience in groups of 3, but each student will need to complete their own Guide Sheet, so print enough for each student.
- Students will need pens to use in filling out their Guide Sheets.
- Make sure to have copies of the scripture memory verses (Item 7) to distribute to the students during the last part of the session. All verses printed on the sheet are NIV.

### Session Teaching Plan:

- **Step One – 5 min.** As students arrive, have them gather in the hallway. Tell them to get together in groups of three. Explain to the students that today they will be experiencing scripture in a new way. They will literally be walking through Psalm 73. For students to have the best experience, encourage the following:
  - They should remain as quiet as possible as they walk through the experience.
  - They should always **FIRST** read their Guide Sheet and **THEN** do as instructed. Trying to run ahead will ruin the experience.
  - There will be several groups moving through the experience. Students will be asked along the way to reset certain items for those coming behind them. They should be diligent to do this.
  - They shouldn't hurry through the course, but at the same time should be mindful of those behind them and move at a steady pace.
  - Once they have finished the walk through, they should wait a few minutes for others to complete the course and then be prepared to discuss the experience.
- **Step Two – 40 min.** Send groups in every two minutes. This should keep groups at the right pace. In the 40 minutes allotted for this experience, you should be able to move through approximately 10 groups of students (30 people). If you have



a large group you may consider setting up multiple courses or increasing your group sizes.

- **Step Three – 15 min.** Have students discuss what they have just experienced. Ask, “How many of you could identify with Asaph’s struggle? Which part of the Psalm gripped you the most? Does it help you to understand the passage better by experiencing it this way?” Share with them that the spiritual discipline you are engaging in today is scripture memory. Say, “God’s word puts us near to Him and as we just learned, ‘His nearness is our good.’” Pass out the scripture memory verses for this year (Item 7). Say, “This year we will seek to memorize these ten verses or passages. Every other week we will review them with each other until we have committed them all to memory.” Also encourage students to write Psalm 73:25-28 on the back of their scripture memory sheet and memorize it as well. Close in prayer.

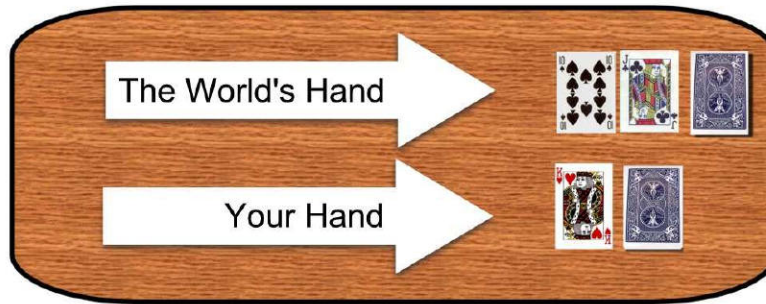
**LEADER’S NOTE** – The remaining three sessions on scripture memory this year will be used for you and your students to dream, study, and construct your own passage walk through. The Sumpherō Task Force has selected the following three passages for you to choose from: The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37); Isaiah’s Call (Isaiah 6:1-8); and The Fall (Genesis 3:1-19). We are encouraging you to set up your experience late in the year and invite your entire church body to walk through it on a Sunday or Wednesday night (Session 20).

# Psalm 73

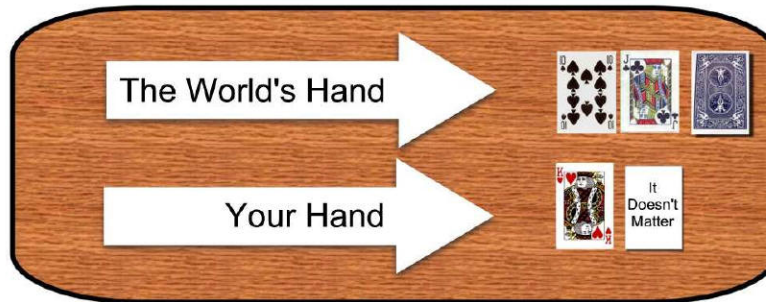
## Needs List

- Print a copy of the room set up for guidance.
- Sign out side of door (Item 1)
- Table outside of room with sign that reads: “Each participant will need a guide sheet and a pen. Groups start by reading the sheet and following the instructions.” (Item 2) Guide sheets should be on the table.
- Tape for distinguishing path on floor (Multiple rolls of wide blue paint tape or masking tape). This tape will distinguish the path for the students to take as they walk through the passage.
- Signs for stations – Start/Station #1, Station #2-Station #11, Exit *(These signs can be hand-written or printed on regular copy paper and should be taped to the floor at the correct spots in the room to mark the stopping points for students.)*
- Stepping stones (6 large patio pavers) and Beam 1 (4 x 4s) 6-8’ long, 2 cinder blocks. *(The stones should be placed similar to the design on the sample set up chart. They should be a difficult stride apart. The point of this exercise is for students to try and walk the path while focusing on the poster of the world/earth on the far wall.)*
- Poster of the earth (Item 3) *(Print the poster as large as possible and trim around the edge of the earth; laminate, if possible, and mount to the wall as described on the room set up.)*
- Magazines, coffee table, 3 chairs
- Poster of Jesus (Item 4). Print as large as possible and mount on foam board and cut out eyes and ear. *(The preparation of this poster will make sense as you read the Guide Sheet. Students should be shocked by the appearance of this poster, so you might consider putting some black paper behind the eyes and the ear that you cut out, in order to emphasize the fact that they are missing.)*
- Clock *(This needs to be a clock big enough to hide the poster board on the back of it, it needs to have a pedestal for it to stand on if it is not free-standing),* poster board on back of clock that says, LOST CLASSMATES.
- Poster mosaic of students smiling (Item 5), table with Bible on it. Bible bookmarked to 1 John 3. *(The poster should be printed in color and as large as possible. From a distance it will look like two teens smiling, but up close students will see multiple pictures of pain and anguish. The Bible should be closed, but bookmarked at 1 John 3:1.)*
- Print Storm Photo Montages (Item 6) and mount on large colored sheets of newsprint. *(These photos should also be printed in color and as large as 11” X 17”. They are simply illustrative. You may use one or two or all of them.)*

- Table, a deck of cards set up to match the scenario, the face of one card should be prepared to read: “It Doesn’t Matter” (*The best way to accomplish creating the “It Doesn’t Matter” card is to take one of the Jokers from the deck and simply glue some copy paper over the face of the card. Trim the excess and write “It Doesn’t Matter” on the new paper face*), create two arrow posters pointing to dealt hands, *one should be labeled “The World’s Hand” and the other should be labeled, “Your Hand.”* (see below)

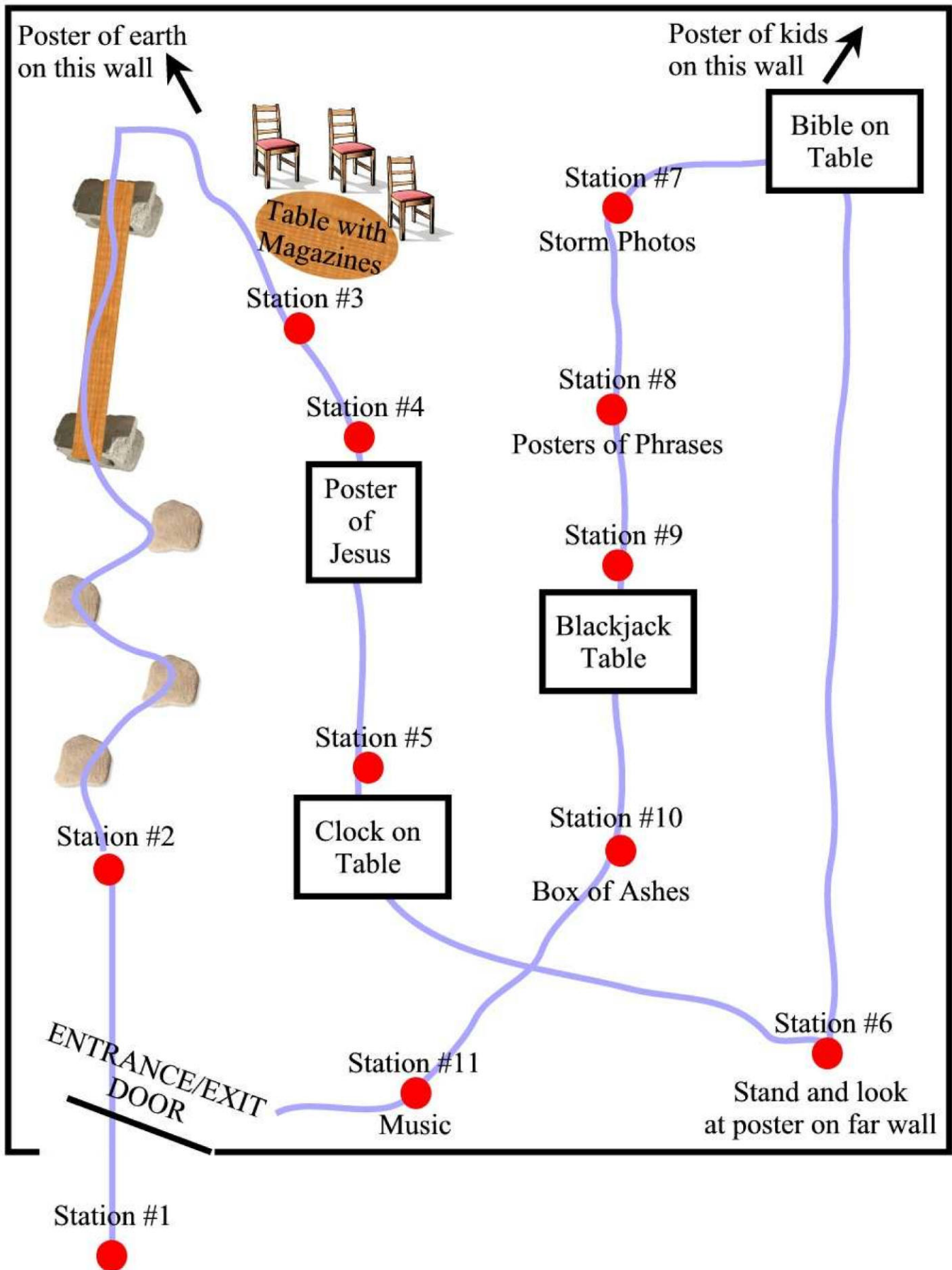


Above is an illustration of the table set-up when the student arrives.  
The student will be instructed to turn over the card next to the King.  
The illustration below shows that the card will be a prepared card that reads, "It Doesn't Matter."



- Three large pieces of newsprint or poster board with each of the following sayings written on the poster (one saying per poster): Blind as a Bat, Stubborn as a Mule, Dumb as an Ox
- Table, a decorative box or container full of ashes with a lid (*The box should be sitting on top of the table and closed. The Guide Sheet will instruct students to open the box. When they do, they will see it is filled with ashes.*)
- A CD player and a copy of Shane & Shane’s, Song of Surrender.
- Exit sign
- Printed copies of scripture memory verses for 2006-07 (Item 7). One per student.

# Psalm 73 - Sample Room Set-Up



# PSALM 73

## GUIDE SHEET

You are about to begin an interactive walk through a passage of scripture. This journey will take about 20-25 minutes. Please use this guide sheet and follow its instructions as closely as possible.

There will be 11 stations or stops along the way. You will receive instructions from this guide about what to do at each station. As you enter the room you will find that the set-up is not elaborate or complicated, the heart of this exercise will be found in the attitude with you approach it. Begin now by praying and asking God to open your heart to experience His word.

### Station #1

Stand behind the tape line marked Station #1 and face the door. Read the following:

***1 Surely God is good to Israel,  
To those who are pure in heart!***

2 Chronicles 29:30 reads, "Moreover, King Hezekiah and the officials ordered the Levites to sing praises to the LORD with the words of David and **Asaph the seer**. So they sang praises with joy, and bowed down and worshiped." (emphasis added)

Psalms 73 is a psalm of Asaph. It echoes the frustration and confusion of every believer at some point in his or her experience of life and it concludes with the thought to which we should all aspire: There is no good like God, and my life is never better than when He draws near to me. Other Biblical figures relied on slightly different attributes of God when faced with temptation. Job relied on the omniscience of God; "*Times are not hidden from the Almighty.*" (Job 24:1) Jeremiah relied on the principle justice of God; "*Righteous art thou, O God, when I plead with thee*" (Jer. 12:1) Habbakuk found bedrock in the holiness of God; "*Thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.*" (Hab. 1:13) But for Asaph, his reliance was on the goodness of God. Look at again at verse 1, "Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart!"

Look at the door before you. Everything that lies on the other side is of the world. It will tempt you to doubt God's goodness. Jesus' prayer for His disciples in John 17:15 was "*I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.*" As you begin this journey through Asaph's doubts consider any doubts of your own that come from seeing injustice in the world and the prosperity of the wicked.

Asaph starts where he finishes; with the conviction that God is good. However, this belief was not without challenge. Every conviction starts with a choice and ends with a confirmation. In stepping through the door before you, you are making a choice to believe that God is good. If you believe this is true, proceed through the door to Station #2 and stop at the first stepping stone.

## Station #2

Read verse 2:

***2 But as for me, my feet came close to stumbling, My steps had almost slipped.***

“But...” Though a small word, it is however, a powerful one. Asaph is about to reveal that his belief in God’s goodness came under serious challenge. Read verses 3-5.

***3 For I was envious of the arrogant, As I saw the prosperity of the wicked.***

***4 For there are no pains in their death, And their body is fat.***

***5 They are not in trouble as other men, Nor are they plagued like mankind.***

Start walking along the course stepping on the stones and then across the beams, BUT...keep your eyes on the poster of the world on the far wall. At the point of your first stumble, refocus on the path and complete the course, then read on.

Asaph observed the prosperity of the wicked and was envious. Have you ever known such envy? Enough so to cause you to stumble in your faith? Have you ever focused more heavily on the world instead of Christ? What is the most troubling thing for you as you observe the wicked in this world? Write it here:

## Station #3

Read verses 6-9.

***6 Therefore pride is their necklace; The garment of violence covers them.***

***7 Their eye bulges from fatness; The imaginations of their heart run riot.***

***8 They mock and wickedly speak of oppression; They speak from on high.***

***9 They have set their mouth against the heavens, And their tongue parades through the earth.***

Sit in a chair and pick up a magazine. Take 90 seconds or so and glance through the pages, then return the magazine to the table.

Read verses 6-9 again. Does it ever amaze you that those who seem to care about God the least also seem to possess the most? Why do these people have a voice? Why do their opinions matter? Why are they the ones interviewed about everything under the sun? Asaph wondered the same thing and what his eyes “saw” (verse 3) became a real issue for him and his eyes planted the seed of bitterness in his heart. Proceed to Station #4

#### Station #4

Read verses 10-12.

- 10 Therefore his people (the wicked) return to this place, And waters of abundance are drunk by them.**
- 11 They say, "How does God know? And is there knowledge with the Most High?"**
- 12 Behold, these are the wicked; And always at ease, they have increased in wealth.**

Look at the poster of Jesus. His eyes have been poked out. He cannot see. He has no vision of the wicked. He cannot observe their laughter at His expense, nor can He hear it, since His ears have been removed. And thus it is with the wicked, says Asaph. They keep on doing their deeds right under the nose of Christ, and despite this most repulsive of attitudes they just keep on prospering.

Look at the poster again. How does it make you feel to see Jesus this way?  
Write it here:

Proceed to Station #5

#### Station #5

Read verses 13-16.

- 13 Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure, And washed my hands in innocence;**
- 14 For I have been stricken all day long, And chastened every morning.**
- 15 If I had said, "I will speak thus," Behold, I would have betrayed the generation of Your children.**
- 16 When I pondered to understand this, It was troublesome in my sight**

This may be the lowest point in the Psalm. Asaph is now thinking that it was a waste of time to have sought to walk in holiness. Look at the clock in front of you. How many hours have you given to God in prayer? How many days have you risen from your bed to set about pleasing Him as best you could? How many times in the course of that service have you been criticized, laughed at, attacked, or misunderstood? All of this is happening while the wicked student walks securely down the halls, dines comfortably in his home and sleeps sound in his bed. Has your soul ever cried out for fairness?

Walk around and look at the back of the clock.

In the midst of this low moment, Asaph suddenly comes slightly to his senses and ponders how horrible it would have been to ever proclaim (out loud) these thoughts and doubts to others. **Lost Classmates.** They are on your heart. Are they a waste of time? What if they were to hear our complaints in times of doubt? Oh, the generations we could ruin by the spewing of bitterness

from our tongues. Stop now and briefly pray together that God would see you and your friends through low times of doubt and that He would keep your tongues from speaking bitterness in times of struggle. When you are through praying proceed to Station #6.

### **Station #6**

Read verse 17.

#### ***17 Until I came into the sanctuary of God; Then I perceived their end.***

This is the turning point of the whole Psalm. It was when Asaph entered the presence of God, "the sanctuary of God," that he began to see things clearly.

Look at the poster on the far wall of the two students. They are smiling. Life is good...or is it? Walk toward the poster until you are right up on it, look closely at the poster and then read on...

Do you see? There is pain, depression, tragedy, circumstances that we never observe. The outward appearances we often use to determine outcomes have nothing to do with reality. Reality is found in the presence of God. There we see things as they really are and fall on our knees in gratefulness for the lovingkindnesses God has shown us. For as the wicked really are, such were we once. There is nothing to envy of that position. In God's presence I am reminded of the great position I have in Him. Open the Bible to the bookmarked page and read the first half of 1 John 3:1.

Take a moment and thank God for His love for you, reset the Bible for others, and then proceed to Station #7

### **Station #7**

Read verses 18-20.

#### ***18 Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction.***

#### ***19 How they are destroyed in a moment! They are utterly swept away by sudden terrors!***

#### ***20 Like a dream when one awakes, O Lord, when aroused, You will despise their form.***

Look at the storm photos. If there is one thing we know in Oklahoma, it is tornadoes and their swift, destructive power. It is no different with the wicked. Asaph, now possessed of God, proclaims that what the wicked man fears, deep in his mocking heart, is coming as swiftly and as surely as the wind blows...his utter destruction!

Is there someone you know who is headed for spiritual destruction even as you read this? Write his/her name here (\_\_\_\_\_). Now take a moment and pray for that person to turn to Christ. After your prayer, proceed to Station #8.

### **Station #8**

Read verses 21-22.

#### ***21 When my heart was embittered, And I was pierced within, 22 Then I was senseless and ignorant; I was like a beast before You.***



Look at the posters. Asaph is confessing his bitterness and stupidity for ever doubting God's goodness. These aren't phrases you ever want to be true of you, but if you let bitterness in, they most certainly will be. Proceed to Station #9

### **Station #9**

Read verses 23-26.

***23 Nevertheless I am continually with You; You have taken hold of my right hand.***

***24 With Your counsel You will guide me, And afterward receive me to glory.***

***25 Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.***

***26 My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.***

On the table in front of you is a hand of Blackjack. The World's hand has been revealed, and only half of yours has been. You know what you will need to win. In a moment your group will be asked to turn over the card to see its value.

Think about what you need. Discuss it with your group. Can you see it in your mind?

Someone turn the card over and then read on...

You probably thought of an Ace, didn't you? Actually, the value of the card doesn't matter. If you have the King, you have everything you need. There is no need to add to Him. Life is not a game of chance. You see, life may look unfair and victory uncertain, but as Asaph has so wonderfully stated, God is our portion forever. Is there anything else we should desire to add to Him? Take a moment and pray...tell God, in your own words, what He means to you. Reset the card for others, then proceed to Station #10.

### **Station #10**

Read verse 27.

***27 For, behold, those who are far from You will perish; You have destroyed all those who are unfaithful to You.***

Look how far Asaph has come in his thoughts. He is speaking here (vs. 27) of the same people he was envying earlier (vs. 12). What a difference God's presence can make. What about all the treasures of the wicked? The possessions of the worldly? The riches of the ungodly? They are in the box in front of you. Open it and see them.

Ask God to forgive you of ever pursuing that which will not last, close the box for others, and then proceed to Station #11.

## Station #11

Read verse 28.

***28 But as for me, the nearness of God is my good; I have made the Lord  
GOD my refuge, That I may tell of all Your works.***

I can only know truth and avoid the bitterness of lies as I make myself available to God. I can only live in reality as long as I am connected to my God. His nearness is my good.

Listen to the CD that has been playing. The words have been printed here for you. Circle the words that speak to you and then close this time with God in prayer. May you always experience the goodness of God as He draws near and desire to tell of His good works.

**Artist: *Shane & Shane***

**Album: *Carried Away***

**Year: *2003***

**Title: *Song of Surrender***

there is a wicked man in me  
wanting the wicked man's disease  
fleeting pleasures, but pleasure indeed  
oh Lord, take my envy of these things  
and the prideful war within  
take me to the place of sweet surrender

You are, You were, You will always be better!

this is a song of surrender  
for whom have i but You?  
You are, You are better  
forever so much better than the world  
You are my portion (Lord you are...)  
You are my portion (my reward...)  
You are my portion  
my never ending, overflowing Lord  
my reward  
my reward  
my portion, Lord!

You are Lord...

creator of created things  
greatest personality  
no ear has heard, no mind conceived  
and though Your Spirit groans in me  
and all creation sings of Your return  
my feet are slipping, be my help

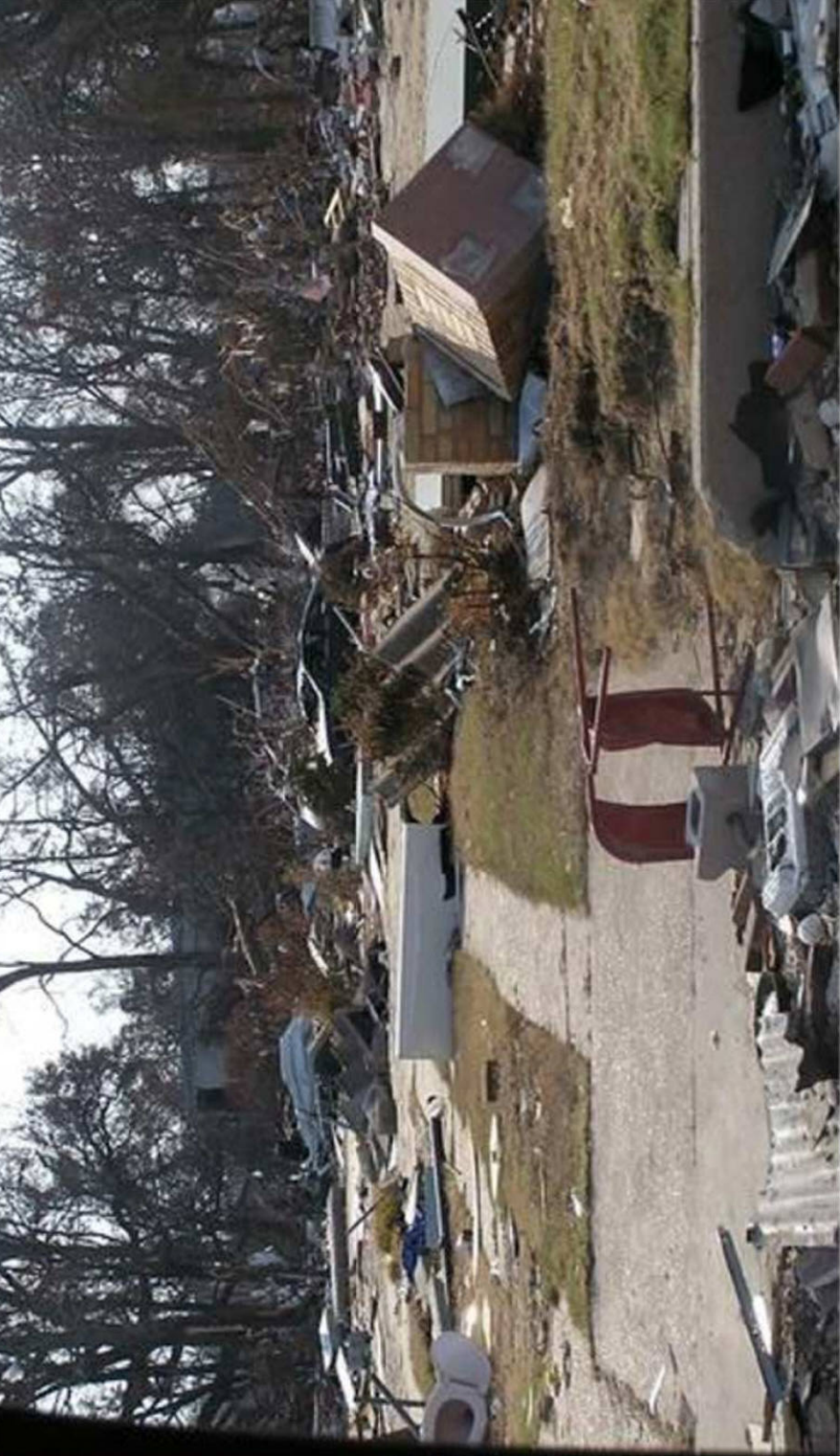
You are, You were, You will always be better!

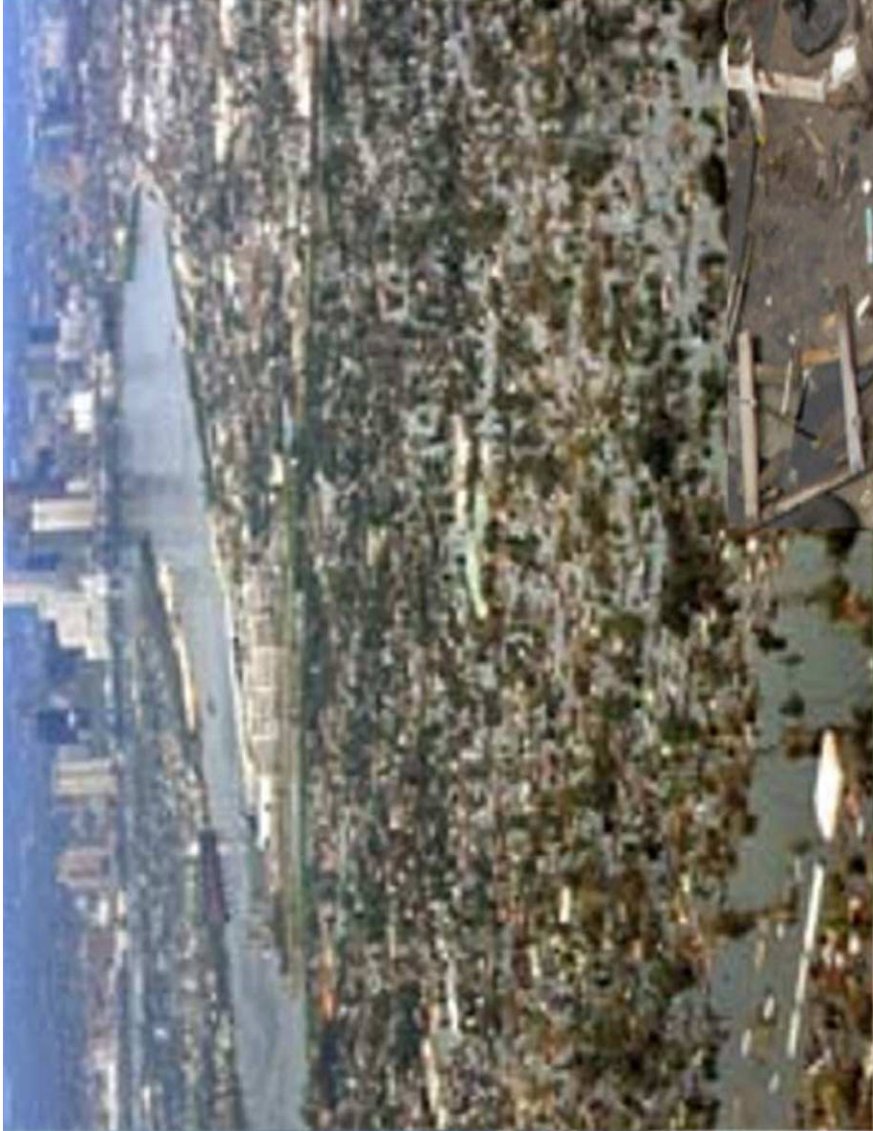
*the nearness of God is my good*

# Psalms 139

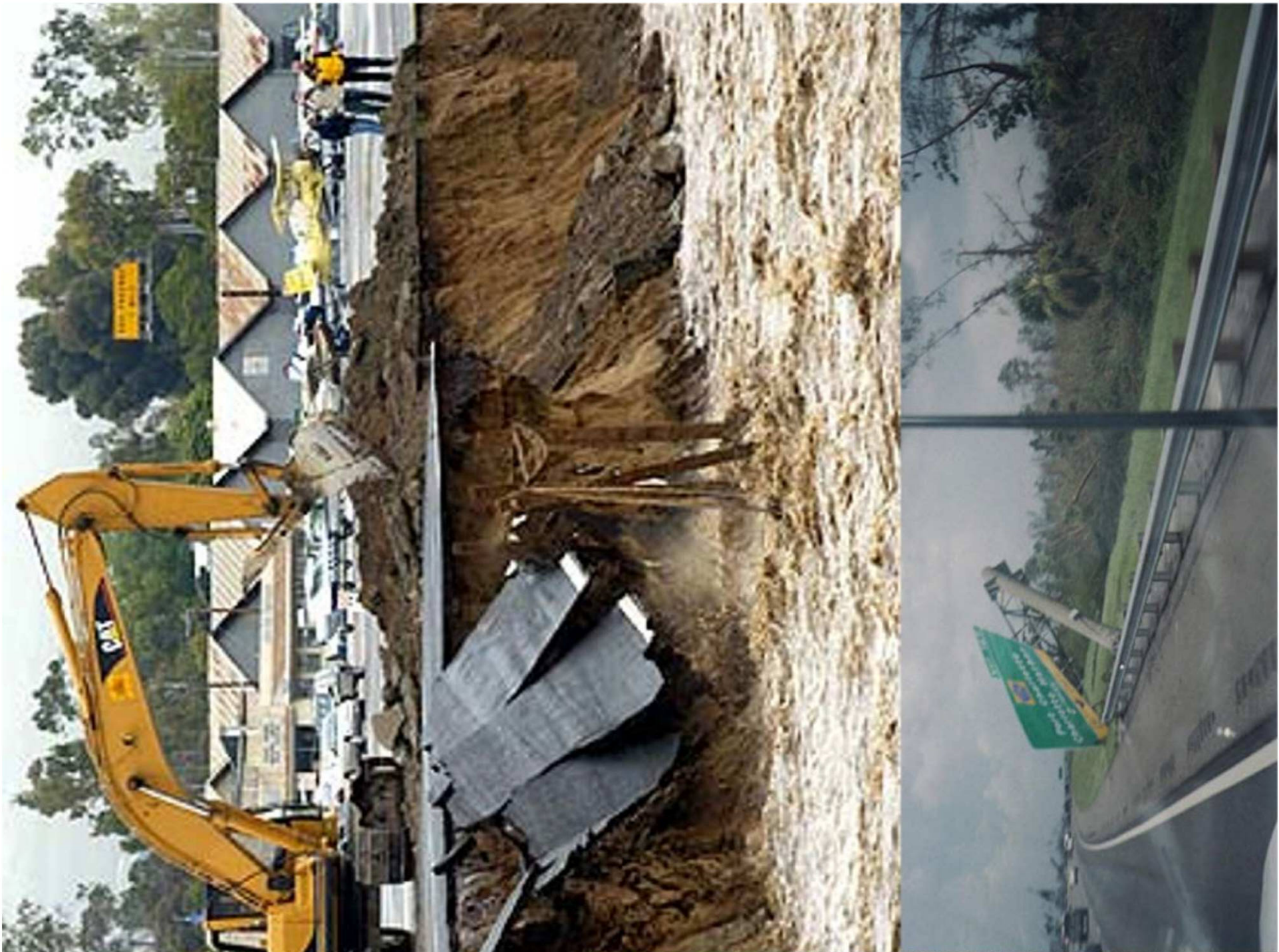
Each participant  
in Psalm 73 will  
need a guide  
sheet and a pen.

Start by reading  
the sheet and  
following the  
instructions.



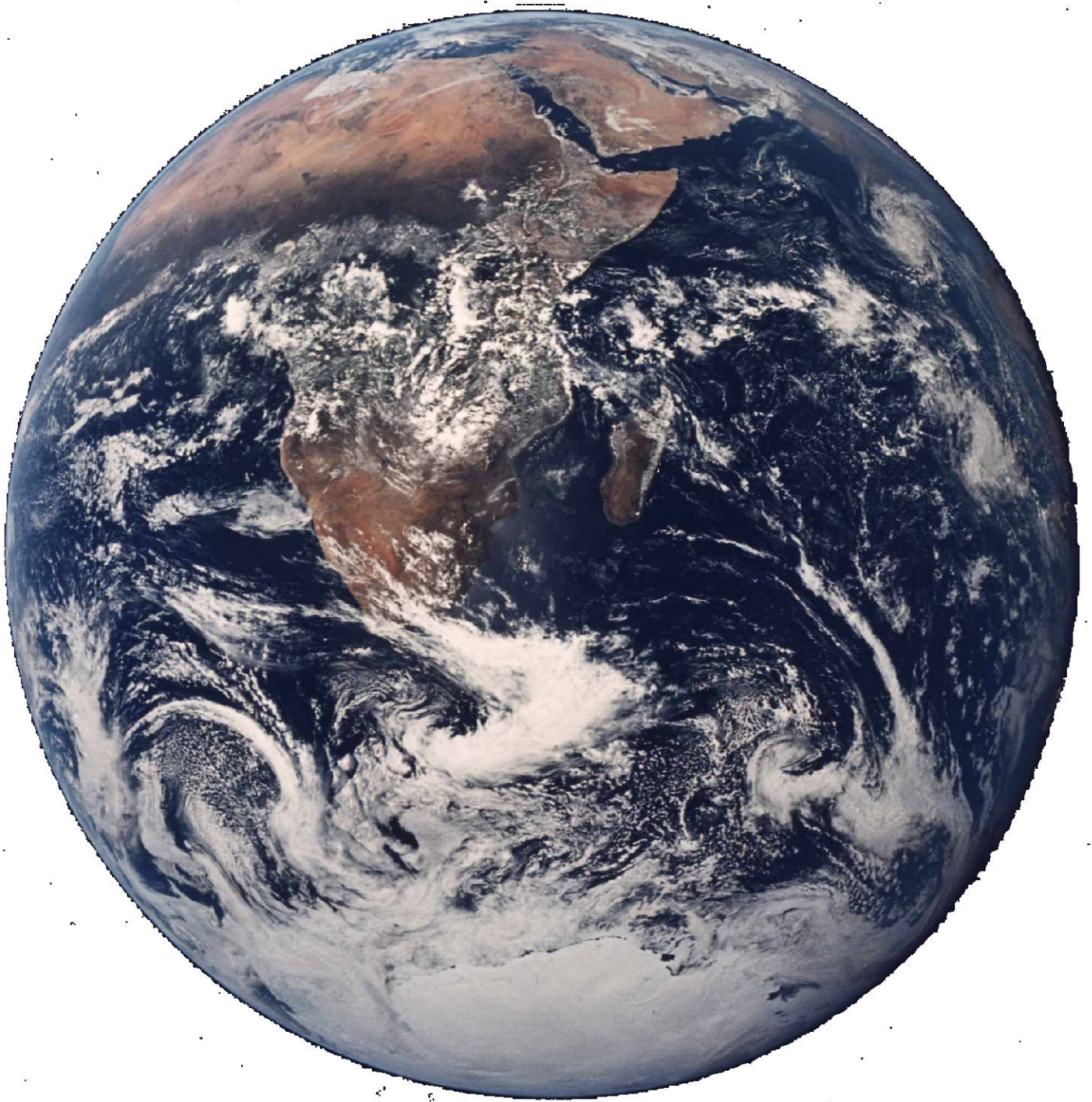
















**2 Timothy 3:16-17****Bible Study**

<sup>16</sup>All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

**Jeremiah 15:16****Scripture Memory**

<sup>16</sup>When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O LORD God Almighty.

**Psalms 1:1-3****Meditation**

<sup>1</sup>Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. <sup>2</sup>But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. <sup>3</sup>He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

**Philippians 4:6-7****Prayer**

<sup>6</sup>Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

**Joel 2:12****Fasting**

<sup>12</sup>"Even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning."

**Colossians 3:17****Ministry**

<sup>17</sup>And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

**Acts 1:8****Evangelism**

<sup>8</sup>But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

**1 Peter 3:18****Evangelism**

<sup>18</sup>For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit

**Mark 12:29-31****Worship**

<sup>29</sup>"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. <sup>30</sup>Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' <sup>31</sup>The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

**Romans 12:1-2****Worship**

<sup>1</sup>Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. <sup>2</sup>Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

## Session Four

<b>Session Discipline:</b>	Ministry
<b>Session Verse/Passage:</b>	Acts 1:8, Ephesians 2:10
<b>Session Purpose:</b>	To focus and engage students in the call to good works.

### Preparation:

- Today's lesson will require students to do some writing, so it would be best to have tables (if available) set up in the room.
- Provide an inexpensive white cotton dish towel for each student. Also gather the materials needed for a foot washing. (Basin or bowls, water, bath towels)
- Gather enough envelopes, paper, and pens to distribute to each student. Your supply should be enough that each student is able to have an envelope and a sheet of paper for each member of their family.
- Print and cut out enough of the "coupons" (Item 1) to provide students with one for each of their family members.
- You will need some Sharpie pens for the last part of the lesson. Be sure and have several on hand.

### Session Teaching Plan:

- **Step One – 15 min.** As students arrive, ask them to remove their shoes and then you (and/or other leaders) wash their feet using the bowl, water and bath towels. Pray with each one and tell them to have a seat at a table. Once the feet of all the students have been washed, tell them that today they will be participating in the spiritual discipline of ministry. Read Acts 1:8 and say, "Most often we identify this passage of scripture with evangelism, and rightly so, for it is a call to share the Gospel with others throughout the globe. However, one critical way we witness the Gospel to others is through ministering to their needs. This year as we engage in the discipline of ministry, we will participate in ministry to the needs of those in our Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the World. First, we need to identify those areas. For our purposes we will be more 'local' with our identification: Jerusalem – Family, Judea – Church, Samaria – School, World – Community. This week we want to minister to the members of our families."
- **Step Two – 35 min.** Distribute envelopes, paper, pens, and note cards. Ask students to take enough supplies to write a letter to each of their immediate family members. Instruct students to write a short letter of appreciation and affirmation to each of their family members. Tell them to include, if possible, a specific trait or characteristic that they appreciate in them. Distribute coupons and tell students to include one in each of the letters they are preparing. Tell students, "We need to be ministering agents in our families and communicate that the Gospel has made a difference in our desire to love and serve others." After students finish, have them place their letters in individual envelopes, seal them, and write the family member's name on the front. Instruct the students to deliver their letters during the week.
- **Step Three – 10 min.** Read Eph. 2:10 and say, "We have been created for good works, that the world may know that we belong to God." Distribute the dish towels and have students use the Sharpies to write their names on each other's

towels. Say, "Take these towels home and let them remind you that as you have been served, so should you serve." Dismiss in prayer.

# COUPON

The bearer of this coupon  
is entitled to  
**one hour**  
of my service upon request.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature*

# COUPON

The bearer of this coupon  
is entitled to  
**one hour**  
of my service upon request.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature*

# COUPON

The bearer of this coupon  
is entitled to  
**one hour**  
of my service upon request.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature*

# COUPON

The bearer of this coupon  
is entitled to  
**one hour**  
of my service upon request.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature*



## Session Five

<b>Session Discipline:</b>	Bible Study
<b>Session Verse/Passage:</b>	Acts 1:8
<b>Session Purpose:</b>	To engage students in a small group Bible Study of Acts 1:8.

### Preparation:

- Today's lesson will require students to do some writing, so it would be best to have tables (if available) set up in the room. Pen or pencils should also be provided.
- Print and distribute a copy of "The SEEKER Study" to each student. Familiarize yourself with the steps of this bible study method, as you will be leading students through the process and this study method will be used several times this year.
- Secure several (at least 5, if possible) translations of the bible. Have those available for students during the study time.
- Print and distribute a copy of "Code2Life.com Story Page" to each student. Secure Code2Life Locker Cards to distribute to students who complete their testimonies. *(These are available through the Student Ministries Office of the BGC0. Contact Holly Isch at 405/942-3000 x4388 or go to code2life.com)*
- Have extra copies of the scripture memory verses available, as students will be reviewing the verses at the conclusion of the session.

### Session Teaching Plan:

- **Step One – 45 min.** As students arrive, distribute a copy of "The SEEKER Study" to each of the students. Say "This week we will engage in an in-depth method of Bible study. It is called the SEEKER Method, and it will help us break down a verse or passage for better interpretation and understanding." Divide the students in groups of three or four. Tell them they will work in these groups to complete the study. Walk students through the process for each step of the study and then let them begin. Be available to answer youth's questions during the study. Call "time" at about the 35 minute mark for discussion on the passage. Walk through the steps again, having students report different things they learned from the study.
- **Step Two – 10 min.** Say, "Today we studied about our call to evangelism. Now we want to prepare ourselves for sharing the Gospel by writing our testimonies for placement on *code2life.com*." Distribute a copy of the "Code2Life.com Story Page" to each student. Quickly walk through the steps on the handout and have students begin writing their testimonies. Have Code2Life locker cards ready to distribute to students who complete the task.
- **Step Three – 5 min.** Scripture Memory Review. Have students pair up and review one another on their scripture memory verses. Be diligent, but forgiving as students labor to learn these verses. ***The goal for the teacher should be to build a desire in students for this discipline, not to force it upon them.*** Close in prayer.

## The SEEKER Study

### Acts 1:8

The following are the components that make up “The SEEKER Study.”

- **Scripture** – This is one verse that you will study for the week.
- **Emphasis** – What does the verse say? What is its meaning?
- **Examine the Context** – What do the surrounding verses state?
- **Key Questions** – Questions that the verses raise in your mind or that might pose a problem for someone else.
- **Execution** – How will I execute what the passage has taught me? How can I put it into action in my own life?
- **Reproduce** – How can I take what I’ve learned from this passage and simplify it so that it can be passed on to an individual or group?

#### ***SCRIPTURE***

Copy the verse (Acts 1:8) from three translations/paraphrases of the Bible. Write them below.

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#### ***EMPHASIS***

Write in *your own words* what this verse teaches. It is important that you only state what the verse says, and not to add elaborate commentary. Write it below.

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#### ***EXAMINE THE CONTEXT***

Now you will concentrate upon the verses immediately preceding and following the verse. These are known as the context of the verse. Under the heading “Acts 1:3-14” record first the thoughts added by the verses preceding your Scripture verse. Then record the thoughts added by the verses following your Scripture verse. Again, do not add commentary; simply state what the verses are saying in your own words.

Acts 1:3-14

Preceding verses (vss. 3-7) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Following verses (vss. 9-14) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

***KEY QUESTIONS***

Below, record the questions that the verses raise in your mind or the problems you think they may raise for someone else, Christian or non-Christian. Do *not* answer the questions and do not only record questions for which you know the answer. It might be helpful to do this verse by verse.

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***EXECUTION***

Below, write out how you will execute or apply what you have learned. What specific commitments do you need to make in regard to your attitudes or actions because of the teaching of this Scripture verse. Somewhere in your execution you should complete the following sentence. "Today I will..." or "This week I will..."

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\_\_\_\_\_

**REPRODUCE**

Now you will want to go back over what you learned from this passage and decide what is reproducible from this text.

This is different than execution or application; execution is a personal issue of what YOU will do. Reproduction is taking what you have learned and finding a way to pass on the truth of that conviction to others. In the space below write out what you will do to **reproduce** what you have learned with the group, so that they could pass it on to someone else.

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# Story Page

**DIRECTIONS FOR PUTTING YOUR STORY ONLINE:** Complete the following three sections and go to [www.code2life.com](http://www.code2life.com). Once you type your story online, you'll be given a code to use so other people can read your story at [www.code2life.com](http://www.code2life.com). You can send an e-card to your friends with your code on it or you can download cards to hand out that have a place for you to write your personal code. It may take a day or two before your story is online, but you can begin sending e-cards or handing out locker cards immediately. **MAKE SURE YOU DO NOT USE YOUR LAST NAME, WHERE YOU LIVE, SCHOOL, OR ANYTHING TO IDENTIFY YOU. ONLY USE YOUR FIRST NAME.**

**1. HOW I KNEW I NEEDED JESUS:** (Write about what happened on the day you prayed to receive Christ. Write about what was going on inside you, how you knew it was God urging you and how you knew what to do. Then tell how you prayed to give your life over to Jesus.)

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**2. HOW MY RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS IMPACTS MY LIFE NOW:** (Write about how Jesus impacts your everyday life. We've given some suggestions such as **The way I make decisions/My thought life/What I think about other people** but you can use other areas as well.)

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**3. HOW MY RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS GIVES ME HOPE FOR THE FUTURE:**

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## Session Six

<b>Session Discipline:</b>	Evangelism
<b>Session Verse/Passage:</b>	Ezekiel 33:6, 2 Peter 3:9
<b>Session Purpose:</b>	To engage students in acts of evangelism.

### Preparation:

- Today's lesson will require students to do some writing, so it would be best to have tables (if available) set up in the room.
- Locate a copy (or several copies) of the most current editions of local middle school and high school yearbooks and have them available.
- Print "Very Important Stuff" Evangelism Note Cards (Item 1) and provide enough of them for each student to have at least three.

### Session Teaching Plan:

- **Step One – 10 min.** After students arrive, say "Last week we learned about the biblical basis for evangelism and prepared our testimonies for placement on *code2life.com*. This week we want to take another step in being more evangelistic." Have students form groups of two or three and ask them to read Ezekiel 33:6. Ask them to discuss in their group what they think the verse is saying. Give the groups a couple of minutes for discussion and then have them respond as a large group. Then ask, "Who is the watchman?" (Answer: We are!) Say, "If we are watchmen, then we must be diligent to warn people of the enemy's attack on their lives. Today we will "blow our trumpets" and sound the warning."
- **Step Two – 40 min.** Distribute yearbooks and have students look for two or three students they know that need to hear about Christ. Tell students they will be writing notes to these students. Students shouldn't all pick the same people but try to select as many different people as possible. Say, "I want you to write a short note to each of the students you selected that communicates your desire to see them come to know Christ. At the end of the note you should tell them that you are always ready to talk to them further about their faith and/or direct them to your code2life testimony. This week I want you to deliver these notes to the students you have selected as you pray for them to receive the message in kindness."
- **Step Three – 10 min.** Read 2 Peter 3:9 and ask students to write the names of the students to whom they wrote notes, on a separate "Very Important Stuff" card. Tell them this will serve as their prayer list for the students. Close the session by having the students pair up and pray that God will give them favor with the students to whom they have written notes and that "God's patience" would be rewarded with several people giving their lives to Christ.

very

important

stuff

very

important

stuff

## Session Seven

**Session Discipline:**

Meditation

**Session Verse/Passage:**

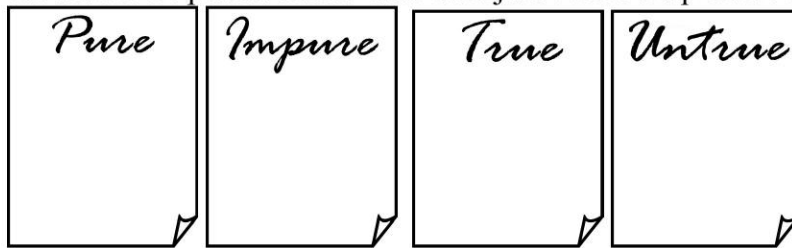
Phil. 4:8, Psalm 1:1-3, Joshua 1:8

**Session Purpose:**

To focus the students' attention on God through meditation.

### Preparation:

- Today's lesson will require students to do some writing, so it would be best to have tables (if available) set up in the room.
- You will need several pieces of large newsprint to place on the walls. Each piece of newsprint needs to be labeled (at the top) with *one* of each of the characteristics mentioned in Philippians 4:8 and their opposites: True/Untrue, Pure/Impure, Noble/Dishonorable, Right/Wrong, Lovely/Unlovely, Admirable/Repulsive, Excellent/Inadequate, Praiseworthy/Disgraceful. (See examples below). You will also need one that is titled "Psalm 1:1-3," but it should not be placed on the wall until just before Step Three in the Teaching Plan.



- You will need tape or other adhesive to mount the newsprint to the wall.
- Secure several Post-It Notepads; enough for one per student. Provide a pen or marker for each student.
- One printed copy of Item 1
- Have extra copies of the scripture memory verses available, as students will be reviewing the verses at the conclusion of the session.

### Session Teaching Plan:

- **Step One – 20 min.** After students arrive, say "Today we want to focus on the spiritual discipline of meditation." Distribute the pens and Post-It Notepads, then read Philippians 4:8 and direct the students' attention to the pieces of newsprint on the walls. Say, "Christian meditation is all about focusing our hearts and minds on the truth of God's word. It is about taking the time to consider whether or not our thoughts are most often directed towards Him or centered on other things. Some of the newsprint on the walls represents the positive areas of our thoughts. Others represent the negative. As I read the following questions I want you to take a Post-It Note, write your answer on it, and in a minute, I'll ask you to place them on the matching posters. You should write each answer on a separate Post-It Note"
  - One by one, read the questions on Item #1 and give students time to write their answers on the Post-It Notes.
  - Once all of the questions have been asked and answered, have students respond by placing their Post-It Notes on the posters (pieces of newsprint) which match their answers.



- When the exercise is complete ask students the following questions, giving them time to respond and discuss:
  - Is it hard to distinguish what is a “good” thought from a “bad” one? How do you determine the difference?
  - How do you think it is possible to consistently keep your thoughts pure and holy? What change or changes would have to be made in your life to see this become true for you?
- **Step Two – 30 min.** Ask students open their Bibles to Psalm 1:1-3. Tell them they will have 30 minutes to focus on this passage in silence. (**NOTE:** This will take some encouragement and patience. Students might be resistant to the idea and be tempted to play the boredom card. Encourage them to try something new and see how God uses it to teach them. As a leader be insistent, but resist being demanding and impatient. This exercise is counter-culture and often pulls people out of their comfort zone.) Ask students to find a spot in the room or outside (whatever works for your particular church setting) where they can be alone (as possible) for this time of meditation. Students should be instructed to write down on their remaining Post-It Notes, any thoughts or insights this passage provokes. Send students to meditate on the passage and then call them back at the appropriate time. **Note:** Before students gather again after the time of meditation, place the “Psalm 1:1-3” newsprint on the wall.
- **Step Three – 5 min.** Read Joshua 1:8 and ask students to report on their time of meditation. Ask, “What was the most difficult part of this experience? What did God reveal to you about meditation?” Ask students to take the notes from their time of meditation and post them on the “Psalm 1:1-3” newsprint. Close in prayer.
- **Step Four – 5 min.** Scripture Memory Review. Have students pair up and review one another on their scripture memory verses. Be diligent, but forgiving as students labor to learn these verses. **Remember, the goal for the teacher should be to build a desire in students for this discipline, not to force it upon them.** Close in prayer.

## **Session Seven**

### **Item #1**

**Read questions to students and give them time to write their answers on their Post-It Notes. Encourage honesty.**

In the last conversation you had with your parents where you were in trouble, were your words of explanation to them true or untrue?

Are the majority of your thoughts about the opposite sex pure or impure?

In regard to your last test at school, were your preparations noble or dishonorable?

If your pastor sat beside you for one of your typical sessions on the internet, would he say your surfing patterns are focused on that which is right or wrong?

Of the last ten messages you sent by text message, email, or IM would you consider your communications lovely or unlovely?

Of your conversations over a typical 24 hours, would your friends say your words tell that you are focused on that which is admirable or that which is repulsive?

You just wrote a paper for school. If I did an internet search for plagiarism, would I find that your adherence to the rules is excellent or inadequate?

Would your teachers say your character reflects that which is praiseworthy or that which is disgraceful?

## Session Eight

**Session Discipline:**

Bible Study

**Session Verse/Passage:**

Joel 2:12-13, Matt. 6:16-18

**Session Purpose:**

To involve students in a bible study on fasting.

### Preparation:

- Today's lesson will require students to do some writing, so it would be best to have tables (if available) set up in the room. Pen or pencils should also be provided.
- Print and distribute a copy of the "The SEEKER Study" to each student. Once gain familiarize yourself with the steps of this bible study method, as you will be leading students through the process.
- Secure several (at least 5, if possible) translations of the bible. Have those available for students during the study time.
- Print the "Fasting Sign-up Sheet" (Item 1) for use in the last portion of the session. For large groups, use multiple copies.

### Session Teaching Plan:

- **Step One –50 min.** As students arrive, distribute a copy of the "The SEEKER Study" to each of the students. Say "This week we are again engaging in the SEEKER Method of Bible study." Divide the students in groups of three or four. Tell them they will work in these groups to complete the study. Assign half of the groups Joel 2:12-13 and the other groups Matthew 6:16-18. Remind students of the process for each step of the study and then let them begin. Be available to answer students' questions during the study. Call "time" at about the 40 minute mark for discussion on the passages. Walk through the steps again, having students report different things they learned from the study.
- **Step Two – 10 min.** Say, "Today we studied about fasting. Now we want to plan for participation in this prayerful ministry of consecration. This year we will participate in four fasts. Each one will be a little more challenging than the last." *(LEADER'S NOTE: In the Matthew passage about fasting, students should note that Jesus' comments about the proper way of fasting, is not a command concerning privacy as much as a warning about self-righteousness. It is okay for someone to know you are fasting, but it is not okay to brag about it or act as if it is a great sacrifice.)* This year's fasts will be grouped into four categories, as follows:
  - **Level 1 – Pleasures** (Snack foods, Soft Drinks, Desserts, TV, Radio)
  - **Level 2 – Conveniences** (Ipod, Text Messages, Emailing, Computers, Cell phones)
  - **Level 3 – Comfort** (Pillow, Showers/Baths, Hair Dryer, Make-Up, Transportation, Relationships)
  - **Level 4 – Necessities** (Food)

Tell students that this week you want them to participate in a Level 1 fast. Say, "I will be passing around a Fasting Sign-up Sheet (Item 1) for you to sign. If you sign the sheet you are agreeing to fast from the item or items you select for a total of 3 days this week." Remind the students that as they experience longing for the items they will be fasting from, they should use that longing to call their hearts to

Christ – the only One who truly sustains. Tell students that next week will be a time of testimonies about the fasts. *(Leader's Note: You might consider securing, in advance, a few students for testimonies next week. This will help insure a healthier sharing time in that session.)* After the sign-up sheet has gone around, dismiss in prayer.



***EXAMINE THE CONTEXT***

Now you will concentrate upon the verses immediately preceding and following the verse. These are known as the context of the verse. Under the heading “Joel 2:12-13 or Matt. 6:16-18” record first the thoughts added by the verses preceding your Scripture verse. Then record the thoughts added by the verses following your Scripture verse. Again, do not add commentary; simply state what the verses are saying in your own words.

**Joel 2:12-13**

Preceding verses (vss. 7-11) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Following verses (vss. 14-17) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Matt. 6:16-18**

Preceding verses (vss. 1-15) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Following verses (vss. 19-24) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

***KEY QUESTIONS***

Below, record the questions that the verses raise in your mind or the problems you think they may raise for someone else, Christian or non-Christian. Do *not* answer the questions and do not only record questions for which you know the answer. It might be helpful to do this verse by verse.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**EXECUTION**

Below, write out how you will execute or apply what you have learned. What specific commitments do you need to make in regard to your attitudes or actions because of the teaching of this Scripture verse. Somewhere in your execution you should complete the following sentence. “Today I will...” or “This week I will...”

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**REPRODUCE**

Now you will want to go back over what you learned from this passage and decide what is reproducible from this text.

This is different than execution or application; execution is a personal issue of what YOU will do. Reproduction is taking what you have learned and finding a way to pass on the truth of that conviction to others. In the space below write out what you will do to **reproduce** what you have learned with the group, so that they could pass it on to someone else.

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## Session Nine

<b>Session Discipline:</b>	Fasting
<b>Session Verse/Passage:</b>	Psalm 40:3
<b>Session Purpose:</b>	To celebrate what God did in the fast.

### Preparation:

- Today's session will be predominantly a time of sharing. You should pre-enlist a few students to share what God did in their hearts as a result of the fast.
- Enlist some people to prepare some snacks and drinks for the session. This should be a relaxed time with students openly sharing.
- In the second part of the session, students will be asked to help you prepare for next week's session on worship. You will need a marker board or newsprint to write notes in front of the group.
- Have extra copies of the scripture memory verses available, as students will be reviewing the verses at the conclusion of the session.

### Session Teaching Plan:

- **Step One – 35 min.** As students come in, serve refreshments and spend some time with them catching up on the week. After everyone arrives, tell the students that this week was devoted to the fast. Read Psalm 40:3 and instruct students that God often uses experiences like fasting to put a renewed love in our heart and a “new song” on our lips. Have pre-enlisted students begin a share time and ask for others to share as well. If students are reluctant to share, ask starter questions, such as, “Was 3 days longer than you thought when it came to choosing not to indulge in the items of your fast? Did anyone realize how much of a “grip” even little things have on our lives? How did the fast help you focus spiritually?” Close this time of sharing with a prayer time. Allow three or four students to pray for the needs of the group and for a greater focus upon God.
- **Step Two – 15 min.** Move to your marker board or newsprint and say, “Next week our session is devoted to worship. I would like for you to help me by sharing your top two or three praise and worship songs.” As students share their favorites with you, write them on the board. For next week's session you will need to pick some songs for the students to sing, so have the students narrow the list down to seven or eight songs. Say, “This week your assignment is to take this list of songs home with you and look up scripture which supports the message of the song. As a part of the worship experience, next week, before we sing each of these songs, I will ask for you to share the verses you selected. Come prepared to read your verses.”
- **Step Three – 10 min.** Scripture Memory Review. Have students pair up and review one another on their scripture memory verses. Encourage any struggling students and commit extra time to them, if necessary. Close in prayer.

## Session Ten

<b>Session Discipline:</b>	Worship
<b>Session Verse/Passage:</b>	Psalm 63:4-5
<b>Session Purpose:</b>	To experientially teach the value of song and worship.

### Preparation:

- Today's lesson will require someone to lead the pre-selected worship songs, using instrumentation or CDs. If you have someone who can lead the music, then you should enlist them, provide them with a list of the chosen songs and any other needs they may have to lead in worship. If you will be using CDs, you will need a CD player, a copy of the selected songs, and someone to lead the singing.
- You will need to prepare a list of the songs and some verses to correspond to each one. The students will hopefully provide many of the verses, but you should be prepared in case they do not.

### Session Teaching Plan:

- **Step One – 50 min.** After students arrive, read Psalm 63:4-5 and welcome them to this time of worship. Introduce the first song and have students share the verses they selected. After the verses are read, the students should be led in singing the song. Follow this pattern until all of the songs are sung.
- **Step Two – 10 min.** Ask students, "What is it about music that helps you to worship? If you were God how would you respond to your children singing to you like we just did?" Give students time to respond. Have students form small groups of three or four and have them spend a few minutes in prayer. Ask them to pray for sincerity in their Christian walk and to be constant encouragers of one another in the faith. When groups finish praying they are dismissed.

## Session Eleven

**Session Discipline:**

Prayer

**Session Verse/Passage:**

Matthew 6:5-8; Colossians 4:2

**Session Purpose:**

To help students continue to expand their prayer life.

### Preparation:

- Locate a spot for and prepare each of four prayer stations. You will be leading the student through the ACTS method of prayer. These stations can be set up inside a single room, throughout the church, or even on both the inside and outside of the church. Use your imagination and whatever flexibility your church will allow.
  - Prayer Station A – Adoration. Create a sign or poster that designates this area as one where students will pray words of praise.
  - Prayer Station C – Confession. Create a sign or poster that designates this area as one where students will confess sin and seek forgiveness.
  - Prayer Station T – Thanksgiving. Create a sign or poster that designates this area as one where students will speak words of thanks to God for His sovereignty in difficult situations and for His grace in times of blessing.
  - Prayer Station S – Supplication. Create a sign or poster that designates this area as one where students will offer personal requests to God and pray for the needs of others.
- Print enough of the ACTS Prayer Guides (Item 1) to give one to each student.

### Session Teaching Plan:

- **Step One – 5 min.** After students arrive, tell them they will be participating in the discipline of prayer. Read Matthew 6:5-8 and Colossians 4:2 and say, “The scripture not only implores us to pray, it gives us instructions on how to pray properly. Today we will be learning the ACTS Method of prayer.
- **Step Two – 45 min.** Distribute ACTS Prayer Guides and have students form four groups, tell them they are going pray as a group at each prayer station. Explain (from the prayer guide) each station and the types of prayers each letter represents. Let them know they will be rotating to four prayer areas. Inform them of the following:
  - Instruct them that they will be praying for ten minutes at each stop. You will blow a whistle or come around and move each group at the proper time.
  - Let them know that they should not move on to the next stop until you give the signal.
  - Encourage them to pray out loud in their groups at each stop.
  - Each student (in their group) should be encouraged to pray at each location. Encourage students to use their ACTS Prayer Guide for knowing how to pray at each station.
  - Assign starting prayer locations for each group and then have them rotate to a new location every ten minutes.

- Students will return to the classroom after completing their last prayer stop.
- ***Step Three – 5 min.*** Gather the students together and ask, “Which part of the ACTS method was most difficult to maintain for ten minutes? Which one was easiest? How did this exercise expand your idea of prayer?” Allow time for students to respond to each question.
- ***Step Four – 5 min.*** Scripture Memory Review. Have students pair up and review one another on their scripture memory verses. Close in prayer.

# **A**DORATION

These are prayers of praise. Your prayers should speak of God's greatness and glory in this world and in your life.

# **C**ONFESSION

This should be a time of confessing sin. **WARNING!...**You shouldn't be specific in this group setting, so most of your confession should be just admitting that you fall short in certain areas of following God.

# **T**HANKSGIVING

These are prayers of gratefulness. Your prayers should reflect a thankful heart for all of God's working in your life and the lives of others.

# **S**UPPLICATION

These are prayers of petition. This is humbly bringing your personal requests to God. It is also asking God for the needs of others.

## Session Twelve

**Session Discipline:**

Scripture Memory

**Session Verse/Passage:**

Luke 10:25-37; Isaiah 6:1-8; Genesis 3:1-19

**Session Purpose:**

To build in students a desire to creatively encounter scripture.

### Preparation:

- Print all three scripture passages out on a sheet of paper and make copies for all the students.
- Provide several bible study commentaries or study tools for the passages mentioned. Students will select only one passage, but you should be prepared for any of the three.
- **LEADER'S NOTE** – These remaining sessions on scripture memory this year will be used for you and your students to dream, study, and construct your own passage walk through. The Sumpherō Task Force has selected the following three passages for you to choose from: The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37); Isaiah's Call (Isaiah 6:1-8); and The Fall (Genesis 3:1-19). We are encouraging you to set up your experience late in the year and invite your entire church body to walk through it on a Sunday or Wednesday night (Session 20).

### Session Teaching Plan:

- **Step One – 60 min.** Distribute the scripture passage sheets. Your entire session should consist of selecting the passage of scripture your students desire to build an experience for, studying the passage, and brainstorming ideas for communicating the truth of the passage by way of an interactive walk through similar to Psalm 73.

## Session Thirteen

<b>Session Discipline:</b>	Ministry
<b>Session Verse/Passage:</b>	Galatians 6:10
<b>Session Purpose:</b>	To focus and engage students in the call to good works.

### Preparation:

- Secure a marker board or place newsprint on the wall. Make sure you have some markers.
- Secure a copy of the church and school calendars for the next couple of months and have it available at the session.

### Session Teaching Plan:

- **Step One – 5 min.** When students arrive, remind them this year they have committed to engaging in acts of ministry to those in “Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the World.” Also remind them of our identification of those areas: Jerusalem – Family, Judea – Church, Samaria – School, World – Community. Read Galatians 6:10 and say, “This week we want to minister to the members of our church.”
- **Step Two – 30 min.** Divide students into small groups of three or four and have them brainstorm ideas for ministering to the members of the church. Give groups about 5 minutes to do this and then have them begin to report. Write their answers on the board or newsprint and encourage them as they make suggestions. Work with students to narrow the list down and to select one definite ministering activity or event. When arriving at a final suggestion, consider the following:
  - Make sure the activity in “ministry” based. That is, it meets a need of the congregation.
  - Make sure it communicates to the congregation that you love them and desire to serve them.
  - Make sure it is an activity in which all of the Sumpherō students can and will participate. Try to avoid specialized services like babysitting, because it tends to de-motivate guys from participating.
  - And finally, make sure the activity emphasizes those who are being served and not the ones who are serving.
- **Step Three – 15 min.** Get out the calendars and schedule the date(s) of the activity. Begin compiling the details that will be necessary to conduct the activity and make assignments. Encourage all students to participate.
- **Step Three – 5 min.** Scripture Memory Review. Have students pair up and review one another on their scripture memory verses. Close in prayer.

## Session Fourteen

**Session Discipline:** Bible Study

**Session Verse/Passage:** Hebrews 12

**Session Purpose:** To teach students new methods of Bible Study.

### Preparation:

- Today's lesson will require students to do some writing, so it would be best to have tables (if available) set up in the room. Pen or pencils should also be provided.
- Print and distribute a copy of the "Methods of Bible Study" (Item 1) to each student. Familiarize yourself with the steps of these bible study methods, as you will be assisting students through the process.
- Secure several translations of the bible and some other bible study tools (Commentaries, Biblical dictionaries, Concordances, etc.). Have those available for students during the study time.
- Print multiple copies of "Spiritual Questionnaire for Students" (Item 2). Each student will need several copies of this survey. It is their homework for next week.

### Session Teaching Plan:

- **Step One – 45 min.** As students arrive, distribute a copy of the "Methods of Bible Study" to each of the students. Say "This week we will learn at least one new method of Bible study." Divide the students in groups of three or four. Tell them they will work in these groups for 45 minutes to complete the study. Ask students to select one of the four methods of bible study from the handout. They will use that method to dissect the passage. Be available to answer student's questions during the study. Have students begin their study. Call "time" after 45 minutes.
- **Step Two – 10 min.** Conduct a talkback time on the study. Ask students what they learned about the passage and have them report on any struggles they had in using their particular method of study.
- **Step Three – 5 min.** Distribute the "Spiritual Questionnaire for Students" (Item 2). Tell students to take as many copies as they think they can use at school or other places they encounter students this week. Ask them to consider giving the majority of the surveys to students they think may not be Christians. Remind them to get the surveys back and to bring them to Sumpherō next week. It will be a critical part of the session. Close in prayer.



# Methods of Bible Study

## Ready, Aim, Fire Method

**Ready**--Bring the principles into focus--Write points or facts that the passage reveals. Go verse by verse.

**Aim**--Finding the target--What verse stands out to you the most? Write out why you feel this is the focal verse.

**Fire**--What does my "target verse" challenge me to do? How can I put into practice what this verse is saying? What specific commitment do I need to make to live out the truth of this verse?

## The P's and Q's Method

**P's**--Principles--Write down the principles that the passage teaches. Go verse by verse.

**Q's**--Questions--Answer the following questions in regard to the principles you discovered in the passage.

- A. What sin do I need to confess?
- B. What example do I need to model?
- C. What command do I need to obey?

**Application**--Upon answering the questions, what specific action do I need to take?

## The Triple S Method

**Standard**--State the principle or ideal expressed from one particular verse.

**Struggles**--How am I not measuring up to this (ideal or principle) in my life?

**Strategy**--My course of action to change this. How can I apply the Scripture to my problem?

## The John 15:5 Method

1. **"I am the Vine"**--What does this passage reveal about God or Jesus Christ? Write everything you can find.
2. **"You are the branches"**--What does this passage reveal about me? Write everything you can find.
3. **"He who abides in Me and I in Him bears much fruit"**--What verse from this passage is the Holy Spirit using to prune me so that His fruit can be produced in my life?
4. **"For apart from Me you can do nothing"** Pray the following:

"Lord, I realize that the first step in applying this truth in my life is to admit that without You I cannot do it. So, I give this to you right now and thank you that no matter what happens, You have taken it. Let me not listen to the voice of the Deceiver, who wants me to feel defeated. Let me not trust in my own strength and try to accomplish this in my flesh. But may I place my hope and my trust in you that through Jesus You can accomplish all things in me. Amen."

# Spiritual Questionnaire for Students

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Would you classify your city/town as: \_\_\_\_\_ Small (1-5000) \_\_\_\_\_ Medium (5000-15,000)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Large (15,000-50,000) \_\_\_\_\_ Big City (50,000+)

**Please answer each of the following as honestly and accurately as possible, by checking the appropriate box, according to your personal views:**

Your opinion of Christianity is ...	_____ Favorable	_____ Unfavorable
Your opinion of Christians is...	_____ Favorable	_____ Unfavorable
Your opinion of Church denominations is...	_____ Favorable	_____ Unfavorable
Your opinion of Jesus Christ is...	_____ Favorable	_____ Unfavorable

Comments: (Elaborate or give any explanation you would like on any of your answers from above.)

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**Respond to the following statements with Agree or Disagree.**

There is a God.	_____ Agree	_____ Disagree
It is possible to have a relationship with God.	_____ Agree	_____ Disagree
There are more ways than one to get to heaven.	_____ Agree	_____ Disagree
Satan is NOT a real person or being.	_____ Agree	_____ Disagree
Jesus really rose from the grave.	_____ Agree	_____ Disagree
Christianity is more about being good than anything else.	_____ Agree	_____ Disagree
I am certain of what I believe about God.	_____ Agree	_____ Disagree
I am satisfied with who I am.	_____ Agree	_____ Disagree

**If people were to observe my life and come to the conclusion that I was not a Christian, it would most likely be because...**

\_\_\_\_\_ they had observed some improper attitudes or actions in my life.  
\_\_\_\_\_ they disagreed with my views on social issues.  
\_\_\_\_\_ they haven't seen me in church.  
\_\_\_\_\_ they never asked.  
\_\_\_\_\_ they are judgmental and don't know me.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (other) \_\_\_\_\_.

## Session Fifteen

**Session Discipline:** Evangelism  
**Session Verse/Passage:** 1 Corinthians 9:19-22  
**Session Purpose:** To engage students in acts of evangelism.

### Preparation:

- Today's lesson will require students to do some writing, so it would be best to have tables (if available) set up in the room.
- Secure a marker board or place newsprint on the wall. Make sure you have some markers.
- Contact students during the week and remind them to survey fellow students using the "Spiritual Questionnaire for Students" (Session 14, Item 2) and to bring those surveys to this session of Sumpherō.
- Have a few copies of the survey on hand for this session as well, as student groups will need a blank copy for Step Two.

### Session Teaching Plan:

- **Step One – 10 min.** As students arrive, collect surveys and choose a couple of students to be your helpers during the session. Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-22. Tell students the heart of evangelism isn't just communicating information (a few verses and a Gospel presentation) but understanding the hearts of people, and making yourself available to be used by God to reach people where they are.
- **Step Two – 15 min.** Use this time to have students collect and compile the survey information. Have one of your student helpers taking notes on a notepad, as the other becomes your scribe at the marker board. Have the rest of the students break into small groups of three or four and distribute equal amounts of surveys to each group. Ask the groups to take a blank copy of the survey and use it as a tally sheet for answers. Tell the groups to go through the surveys and compile the information. They should set aside any surveys that have comments or long answers. These will be discussed later.
- **Step Three – 30 min.** Have student groups report their findings and write them on the board. The purpose of this session is help students learn what fellow students think and believe and to develop ways to reach them. After gathering all the information, discuss your findings and brainstorm with the group ways to reach these students with the Gospel. Be sure to arrive at one or two tangible ways to do evangelism. Commit with students to carry out your plan.
- **Step Four – 5 min.** Scripture Memory Review. Have students pair up and review one another on their scripture memory verses. Close in prayer.

## Session Sixteen

**Session Discipline:**

Meditation

**Session Verse/Passage:**

Romans 7; 1 Corinthians 6:9-20; Galatians 6:1-5

**Session Purpose:**

To have students meditate on the issue of liberty in Christ.

### Preparation:

- You will need several large strips of black plastic (approximately 4' x 8') to hang from the ceiling. Hang these strips of plastic randomly throughout the room. On each of the pieces of plastic you will attach several printed or handwritten copies of the following phrases: (Don't be afraid to place duplicate copies of the phrases throughout the room. The goal is to initially saturate the students' minds with these thoughts. You may also want to find some newspaper or magazine articles that reflect the sentiments of these phrases and post them on the plastic as well, the more the better.)
  - I don't see how you can be a Christian and not have a quiet time everyday.
  - God knows my thoughts, so why should I pray?
  - A good Christian always gives at least 10% of their money to his or her church.
  - It's my money, God gave it to me. I can spend it how I want to.
  - God wants me to prosper, right?
  - You can tell who loves the Pastor by who is there on Sunday morning. You can tell who loves the church by who comes on Sunday night. And you can tell who loves Jesus by who comes to prayer meeting on Wednesday.
  - You have to dress up to come to church.
  - God doesn't care how I dress.
  - Baptists don't dance.
  - You're not worshipping if you don't raise your hands.
  - The music has got to be good or I can't worship.
  - I can't worship to hymns.
  - Smokers go to hell.
  - Gossip isn't gossip if it's the truth.
  - A Christian would never use tobacco.
  - It's okay to drink, but not to get drunk.
  - I can still love God and not come to church.
  - If I go to church, I'm a Christian.
  - I've been a Christian all my life.
  - God wouldn't send good people to hell.
  - God knows that I can't control that part of my life, besides, He's already forgiven me.
  - God made me that way.
- You will need tape or other adhesive to mount the plastic to the ceiling and the phrases to the plastic.
- On a marker board or newsprint write the scripture reference headings (Romans 7; 1 Corinthians 6:9-20; Galatians 6:1-5)

- Familiarize yourself with the scripture passages for the week. Students will have some questions during the discussion and you should be familiar with the context and meanings of the passages.

### **Session Teaching Plan:**

- **Step One – 10 min.** As students arrive, ask them to remain silent and walk about the room and read the statements, questions, phrases, and articles attached to the plastic strips.
- **Step Two – 35 min.** After students have had time to observe the material, have them remain silent and instruct them to open their bibles to passages written on the board (Romans 7; 1 Corinthians 6:9-20; and Galatians 6:1-5). Tell them they will have 30 minutes to meditate on the scripture passages. Instruct them to be careful as they read the passages to reflect on the truth of the scripture in light of what they have just observed in the room. Ask them to get alone as possible in the room to do this. At the end of the 30 minutes call the students together.
- **Step Three – 15 min.** Engage students in a discussion about this time of meditation. Ask, “How did you feel when you first read the statements? For you, which one invoked the strongest response? How did the scripture help you in discerning the truth or fiction in any of the statements? How is the law (of Moses) good and how is it bad? When does liberty become a license? What did Paul mean when he said ‘All things are permissible, but not all are profitable?’” Help students to understand that just like our freedom in Christ is not a license to sin, our commitment to Him is not lorded over us by rules. **LEADER’S NOTE: This is a healthy tension and students will probably go away struggling some with these issues. It is not necessary, nor necessarily wise, to wrap this one up with a bow and send everyone on their way. Just remind the students that God loves them and that you are always there, as a fellow struggler, to help them talk through these issues.**

## Session Seventeen

<b>Session Discipline:</b>	Fasting
<b>Session Verse/Passage:</b>	Isaiah 58:5-11
<b>Session Purpose:</b>	To engage students in a fast designed to deepen their love for Christ, the poor and the oppressed.

### Preparation:

- Gather multiple pictures, newspaper, magazine or internet articles, or secure a video clip about poverty and oppression. (Bob Simon has a great piece he did on 60 Minutes about a Tutsi woman who survived the Rwandan genocide in 1994. The clip is just over 13 minutes long and can be downloaded or ordered at the CBS website.)
- Make copies of the Isaiah 58 handout and have pens available for students.
- Make as many copies of the Fasting Sign-up Sheet as you will need. This list is simply for you to keep a record of those who are committed to the fast.
- Make copies of the Fast Permission Letter, Parental Waiver, and Prayer Cards. *(Note: Be sure and secure Parental Permission BEFORE this week's fast. Send this letter home with students a week or two in advance. If you are reading this notice the day before your group meets, then schedule your fast for a date later in the week, so you have time, in the next couple of days, to send out and collect the waivers.)*
- Have extra copies of the scripture memory verses available, as students will be reviewing the verses at the conclusion of the session.

### Session Teaching Plan:

- **Step One – 20-25 min.** *Option 1:* Ask students to gather into groups of 3 or 4. Distribute stories, photos, and articles about oppression and poverty. Have students read the material and then ask the groups to discuss the following questions: Why do they think situations like the ones they read about occur? In their opinion, what is the solution to these types of problems? *Option 2:* Show the “60 Minutes” video piece, then lead the students in a talkback session of what they observed. Ask such questions as: Do you think you could have survived in such a fashion? Why or why not? Where do you think such hatred (as exhibited by the genocidal Hutus) comes from? Do their (the students) day to day actions contribute to such situations occurring in the world? How so?
- **Step Two – 10-15 min.** Separate the students into 3 groups. Distribute the Isaiah 58 handouts and assign each group a particular section of the handout. Tell them this passage is Isaiah 58:5-11 as paraphrased in *The Message*. Instruct each group to answer the question at the top of the sheet for their portion of scripture. After students have completed this task, lead them in a discussion of their findings. Have each group report and then ask, “Are there any promises from God in the passage concerning the reward of those who would follow His instructions? What are they? Why do you think God describes an ‘acceptable’ fast this way?”
- **Step Three – 15 min.** Hand out Fasting Permission Letter, Parental Waivers (if you have not sent these out previously), the Fasting Sign-up Sheet, and Prayer Cards. Tell students that you will be participating in a Level 4 (Food) Fast this

week. Remind them that you are not recommending anyone to participate who has not secured Parental Permission. Select the day for the fast. Say: "The day our group has chosen for the fast is \_\_\_\_\_. This means that from 6:00 p.m. on the day before the fast, until 6:00 p.m. of the day of the fast, you should eat nothing and drink only water. You may take your first meal after 6:00 p.m. on the day of the fast." After handing out the Prayer Cards, tell students they should keep their card close to them the day of the fast. Tell them that as they experience hunger pangs, they are to use the prayer requests on the card as a means of focusing their attentions on the needs of others. Remind students that next week you will want to hear testimonies of what God does through this time of fasting. Pray with them and move to Step Three.

- **Step Three – 10 min.** Scripture Memory Review. Have students pair up and review one another on their scripture memory verses. Encourage any struggling students and commit extra time to them, if necessary. Have a student close in prayer and remind them to pray for all those who will fast during the week.



Dear Parent,

First let me say, thank you, for letting your child participate in the Sumpherō Youth Discipleship program.

During our times together we are actively engaging students in eight specific spiritual disciplines. One of those eight is the discipline of fasting.

This week we are asking students to fast from all food and beverages (except for water) for one day.

We understand that many students may have dietary needs related to medical conditions, so we are seeking permission for your student to participate with us in this spiritual exercise.

The day our group has selected for the fast is \_\_\_\_\_. This means that from 6:00 p.m. on the day before the fast, until 6:00 p.m. of the day of the fast, your child should eat nothing and drink only water. They may take their first meal after 6:00 p.m. on the day of the fast.

Students will be given a prayer card to help focus their attentions on Christ and the needs of others during (hunger pangs and) this dedicated time for God.

We will not be encouraging any student to participate with us in the fast who does not have parental permission to do so. If you would be willing to give your child permission to participate with us in this exercise, please sign the attached permission slip and return it (or have your student return it) to the Sumpherō group leader.

Thank you!





My child, \_\_\_\_\_, has permission to participate in  
the Sumpherō Youth Discipleship fast.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent or Guardian)



# Isaiah 58:5-11

(The Message)

In this passage, what is the *heart of God* concerning a “true” fast?

## **Group One** (vss.5-6)

Do you think this is the kind of fast day I'm after:

a day to show off humility?

To put on a pious long face

and parade around solemnly in black?

Do you call that fasting,

a fast day that I, God, would like?

"This is the kind of fast day I'm after:

to break the chains of injustice,

get rid of exploitation in the workplace,

free the oppressed, cancel debts.

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## **Group Two** (vss.7-9a)

What I'm interested in seeing you do is:

sharing your food with the hungry,

inviting the homeless poor into your homes,

putting clothes on the shivering ill-clad,

being available to your own families.

Do this and the lights will turn on,

and your lives will turn around at once.

Your righteousness will pave your way.

The God of glory will secure your passage.

Then when you pray, God will answer.

You'll call out for help and I'll say, 'Here I am.'

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## **Group Three** (vss.9b-11)

"If you get rid of unfair practices,

quit blaming victims,

quit gossiping about other people's sins,

If you are generous with the hungry

and start giving yourselves to the down-and-out,

Your lives will begin to glow in the darkness,

your shadowed lives will be bathed in sunlight.

I will always show you where to go.

I'll give you a full life in the emptiest of places—

firm muscles, strong bones.

You'll be like a well-watered garden,

a gurgling spring that never runs dry.

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## FASTING PRAYER CARD

### Health Care and Nutrition

Measles, malaria and diarrhea are three of the biggest killers of children — yet all are preventable or treatable  
HIV/AIDS has created more than 14 million orphans — 92 percent of them live in Africa  
Six million children under five die every year as a result of hunger

### Education

134 million children between the ages of 7 to 18 have never been to school.  
Girls are more likely to go without schooling than boys — in the Middle East and North Africa, girls are three times more likely than boys to be denied education

### Exploitation

In the last decade, more than 2 million children have died as a direct result of armed conflict  
More than 300,000 child soldiers are exploited in armed conflicts in over 30 countries around the world  
2 million children are believed to be exploited through the commercial sex trade  
Approximately 246 million children work; 171 million children work in hazardous conditions

*Facts Source: [www.care.org](http://www.care.org)*

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## Session Eighteen

<b>Session Discipline:</b>	Worship
<b>Session Verse/Passage:</b>	Hebrews 13:15-16
<b>Session Purpose:</b>	To experience the essence and foundations of worship.

### Preparation:

- Today's lesson will require a DVD player, TV or projection unit, and a CD player. (**DVD:** You will need to secure the DVD "Noise" from the Nooma video series by Rob Bell. You can find this video at [www.nooma.com](http://www.nooma.com) or you can call and order at 877/776-7755. The cost is \$10.00, plus shipping. **CD:** You need to have a copy of Matt Redman's, *The Heart of Worship* to play during the session. It is available at any Christian bookstore or can be downloaded for \$.99 at [www.christianbook.com](http://www.christianbook.com))
- You will need to make copies of the handout, "Matt Redman, Heart of Worship." Make enough for each student to have one. Students will need pencils or pens for this session as well.
- You will also need to read through the teaching sheet, "The Story Behind the Song", as you will be relating Matt's story to the students during the session.

### Session Teaching Plan:

- **Step One – 15 min.** After students arrive, tell them that today's session will be focused on the discipline of worship. Read or relate to them the story of Matt Redman's song, *The Heart of Worship*. It is a worship song they are probably familiar with, but they may not know its origins. After relating the story, distribute copies of the *Matt Redman, Heart of Worship* (handout) to students and make sure each student has a pen or pencil. Tell students that you are going to play the song and you want them to underline any of the phrases from the song they find particularly meaningful as they listen to it. Play the song and after it concludes, spend a few minutes talking with students about the phrases or verses they underlined.
- **Step Two – 25 min.** Ask students, "Why do you think we let so many things get in the way of true worship?" Field a few answers and then tell the students they are about to watch a 10 minute video called "Noise." Let students know that about two and a half minutes into the video, the screen will go blank, but they are to be silent and keep watching. Play the video. After the video concludes ask students to get into groups (of three or four students each) and spend a couple of minutes discussing the video. Ask them to think about questions such as, "Was it hard to keep focused and read the words? What stood out in the written dialogue? How does God speak to you most often? Why do you think it is good to build in quiet times of reflection in our lives?" Give the students a few minutes for group discussion and then ask them to take their handout and look at the portion labeled, **60 seconds**. Give students one minute to write as many things as they can think of that are sounds they encounter in a typical day. Remind them that not all noises are auditory, some are visual. Have them do this individually, but tell them they will discuss it in groups. Once the minute is up, have the groups talk about the different noises (distractions) that make up their day.

- **Step Three – 15 min.** Read Hebrews 13:15-16 from the *Acts of Worship* portion of the handout. Remind students that once Christ was sacrificed for our sins, atonement was complete for all those who would trust in His name. The annual sacrifices required by Old Testament law were no longer necessary. However, we are called on by scripture (Romans 12:1-2) to be “living sacrifices.” These two verses in Hebrews speak of two practices that are acceptable “living sacrifices” for New Testament believers: praise and good works. These are to be ongoing, living, acts of worship intended to let God know how much we appreciate His mercy in providing Jesus (the ultimate sacrifice). Instruct students to pray silently for a few moments and then, in the space provided on the *Acts of Worship* portion of their handout, to write an act of praise or good works they can do this week to express to God their love for Him. Encourage students to make this act a regular part of their ongoing, lifestyle of worship. Play the song *The Heart of Worship* again as students complete the assignment. After the song concludes, close the session in prayer.

## The Story Behind the Song

The Heart of Worship, by Matt Redman

(Story summarized from an internet article by David Schrader published on crosswalk.com)

Check the liner notes of almost any modern worship recording, and the name Matt Redman is likely to be among the songwriting credits. Still, as prolific as his works have made him, he says the story behind “The Heart of Worship” in particular is a personal reminder that, “I’m just a little songwriter—and a pretty foolish one at that!”

The song dates back to the late 1990s, born from a period of apathy within Matt’s home church, Soul Survivor, in Watford, England. Despite the country’s overall contribution to the current worship revival, Redman’s congregation was struggling to find meaning in its musical outpouring at the time.

“There was a dynamic missing, so the pastor did a pretty brave thing,” he recalls. “He decided to get rid of the sound system and band for a season, and we gathered together with just our voices. His point was that we’d lost our way in worship, and the way to get back to the heart would be to strip everything away.”

Reminding his church family to be producers in worship, not just consumers, the pastor, Mike Pilavachi, asked, “When you come through the doors on a Sunday, what are you bringing as your offering to God?”

Matt says the question initially led to some embarrassing silence, but eventually people broke into a cappella songs and heartfelt prayers, encountering God in a fresh way.

“Before long, we reintroduced the musicians and sound system, as we’d gained a new perspective that worship is all about Jesus, and He commands a response in the depths of our souls no matter what the circumstance and setting. ‘The Heart of Worship’ simply describes what occurred.”

*When the music fades, all is stripped away, and I simply come / Longing just to bring something that’s of worth that will bless your heart... / I’m coming back to the heart of worship, and it’s all about You, Jesus*

Redman remembers writing the song quickly in his bedroom soon after the church’s journey together, with no grand intentions, by any means, for it to become an international anthem. He viewed the words simply as his personal, subjective response to what he was learning about worship.

Amazed by how God has since taken the song around the world for His purposes, the songwriter smiles in regard to his own lack of foresight. “It nearly didn’t go any further than my bedroom. But I love that...” Even more encouraging, he says, is when other pastors get in touch to let Matt know how God has used the song to take their congregations through a situation similar to the one his church experienced.

As teachable as “The Heart of Worship” has become, Matt Redman continues to learn about true worship. “It’s such a biblical posture in worship, that speaks of reverence. If you look through the Bible, there’s a whole host of people who faced up to the glory of God and found themselves facedown in worship. The themes of reverence, wonder, and mystery in worship, are things I feel we really need to grasp more of in our worship expressions. I know that I do!



*Matt Redman's*

## The Heart of Worship

When the music fades  
And all is stripped away  
And I simply come  
Longing just to bring  
Something that's of worth  
That will bless your heart

I'll bring You more than a song  
For a song in itself  
Is not what You have required  
You search much deeper within  
Through the ways things appear  
You're looking into my heart

I'm coming back to the heart of worship  
And it's all about You  
All about You, Jesus  
I'm sorry Lord for the thing I've made it  
When it's all about You  
It's all about You Jesus

King of endless worth  
No one could express  
How much You deserve  
Though I'm weak and poor  
All I have is Yours  
Every single breath

I'll bring You more than just a song  
For a song in itself  
Is not what You have required  
You search much deeper within  
Through the way things appear  
You're looking into my heart

I'm coming back to the heart of worship  
And it's all about You  
All about You, Jesus  
I'm sorry Lord for the thing I've made it  
When it's all about You  
It's all about You Jesus

Its all about you  
Jesus

Once your leader instructs you to begin, in the space below, write as many sounds as you can think of, that you hear in a typical day. (Examples: My mother's voice, music, the squeak of my bedroom door, etc.)

# 60 seconds

"Therefore, through Him let us continually offer up to God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of our lips that confess His name. Don't neglect to do good and to share, for God is pleased with such sacrifices."

**Hebrews 13:15-16**

# Act of Worship



## Session Nineteen

**Session Discipline:**

Prayer

**Session Verse/Passage:**

Matthew 6:9-13

**Session Purpose:**

To engage students in looking more deeply at the Lord's Prayer and to learn how to pray as Jesus instructed.

### Preparation:

- Make copies of the Lord's Prayer handout and have pens or pencils available for students.
- Gather enough large sheets of newsprint and markers to accommodate the following: Students will be working in groups (4 to 6 students in each group) to write a contemporary version of the Lord's Prayer. You will also need tape or an adhesive to post these pieces of newsprint around the room.
- Have extra copies of the scripture memory verses available, as students will be reviewing the verses at the conclusion of the session.

### Session Teaching Plan:

- **Step One – 15 min.** Tell students that this week we are focusing on the discipline of prayer. Distribute a copy of the Lord's Prayer handout to each student. Group the students into pairs. Tell them you are giving each group 10 minutes to write their own version of the Lord's Prayer. Here are the rules:
  - The prayers should be written in contemporary English.
  - Try to avoid slang, as the prayers are to be written with sincerity and reverence.
  - Be creative without being silly, the goal is to write this prayer as you would say it. Sincerely, but in your own words.
- **Step Two – 30 min.** Have the student "pairs" group together with one (or two, depending on your group size) other pairs. (This will form groups of 4 to 6 students.) Distribute some newsprint and a marker to each group. Instruct the groups to merge the ideas of the smaller "pairs" into one "final" prayer and then to write that prayer legibly onto the newsprint. (This is a simple exercise of having two or three groups take their previous work and merge it into one new piece.) Once groups have written their prayers on the newsprint, have the group post their prayer somewhere in the room. Tell students you want them to move (in groups) from prayer to prayer and pray each prayer together. Once all groups have prayed at each spot, gather everyone together and discuss the following questions: "Which prayer did you like the best and why? Is there something added to your prayers, that Jesus left out of his? Which part of the 'original' Lord's Prayer is most comforting to you and why? Which part of the prayer is most difficult to pray in sincerity? What helped you most by doing this exercise?" Close this part of the session by having the group recite the original Lord's prayer.
- **Step Three – 10 min.** Scripture Memory Review. Have students pair up and review one another on their scripture memory verses. Encourage any struggling students and commit extra time to them, if necessary. Have a student close in prayer.

## The Lord's Prayer – Matthew 6:9-13 (NIV)

As a group, rewrite the Lord's Prayer. Creatively use modern language to develop a sincere reproduction of the prayer.

This, then, is how you should pray:  
Our Father in heaven,

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hallowed be your name,

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your kingdom come,

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your will be done

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on earth as it is in heaven.

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Give us today our daily bread.

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Forgive us our debts,

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as we also have forgiven our debtors.

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And lead us not into temptation,

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but deliver us from evil .

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(For Yours is the kingdom and the  
power and the glory forever. Amen.)

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## Session Twenty

**Session Discipline:** Scripture Memory

**Session Verse/Passage:** John 6:63

**Session Purpose:** To build in students a desire to creatively encounter scripture.

### Preparation:

- **LEADER'S NOTE** – This remaining session on scripture memory is to be used for you and your students to host your own passage walk through with your church. The Sumpherō Task Force selected the following three passages for you to choose from: The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37); Isaiah's Call (Isaiah 6:1-8); and The Fall (Genesis 3:1-19). On Saturday, May 5<sup>th</sup> of 2007, the BGCO Student Education Team will be hosting the first *Sumpherō Summit*. It will be a statewide celebration of those youth groups who chose to participate in Sumpherō for 2006-07. During that Summit, up to three Oklahoma youth groups will have been selected to set up their scripture walk through experiences as interactives for the event. If your group would like to be considered for this privilege, you will need to contact Katie Null in the BGCO Student Ministry Office and submit your church name, the passage you have chosen and a video tape or DVD of the experience. ***The deadline for this submission is Friday, March 30<sup>th</sup>.*** Those who make application for this possibility will be notified in mid-April 2007 of whether or not their group has been selected.
- **Optional** – Secure a video camcorder

### Session Teaching Plan:

- **Step One** – Read John 6:63 to your group. Remind them that God's words are "life" and the interactive they have designed will help others to experience the Spirit of God. Conduct the interactive for your church. Be sure to have someone record the comments of those who go through the interactive. Have students pray with each person or family that participates. If time allows, spend a few moments after the activity talking through the experience and getting feedback from students.

## Session Twenty-One

**Session Discipline:** Ministry  
**Session Verse/Passage:** Mark 9:35  
**Session Purpose:** To focus and engage students in the call to good works.

### Preparation:

- ***SPECIAL NOTE TO LEADERS:*** *This session has been prepared from the perspective that your Sumpherō group will plan an activity during this session and then carry out the ministry effort at another time. However, if you are preparing well enough in advance for these lessons, you may want to do the activity planning in advance of the session, so that you use your session time to actually perform the ministry activity. The option is yours.*
- Secure a marker board or place newsprint on the wall. Make sure you have a marker.
- Secure a copy of the church and school calendars for the next couple of months and have it available at the session.
- You will want to solicit a list from your local school or school system for needs that your group can meet, such as, but not limited to: painting classrooms, cleaning marker boards, scrubbing the bathrooms, preparing a meal for the teachers, landscaping, etc. ***The key to this project is performing a ministry service that meets a stated need of the school and is not simply a project your group thinks is a good idea.***

### Session Teaching Plan:

- ***Step One – 5 min.*** When students arrive, remind them this year they have committed to engaging in acts of ministry to those in “Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the World.” Also remind them of our “specialized” identification of those areas: Jerusalem – Family, Judea – Church, Samaria – School, World – Community. Read Mark 9:35 and say, “God has called us to a life of servanthood. Serving others, by meeting *their* needs, should always be a part of the life of a Christian. This week we want to minister to the students and leaders of our school.”
- ***Step Two – 30 min.*** Divide students into small groups of three or four and have them brainstorm ideas for ministering to the school system. *If you have solicited a list of needs from your local school or school system, then give these to the students to help guide their conversation.* Give groups about 5-10 minutes to do this and then have them begin to report. Write their answers on the board or newsprint and encourage them as they make suggestions. Work with students to narrow the list down and to select one definite ministering activity or event. When arriving at a final suggestion, consider the following:
  - Make sure the activity in “ministry” based. That is, it meets a targeted need of the school(s). (*Note: Solicit a list from your local school or school system for these needs.*)
  - Make sure it communicates to the congregation that you love them and desire to serve them.

- Make sure it is an activity in which all of the Sumpherō students can and will participate.
  - And finally, make sure the activity emphasizes those who are being served and not the ones who are serving.
- ***Step Three – 15 min.*** Get out the calendars and schedule the date(s) of the activity. Begin compiling the details that will be necessary to conduct the activity and make assignments. Encourage all students to participate.
- ***Step Three – 5 min.*** Scripture Memory Review. Have students pair up and review one another on their scripture memory verses. Close in prayer.

## Session Twenty-Two

**Session Discipline:** Bible Study

**Session Verse/Passage:** Acts 17:22-32; Rom. 10:8-10; Acts 26:12-20

**Session Purpose:** To engage students in a biblical study of three models of personal evangelism.

### Preparation:

- Today's lesson will require students to do some writing, so it would be best to have tables (if available) set up in the room. Pen or pencils should also be provided.
- Print a copy of the "The SEEKER Study" for each student. Once again familiarize yourself with the steps of this bible study method, as you will be leading students through the process.
- Secure several (at least 5, if possible) translations of the bible. Have those available for students during the study time.
- Print copies of the Methods of Evangelism handout. Print enough that each student will have one.
- **OPTIONAL:** Gather a TV or projection unit, DVD player, and a copy of the movie, *Superman Returns*. (There is a short clip that can be used effectively to illustrate a point at the conclusion of the session. The clip is found in Scene 20 on the DVD. Start at the point where Superman takes Lois Lane up off the roof of the Daily Planet and into the sky over Metropolis. Stop the clip after Superman says, "You once wrote that the world doesn't need a savior, but everyday I hear people crying out for one.")

### Session Teaching Plan:

- **Step One – 50 min.** As students arrive, distribute a copy of the "The SEEKER Study" to each of the students. Say "This week we are again engaging in the SEEKER Method of Bible study. You will be studying passages that relate to methods of sharing your faith." Divide the students in groups of three or four. Tell them they will work in these groups to complete the study. Assign some of the groups Acts 17:22-32, some Rom. 10:8-10, and some Acts 26:12-20. Remind students of the process for each step of the study and then let them begin. Be available to answer students' questions during the study. Call "time" at about the 40 minute mark for discussion on the passages. Walk through the steps again, having students report different things they learned from the study.
- **Step Two – 10 min.** Distribute a copy of the Methods of Evangelism handout to each student. Ask the students which method was represented by the passage they studied today. Spend a few moments encouraging the students to become active in sharing their faith. You might encourage them to choose one of the methods of evangelism to use this week in sharing with a friend or classmate. (Optional: Show the clip from the movie, *Superman Returns*. Say, "Though you may not hear them, there are students all over our city crying out for a Savior. Christ hears them and He wants to use you to reach them. We must then be faithful to share the Gospel with them.") Close in prayer.



***EXAMINE THE CONTEXT***

Now you will concentrate upon the verses immediately preceding and following the passage. These are known as the context of the passage. Under the first heading, record the thoughts added by the verses preceding your Scripture passage. Then record the thoughts added by the verses following your Scripture passage. Again, do not add commentary; simply state (in a condensed form) what the verses are saying in your own words.

**Preceding Verses: (Acts 17:16-21; Rom. 10:1-7; Acts 26:1-11)**

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**Following verses: (Acts 17:33-34; Rom. 10:11-15; Acts 26:21-23)**

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***KEY QUESTIONS***

Below, record the questions that the verses raise in your mind or the problems you think they may raise for someone else, Christian or non-Christian. Do *not* answer the questions and do not only record questions for which you know the answer. It might be helpful to do this verse by verse.

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**EXECUTION**

Below, write out how you will execute or apply what you have learned. What specific commitments do you need to make in regard to your attitudes or actions because of the teaching of this Scripture verse. Somewhere in your execution you should complete the following sentence. “Today I will...” or “This week I will...”

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**REPRODUCE**

Now you will want to go back over what you learned from this passage and decide what is reproducible from this text.

This is different than execution or application; execution is a personal issue of what YOU will do. Reproduction is taking what you have learned and finding a way to pass on the truth of that conviction to others. In the space below write out what you will do to **reproduce** what you have learned with the group, so that they could pass it on to someone else.

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# Methods of Evangelism

## ABC Method

- Admit to God you are a sinner. Repent, turning away from your sin.
- Believe Jesus is God's Son and that He died for the forgiveness of your sins and rose from the dead to give you new life.
- Confess your faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord.

## Personal Testimony

- Relating the story of your salvation experience, including: how you felt God calling you to Himself, the moment of your conversion to Christ, and how God has sustained you since.

## Apologetics

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## Session Twenty-Three

**Session Discipline:** Fasting

**Session Verse/Passage:** Ezekiel 33:6

**Session Purpose:** To engage students in a fast designed to focus their attention on lost students in their school.

### Preparation:

- Print the info sheet for “The Survival Game” and make preparations to play the game. Materials needed to play the game are listed on the info sheet.
- Make as many copies of the Fasting Sign-up Sheet as you will need. This list is simply for you to keep a record of those who are committed to the fast. Also, print copies of the *Fast Cards* to cut out and distribute to each participant of the fast for them to use as a reminder.
- Have extra copies of the scripture memory verses available, as students will be reviewing the verses at the conclusion of the session. (These verses were made available in Session Three; Item 7)

### Session Teaching Plan:

- **Step One – 30 min.** Play the Survival Game.
- **Step Two – 20 min.** Bring everyone together and spend a few minutes discussing the game. Ask: “What was different about this game? What were you thinking when the person you were assigned to protect died? Did you think it was fair that you were unable to protect the people “death” (the sponsor designated for that role) took? What was the hardest part of this game?” After you have discussed the game for a few minutes have the students open their Bibles to Ezekiel 33:6. Relay the following information to the students: “Thirty-eight students between the ages of 15-19 die each day in the United States. In the time it takes to complete today’s lesson, one student will have died and another will be ten minutes away from death. By the end of the week, four of those dead students will have been from Oklahoma. This does not count those who are 13-14 years of age. Most of those who die will not have a relationship with Jesus. The grave question before us is this: Do we care?” Have someone read Ezekiel 33:6. Ask: “Who is the watchman? Do you think God holds us accountable to share our faith? Allow students to respond and then tell them this week they will be participating in a Level 3, Comfort Fast. They will fast from any or all of the following items for two days: Pillow, Showers/Baths, Hair Dryer, Make-Up, Transportation, Relationships. Have each student think of at least one fellow student who needs to come to know Christ. This fast will be for their salvation. Remind students they have the opportunity and the responsibility to be “watchmen” and that the eternal survival of their fellow students may very well rest with them. They should have no expectation that time will always be on their side, so they should act now to pray and fast for their friends and then to share their testimony of faith with them. End this portion of the session with open prayer. Give any student who desires to pray the opportunity to do so before closing. Remember to have students sign the Fasting sign-up sheet and to take a Fast Card as a reminder to fast during the week.

- ***Step Three – 5 min.*** Scripture Memory Review. Have students pair up and review one another on their scripture memory verses. Encourage any struggling students and commit extra time to them, if necessary.
- ***Step Four – 5 min.*** Before students leave, tell them that next week's session will be on the road! It will be a session dedicated to evangelism and they will be visiting some of the people who they are fasting for this week. Let the students know that you will be providing transportation and to be on time.



## **FASTING CARD**

### **Fasting Items:**

Pillow, Showers/Baths, Hair Dryer, Make-Up,  
Transportation, Relationships

You have agreed to fast from any or all of the items listed above for two days this week. (You can choose which days, but they must be back to back).

Remember, you are fasting for a purpose greater than self-deprivation. As you long for the item(s) you are giving up, focus on these two things: Christ, for whom we should consistently long, and a person with whom we need to share the gospel.

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# **The Survival Game**

## **GOAL**

This is an elimination game. The goal of the game is to help a person, whose name you will choose, to survive (or stay in the game).

## **LENGTH OF GAME**

This game is designed to be played within 30 minutes by any sized group. (The lesson plan for Lesson Twenty-Three has allotted 30 minutes for this game. If your group only takes 15 minutes to play the game, consider playing it twice.)

## **PREPARING TO PLAY THE GAME**

- Prepare the room by using some masking tape to make outlines of several squares, of different sizes, on the floor. Also, make several triangles as well. Make fewer triangles than squares.
- Make sure each person is given two pieces of paper. Each person then writes his or her name on each of the two pieces of paper. Provide two boxes for depositing the slips of paper. One box should be labeled, DEATH, and the other, LIFE. Students should deposit one slip in each of the two boxes. When this is done, what you should have is two boxes which each contain the names of everyone in the room.
- A sponsor should be designated as the holder of the DEATH box.
- One at a time, students should draw a name out of the LIFE box. They should check to make sure they have not selected their own name, but they should not tell anyone the person's name they have chosen. If a person chooses his own name, he should return it to the box and select another name.

## **PLAYING THE GAME**

Tell the students that this is an elimination game and their objective will be to make sure the person whose name they selected from the LIFE box “survives” or, in other words, doesn't get eliminated.

Tell them that when the game begins you will be calling out a series of instructions, which when carried out, will begin to eliminate some people from the game. Remind them the goal is NOT their own personal survival, but the survival of the person they have chosen. Also let the students know that once they have been eliminated from the game they can no longer help the person whose name they were holding.

(Note to leader: Once the game begins you will use any or all of the listed techniques to eliminate people from the game. Also, every 60 seconds, the sponsor with the DEATH box should reach in the box, select a name, and read it aloud. The person whose name is read is automatically eliminated from the game. If this person has already been eliminated from the game, another name should be quickly selected and read. This is repeated every 60 seconds.)

***Beginning:*** Tell students they may begin milling around the room. Say, “When I give you instructions you must obey them as quickly as possible. Those unable to fulfill the task or whose name is called out by “DEATH,” will be eliminated. Begin!” (At this time “DEATH” begins the countdown to eliminating someone every 60 seconds.)

***Eliminating Students:***

Watch for a few seconds as students randomly mill about the room. Intermittently use the following techniques to eliminate students from the game.

- Tell students they have 30 seconds to form groups of \_\_\_\_ (insert number). Depending on the size of the group, you will need to vary the number you use in order to eliminate students. (Any student not in a group at the end of 30 seconds is eliminated.)
- Tell students that at the end of 30 seconds they must be inside one of the tape squares on the floor. Note: Tell students they must be all the way inside the squares, with no part of their feet or shoes over the taped line. (Note: If all the students can easily fit into the squares, remove one or two of the squares after the first use of this elimination technique.)
- Tell students that at the end of 30 seconds they must be inside one of the tape triangles on the floor. Note: Tell students they must be all the way inside the triangles, with no part of their feet or shoes over the taped line. (Note: If all the students can easily fit into the triangles, remove one or two of the triangles after the first use of this elimination technique.)

**ENDING THE GAME AND DETERMINING THE WINNERS**

After the squares and the triangles are no longer effective, continue to use the number method of elimination to get down to 1-3 “surviving” students. At that point announce that the game is over and announce the winners. The winners are the students who are holding the names of the “surviving” students.



## Session Twenty-Four

**Session Discipline:** Evangelism  
**Session Verse/Passage:** 2 Corinthians 5:14-15  
**Session Purpose:** To engage students in acts of evangelism.

### Preparation:

- NOTE: Today's session will take place outside of the classroom. Transportation should be secured for all students to participate. You will be sending out as many groups as you think you can accommodate within the time frame of your meeting.
- Last week students fasted for the salvation of particular individuals or classmates. This week should engage students in an intentional activity of sharing the gospel with some of those students. Midweek, before the session arrives, secure the names and addresses of 1-5 of those students for whom one or more of your students fasted. It would be a good idea to contact these students (the day of the session) and let them know you will be visiting with them. This will save time and ensure that you won't be visiting an empty house.
- Pre-enlist one student per group (see Step One) to prepare their personal testimony to share on the visit during the session.
- Prepare a snack food basket for each student you plan to visit. This will be a fun icebreaker and give an added purpose to your visit.
- ***SPECIAL NOTE:*** *Our next Session, Session Twenty-Five will be a session on meditation. Students will meditate on God's word in light of specific prayer requests and/or needs of the adults in their church. At least one week in advance of Session Twenty-Five, you should provide the opportunity for those in adult Sunday School to write down any prayer requests and/or needs they may have. You will use these with the students during Session Twenty-Five.*

### Session Teaching Plan:

- ***Step One – 10 min.*** As students arrive, group them in such a way as to accommodate the number of vehicles you have secured and the number of students you plan to visit. Once students have been divided, have them sit in their groups and ask someone in each group to read 2 Corinthians 5:14-15. (Provide Bibles, if needed.) Ask the students to discuss this passage in light of last week's fast. Say, "If God would have us fast and pray for the salvation of students last week, do you think His love would compel us this week to go and share with some of these students?" Have the students pray for the individual in their group who was pre-enlisted to share his or her testimony. Ask them to pray for the person to be bold and genuine. Dismiss to vehicles.
- ***Step Two –50 min.*** Visit the students. Have your group deliver the basket and seek an opportunity to visit for a few minutes. Do your best to communicate to the person you are visiting that they have been on your discipleship group's heart and then allow the pre-enlisted student in your group to share his or her testimony. Use good judgment and if there is a visible receptivity on the part of the student being visited, seek to find out his or her spiritual condition and ask if they would like to know Christ. Celebrate any decisions that students make. Answer any questions they may have and give them information on your student

ministry. If at all possible, set up a time for a minister to come and visit about baptism. If no decisions are made on your visits, encourage your students for being “watchmen” and for being faithful to God’s task of seeking the lost.

## Session Twenty-Five

**Session Discipline:** Meditation

**Session Verse/Passage:** Multiple

**Session Purpose:** To engage students in meditating on God's word on behalf of the needs of others

### Preparation:

- **SPECIAL NOTE:** *In our last session, Session Twenty-Four, you were instructed to solicit prayer requests from those in Adult Sunday School. Today students will meditate on God's word in light of those specific prayer requests and/or needs of the adults in their church. If you have not already solicited these prayer requests, then do so before this Sumpherō session.*
- During this session, students will be placed into small groups of 3 or 4 students per group. You will need to prepare a handout, comprised of the previously gathered prayer requests, to hand to each student. This handout should be a typed, numbered list of the requests.
- You will need pens or pencils for each student.
- Make enough copies of the Scripture Meditation Handout to give to each student.
- Students will be looking up verses of scripture during this session, so make sure you have some extra Bibles on hand.

### Session Teaching Plan:

- **Step One – 15 min.** After students arrive, say “Today we want to focus on the spiritual discipline of meditation.” Divide students into groups of 3 or 4 students per group. Distribute the pens/pencils and copies of the Prayer Request Handout and Scripture Meditation Handout to each student. Tell students that you want them to spend a few minutes and read through the prayer requests. Ask them to work as groups to accomplish the following:
  - Look at both handouts and determine where the requests from the Prayer Request Handout fit into the categories used on the Scripture Meditation Handout.
  - Since the requests are numbered, they are to write the number of the prayer request on the Scripture Meditation Handout in the box under the proper category.
  - As individuals in a group, each person should select a category from the Scripture Meditation Handout and prepare to meditate on the scriptures that are provided.
- **Step Two – 30 min.** Ask students to begin meditating on the scriptures from their selected category, and as they do so, to pray for the requests associated with that category.
- **Step Three – 10 min.** Spend a few minutes debriefing the students from this exercise. Ask, “How did it change your praying for these prayer requests by meditating on the scriptures? How does meditating on God's word affect you in terms of how you feel He will respond to the prayers? Did anyone learn any new scriptures today?” Allow students to respond and encourage them for their participation.

- ***Step Four – 5 min.*** Scripture Memory Review. Have students pair up and review one another on their scripture memory verses. Be diligent, but forgiving as students labor to learn these verses. ***Remember, the goal for the teacher should be to build a desire in students for this discipline, not to force it upon them.*** Close in prayer.

# Scripture Meditation Handout

**Praise:** If the prayer request is an invitation to praise God for what He has already done in and/or for someone, then meditate on the following verses:

Psalm 18:1-3; Psalm 24:1-10; Psalm 47:1-9; Psalm 89:1-18; Psalm 92:1-9

**Healing:** If the prayer request is asking for prayer on behalf of someone facing surgery or recovering from an illness, then meditate on the following verses:

Isaiah 58:8; 1 Peter 2:24; Psalm 107:20; Mark 5:34; Psalm 103:3; Proverbs 4:20-22; Jeremiah 17:14; Matthew 9:35; James 5:14-16; 3 John 2

**Salvation/Forgiveness:** If the prayer request is asking for prayer on behalf of someone who needs to accept Christ or for someone dealing with sin and needing forgiveness, then meditate on the following verses:

John 1:12; John 3:16-17; Romans 5:8; Romans 6:23; Romans 10:9-10; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:8-9; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 John 1:9; 1 John 5:11-13; Revelation 3:20

**God's Guidance:** If the prayer request is asking for God's wisdom and direction for an upcoming decision or a situation of life, then meditate on the following verses:

Psalm 5:8; Psalm 27:11; Psalm 31:3; Psalm 32:8; Psalm 43:3; Psalm 86:11; Psalm 119:133; Psalm 143:8; Jeremiah 10:23

**God's Protection:** If the prayer request is seeking God's protection for someone or something, then meditate on the following verses:

Psalm 4:8; Psalm 18:10; Psalm 27:1-3; Psalm 55:16-18; Psalm 91:9-11; Psalm 121:2-3, 7-8; Proverbs 18:10; Isaiah 41:13; 2 Thessalonians 3:3

**Unspoken Requests:** If the prayer request is not specific about the prayer needs, then meditate on the following verses:

Psalm 44:21; Proverbs 15:3; Jeremiah 17:10; Romans 11:33

## Session Twenty-Six

<b>Session Discipline:</b>	Worship
<b>Session Verse/Passage:</b>	Ecclesiastes 4:9-10; Proverbs 16:24; Hebrews 3:12-13
<b>Session Purpose:</b>	To experience the power of affirmation.

### Preparation:

- You need to purchase or make a small handheld cross from rough wood, no taller than nine inches; one that is easily passed from one person to the next in a group. The groups that will be formed in today's session should be no larger than 15 people, so plan to have a cross for each group formed.

### Session Teaching Plan:

- **Step One – 30 min.** After students arrive, tell them that today's session will be focused on the discipline of worship. Read each of the verses listed above and say, "One of the great gifts God has given His people is the gift of each other. We are drawn together by Christ and bound by His love for us. Today we want to take some time and affirm one another in the Lord." Break students into groups of no more than 15 students per group, and have each group gather their chairs around so that they are sitting in a circle. Give one person from each group a cross and then share the following instructions: "In a minute I will ask you to begin a time of affirmation. Beginning with the person who is currently holding the cross, I will want you to say a word of encouragement about the person sitting on your right. You will only speak as you are holding the cross. It will be passed to the right after each person finishes speaking. Please be thoughtful and serious. Each word of encouragement should begin like this: 'Because of the cross, I love you and one thing I would say that I admire about you is \_\_\_\_\_.'" Tell them to make sure each student is encouraged. Tell students that when their group is finished to hand their cross to you. Ask if there are any questions and then begin.
- **Step Two – 25 min.** Once each group has finished, tell the students to gather their chairs into one big circle. Place the cross on the floor on the center of the circle, and give the following instructions: "Now, I want us to spend some time affirming Christ for what he has done in our lives. One at a time I want you to go to the center of the circle, pick up the cross, and hold it while you share an affirming word about Jesus. Your affirmation should be no more than a sentence or two, but should be focused on reasons why you love Jesus, and why He is worthy to be worshipped." Allow the students to randomly begin this time. Students should not necessarily go in a certain order, nor should every student speak, but this should be encouraged as a free-flowing time of praise.
- **Step Three – 5 min.** Select two or three students to close the session in prayer.

## Session Twenty-Seven

**Session Discipline:** Prayer

**Session Verse/Passage:** Luke 14:16-24

**Session Purpose:** To allow students to experience prayer in a new and challenging way that will further expand their prayer life.

### Preparation:

**(NOTE: Set up for this session is somewhat complex, but results will be well worth the effort. Like the Psalms 73 experience, feel free to enhance this session further with your own imagination, however, be careful that increased visuals do not detract from the message of the scripture.)**

- Gather all the materials listed on the attached Needs List and prepare as instructed.
- Print all of the additional signs and attachments that are included in this session.
- Assemble the room according to the Sample Room Set Up Chart and the Guide Sheet. Be sure and look at the Sample Room Set Up Chart as you read through the Guide Sheet. You will need to do both in order for everything to be clear.
- The room should be set up so that each station is isolated from the next.
- An instruction sheet should be placed at each station and read through before performing the task instructed and proceeding to the next.

### Session Teaching Plan:

- **Step One – 5 min.** As students arrive, have them gather in the hallway. Tell them to get together in groups of three. Explain to the students that today they will be experiencing prayer in a new way. For students to have the best experience, encourage the following:
  - They should remain as quiet as possible as they walk through the experience.
  - At each station they should always **FIRST** read the Instruction Sheet and **THEN** do as instructed. Trying to run ahead will ruin the experience.
  - They shouldn't hurry through the course, but at the same time should be mindful of those behind them and move at a steady pace.
  - Once they have finished the experience, they should wait a few minutes for others to complete the course and then be prepared to discuss it as a large group.
- **Step Two – 40 min.** Send groups in every two minutes. This should keep groups at the right pace. In the 40 minutes allotted for this experience, you should be able to move through approximately 10 groups of students (30 people). If you have a large group you may consider setting up multiple courses or increasing your group sizes.
- **Step Three – 10 min.** Have students discuss what they have just experienced. Ask questions such as, "What types of things did you learn from this Prayer Experience? What part of this experience did God use to speak to you the most? What did setting down your rock at the foot of the cross symbolize? Will anyone share with us who it was that brought them to God's banqueting table?" Say, "Hopefully at station six, God laid someone on your heart that you need to invite

to the banqueting table. If not, pray that He will. Diligently pray for this person and their salvation. Pray that God will give you the opportunity to share the gospel with them and they will come to know Him. It is important that we recognize all the different areas of prayer. We are to acknowledge how big God is, praise him for who He is to us, confess our sins to Him, pray for the lost, dedicate our lives to Him and be commissioned to His purpose. Think about your personal prayer life, of what does it consist? All of these things? What is it missing?"

- ***Step Four – 5 min.*** Scripture Memory Review. Have students pair up and review one another on their scripture memory verses. Close in prayer.



# Prayer Experience

## Guide Sheet

### Special Notes:

- The set up of this experience will be most successful if there are partitions or dividers that separate each station from the others. If you cannot see what is coming next, the station you are at will be more effective. Consider hanging bed sheets or black plastic from the ceiling or bringing in screens. Be creative!
- Have a CD player softly playing a song such as *Knees to the Earth* by Passion Worship Band (Sacred Revolution CD) OR *Grace is Sufficient* by Shane & Shane (Clean CD)
- On the floor in front of each station, or nearby, place the sign with that station's number along with the instructions for that particular station.

### Station One: START

This station should be set up right outside the room. A large pile of rocks should be setting by the doorway. Each student will need their own rock. You may set these on the floor, in a large box, or on a table.

### Station Two: REVELATION

Set up a table with these items on it:

*(Note: This table should be the first thing that students see when they walk in the door.)*

- Pile of loose dirt or soil
- Clear vase of water
- Three spikes and a mallet and/or a cat of nine tails. *(Together, these will serve as one single item. These items are intended to symbolize instruments of death. We do not recommend using a crown of thorns here because it directly symbolizes Jesus and that is not really what we are wanting at this station.)*

In front of each item will be a 9" x 6" envelope. The front of it will have the "To Man:" statement. *(These are included in your additional signs and attachments. Print them off, cut them, and tape them to the front of your envelopes.)* Cut a small arc in the bottom of each envelope and slide a colored piece of heavyweight (cardstock paper) inside the envelope so that it may be seen and easily pulled out. When the cardstock is fully inserted in the envelope, this should be seen at the bottom: "TO GOD:" with an arrow above it. When they pull on the card, they will see what each item is "to God" along with a scripture that explains it and a stop sign to tell them when to quit pulling. *(These are also included in your additional resources. They will need to be printed and cut to fit inside the envelope.)* Tape the envelopes at the edge of the table so that the sheet may be pulled in and out easily. A picture of what each card should look like is located in the additional attachments

1. To Man: Dirt                   *(Taped on outside of envelope)*  
 To God: This is man. *(Inside card)*  
 Scripture written below this: “Then the Lord God formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being.” Genesis 2:7
  
2. To Man: Water  
 To God: This is wine.  
 Scripture written below this: “Fill the Jars with water, Jesus told them. So they filled them to the brim. Then He said to them, “Now draw some out and take it to the chief servant” and they did. When the chief servant tasted the water (after it has become wine) he did not know where it came from – though the servants who had drawn the water knew. He called the groom and told him, “Everybody sets out the fine wine first, then, after the people have drunk freely, the inferior. But you have kept the fine wine until now.” John 2:7-10
  
3. To Man: Instruments of death.  
 To God: Instruments of healing.  
 Scripture written below this: “But He was pierced because of our transgressions, crushed because of our iniquities; punishment for our peace was on Him, and we are healed by His wounds.” Isaiah 53:5

### Station Three: ADORATION

There are a couple of options with this station. Choose the one that best works for your group. Regardless of which option you choose, you will need to look off of the provided list of Names of God to make the resource.

Option One: Place a large poster on the wall that lists multiple names of God.

Option Two: Create a PowerPoint that will continually loop these names and flash them on the screen at different times.

### Station Four: CONFESSION

This station will require students to walk down a designated “pathway”. At the beginning of this station, place the sign with its station number along with the first Confession instruction sheet. On the floor of this pathway place the Deeds of the Flesh Stepping Stones (*located in the additional signs and attachments*) periodically and on either side of the path. A full length mirror should be at the end of the pathway. Here, place the second Confession instruction sheet in front of the mirror and tape an X on the floor for students to stand on. On the ceiling, above the mirror tape the mirror image Fruit of the Spirit signs. (*Also located in the additional signs*) Angle the mirror so that when you look up at the top of the mirror, you can read the Fruit of the Spirit in it. (*Note: You may have to secure the mirror at this angle so that it doesn't move throughout the*

*experience. This can be done with masking tape stretching from the top of the mirror to the base of the stand. If a full length standing mirror is not accessible to you, be creative. Consider placing a mirror on the floor that students can stand over and look into.)* Have a table off to the side that has pens or markers and a stack of paper.

### Station Five: Expiation – (Forgiveness)

Have a small table with a shredder on it. *(Note: If you have a larger group, consider putting two shredders on this table to speed up the process)* Tape the provided 1 John 1:9 sign to the front of the shredder, or hang it above the shredder.

### Station Six: PROCLAMATION

As students turn the corner to this station, they should see a large banquet table elegantly decorated. Set several chairs up around this table with placemats, place settings, glasses, silverware, napkins, a large center piece, etc. You do not have to fill this table with actual banquet food, but placing a few loaves of French bread and butter on the table may help with appearance. Also, if you can locate any faux food (such as grapes or apples) this may give the banquet table a more genuine feeling. Place the station number and instruction sheet on the floor before students get to this table. In front of each plate, set a business card holder with several of the prayer notecards in it and a pen. *(These notecards are located in the additional resource section of this session. They will need to be printed, copied and cut so that several may be set in front of each plate.)* On each plate, set a copy of the Parable of the Dinner, also located as an additional resource. *(Note: To make this parable more effective, consider printing it on special paper, such a parchment or resume paper, and burn the edges of the paper to give it an extra touch of elegance.)*

### Station Seven: DEDICATION

Set up a cross. *(This cross should be reasonable in size. We recommend at least 4ft in height. To stabilize this cross, you can place it in a cinder block or brace of another type to make it stand.)* Also place a crown of thorns here if you have one available. Cover the bottom of the cross with a black or white cloth. Here students will lay down their rocks that they have been carrying with them throughout the experience.

### Station Eight: COMMISSION

Print out the five provided different types of prayer positions and scriptures that accompany them. *(Consider printing these out on colored paper and laminating them)* Lay out a small rug (30" x 40") for each prayer position and velcro the sign to the rug. *(If rugs are not available to you and you cannot purchase them, consider laying out large towels of the same color or just space out the signs on the floor so that there is a designated space for each one on the floor. You can tape off a section for each or even lay down a sheet for each position.)*

# Session Twenty-Seven

## Needs List

- Print a copy of the guide sheet and the instruction sheets, along with any other additional resources that are provided.
- Tape for distinguishing path on floor (Multiple rolls of wide blue paint tape or masking tape). This tape will distinguish the path for the students to take as they walk through the experience.
- Signs for stations – Station #1, Station #2-Station #8, Exit (These signs can be printed from the provided additional signs and resources or can be handwritten. They should be taped to the floor at the correct spots in the room to mark the starting points for students.)
- A rock (fist size or bigger) for each of the students. (Every participant will need their own rock so make sure you have enough for everyone.)
- Loose dirt or soil (About ½ Gallon)
- Clear vase filled with water
- 3 large spikes
- Cat of 9 tails or a mallet (These items are intended to symbolize instruments of death. We do not recommend using a crown of thorns here because it directly symbolizes Jesus and that is not really what we are wanting at this station.)
- A cross (This cross needs to be at least 4ft high. If this is not available to you, purchase 2 boards (1x4) and nail them together to make a cross.)
- A sheet or cloth (black or white to wrap around the base of the cross)
- 3 (9x6) envelopes
- Full Length Mirror (Preferably one that stands on its own and swivels.)
- Paper
- Pens
- One (or two depending on your group size) small shredders
- Two 8ft tables for the banquet set up
- White table cloths to cover the two 8ft tables
- A Nice Banquet Table Setting
  - Plates
  - Glasses
  - Silverware
  - Placemats
  - Cloth Napkins
  - Napkin Rings
  - Serving Dishes
  - Nice Center Piece (candles, flowers or fruit bowl)
  - Optional: Two loaves of French bread
  - Optional: Sticks of butter
- Business card holders (one for each table setting)
- Crown of Thorns

- Copy of the song *Knees to the Earth* by Passion Worship Band (Sacred Revolution CD) OR *Grace is Sufficient* by Shane & Shane (Clean CD). You may also pick your own song to play here as long as it is soft sounding and relevant to the mood.
- CD Player
- Five rugs (30" x 40") or five towels.
- Velcro
- Projector, Laptop & Screen (You can also use a white sheet or blank wall). OR depending on which option you choose at this station, a poster with names of God written on it may suffice.)
- Black visquine, sheets, or fabric (The amount of this that is needed will be determined by the size of your room. You will need to hang this from the ceiling in a maze format so that each station is isolated from the others. If hanging things from the ceiling is not an option for you, consider setting up dividers of another type such as portable partitions.)
- Suspended ceiling hooks (if needed) to hang black plastic or sheets from the ceiling tiles in order to divide up the different stations.
- 3 Tables (2 smaller and one regular size)

# START

To begin, pick up a rock from the pile. Hold on to it throughout this experience and never set it down until instructed.

You may now enter the room and proceed to Station 2.

# REVELATION

How big is your God?

Isaiah 55:9 says, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts."

As you begin this Prayer Experience, set your thoughts on our Father, who is able to do great things.

On the table, there are three envelopes describing three items or sets of items. To see what these are in the hands of a big God, pull on the orange tab until you reach the stop sign. After reading the card, re-insert for people that will come after you. Take a moment and thank God for who He is and proceed to Station 3.

# ADORATION

Spend a moment watching the names of God appear. God is ALL of these ALL the time.

Which of these stand out to you today? Which do you need Him to be today? Spend a moment praying and lift in praise this name or attribute of God.

After you have finished praying, proceed to Station 4.



# CONFESSION

Carefully proceed down the corridor, being careful to recognize, but to avoid the Deeds of the Flesh on the floor. Further instructions will await you at the mirror.

# CONFESSIO

Stand on the X on the floor and look in the mirror. If you'll glance at the top part of the mirror, you should see the Fruit of the Spirit.

All of us want to pursue the Fruit of the Spirit, but we are constantly tempted by the Deeds of the Flesh. Get a sheet of paper and take a moment to list the Deeds of the Flesh, or sins, with which you struggle. Pray, confessing your sin to God. Remember, cleansing begins and ends by looking up. Now take your paper, or confessed sin, with you to Station 5.

# **EXPIATION (Forgiveness)**

Isaiah 43:25 says,

"I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake, And I will not remember your sins."

Take your sheet of confessed sins and place it in the shredder. Thank God for His abundant mercy and forgiveness.

Proceed to Station 6.

# PROCLAMATION

Have a seat at the table and read the Luke 14 passage in front of you. Take a few minutes to stop and think about the person(s) that took you by the hand and brought you to Christ's banqueting table. Pray and thank God for them and what they did for you.

Take a notecard from the holder above your plate. Write on it the name of someone who Jesus is leading you to invite to His table. Pray that God will use you to bring them to a saving knowledge of Christ. Take this card with you and pray over this person on a consistent basis. Proceed to Station 7.

# DEDICATION

You have been carrying a rock, a burden, an hindrance, or distraction. This rock represents something that is holding you back from compelling others to come to Christ. It could be a sin, a tyranny of the urgent, comfort zone issues, or even a lack of passion. We are often distracted by, and even fixated on, the things that hold us back. Think about what it is in your life that is weighing you down and keeping you from being a strong agent of the gospel. This rock represents that which you've allowed to burden you. It's time to let it go and place it at the foot of the cross.

Pray that you would no longer allow what this rock represented to burden you, but instead ask God to burden you with the desperation of the lost.

Proceed to Station 8.

# COMMISSION

This last station is intended to commission you for the end gathering of souls.

We worship God with our words, our thoughts and with our service, but also with our body. The position we take before God says something about who we are and who He is. So choose any or all of these five positions and worship Him, letting Him know you are committed to Him above all else and to the undeniable mission He has given you. After praying you may exit. After everyone has completed the experience, your group will meet to discuss it.

**Station One**

**Station Two**

**Station Three**

**Station Four**



**Station Five**

**Station Six**

**Station Seven**

**Station Eight**

**EXIT**



# A Man

**Then the LORD God formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being. Genesis 2:7**



**TO God:**



# Wine

"Fill the jars with water," Jesus told them. So they filled them to the brim. Then He said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the chief servant." And they did.

When the chief servant tasted the water (after it had become wine), he did not know where it came from—though the servants who had drawn the water knew. He called the groom and told him, "Everybody sets out the fine wine first, then, after people have drunk freely, the inferior. But you have kept the fine wine until now."

John 2:7-10



**TO God:**



# Instruments of Healing

But He was pierced because of our transgressions,  
crushed because of our iniquities;  
punishment for our peace was on Him,  
and we are healed by His wounds. Isaiah 53:5



**TO God:**

**To Man:**

**Dirt**

**To Man:**

**Water**



**To Man:  
Instruments  
of Death**

**To Man:  
Dirt**

↓  
**TO God:**

**To Man:  
Water**

**Wine**

"Fill the jars with water," Jesus told them. So they filled them to the brim. Then He said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the chief servant." And they did.

When the chief servant tasted the water (after it had become wine), he did not know where it came from—though the servants who had drawn the water knew. He called the groom and told him, "Everybody sets out the fine wine first, then, after people have drunk freely, the inferior. But you have kept the fine wine until now."

John 2:7-10

↓  
**TO God:**

**To Man:  
Instruments  
of Death**

↓  
**TO God:**

# NAMES OF GOD



Advocate (1 John 2:1)

Lamb of God (John 1:29)

The Resurrection & the Life (John 11:25)

Shepherd & Bishop of Souls (1 Peter 2:25)

Judge (Acts 10:42)

Lord of Lords (1 Timothy 6:15)

Man of Sorrows (Isaiah 53:3)

Head of the Church (Ephesians 5:23)

Master (Matthew 8:19)

Faithful & True Witness (Revelation 3:14)

Rock (1 Corinthians 10:4)

High Priest (Hebrews 6:20)

The Door (John 10:9)

Living Water (John 4:10)

# NAMES OF GOD

- Bread of Life (John 6:35)
- Rose of Sharon (Song of Solomon 2:1)
- Alpha & Omega (revelation 22:13)
- True Vine (John 15:1)
- Messiah (Daniel 9:25)
- Teacher (John 3:2)
- Holy One (Mark 1:24)
- Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5)
- The Beloved (Ephesians 1:6)
- Branch (Isaiah 11:1)
- Carpenter (Mark 6:3)
- Good Shepherd (John 10:11)
- Light of the World (John 8:12)
- Image of the Invisible God (Colossians 1:15)

# NAMES OF GOD

The Word (John 1:1)

Chief Cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20)

Savior (John 4:42)

Servant (Matthew 12:18)

Author & Finisher of Our Faith (Hebrews 12:2)

The Almighty (Revelation 1:8)

Everlasting Father (Isaiah 9:6)

Shiloh (Genesis 49:10)

Lion of the Tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5)

I Am (John 8:58)

King of Kings (1 Timothy 6:15)

Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6)

Bridegroom (Matthew 9:15)

Only Begotten Son (John 3:16)

# NAMES OF GOD



Wonderful Counselor (Isaiah 9:6)

Immanuel (Matthew 1:23)

Son of Man (Matthew 20:28)

Dayspring (Luke 1:78)

The Amen (Revelation 3:14)

King of the Jews (Mark 15:26)

Prophet (Matthew 21:11)

Redeemer (Job 19:25)

Anchor (Hebrews 6:19)

Bright Morning Star (Revelation 22:16)

The Way, the Truth, & the Life (John 14:6)



Sexual

Immorality



**Impurity**





Debauchery



Idolatry



Witchcraft



Hatred



Discord




Jealousy



Fits of

Rage



Selfish

Ambition





**Dissensions**



**Factions**



**Envy**



**Drunkenness**



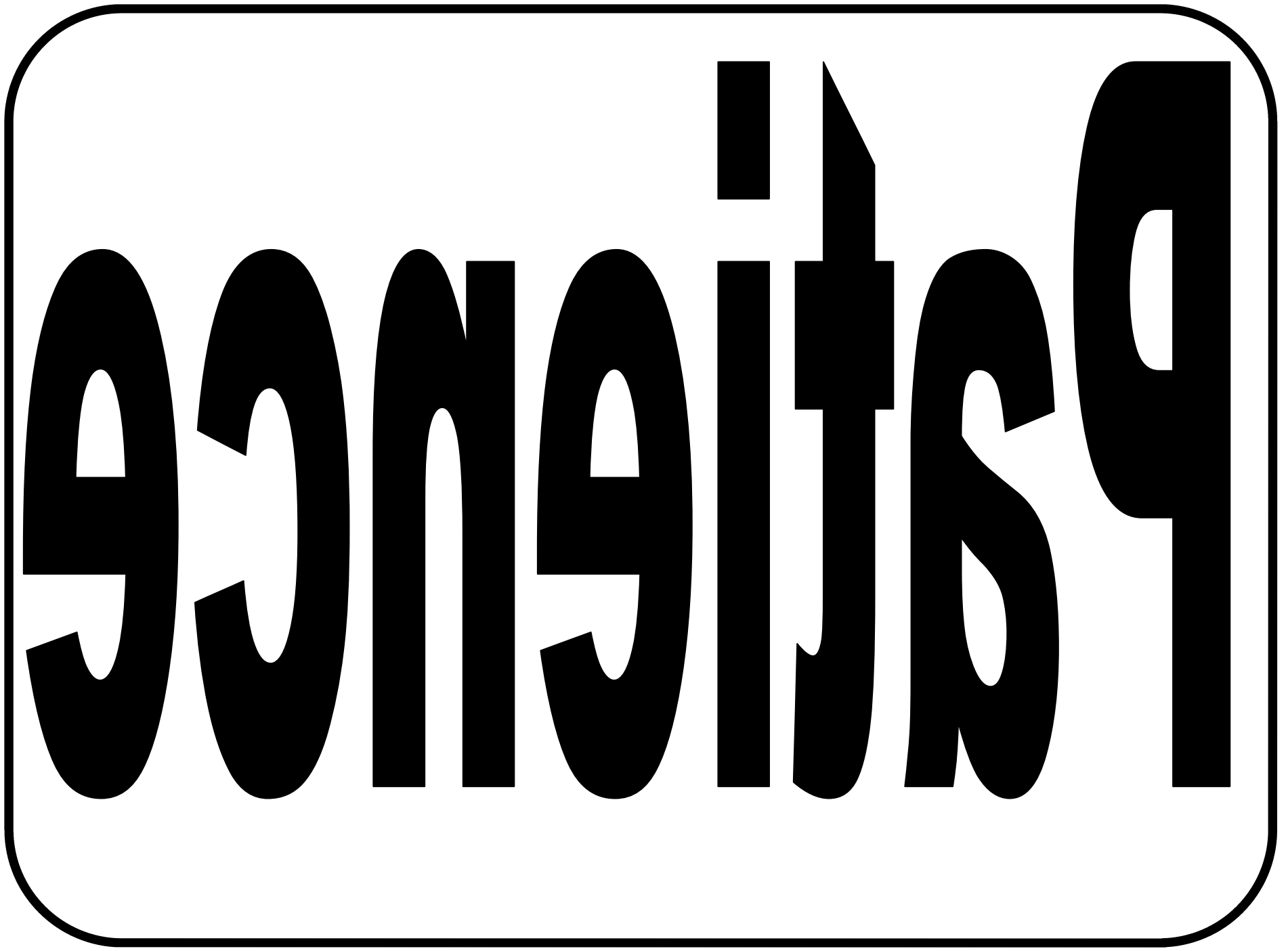
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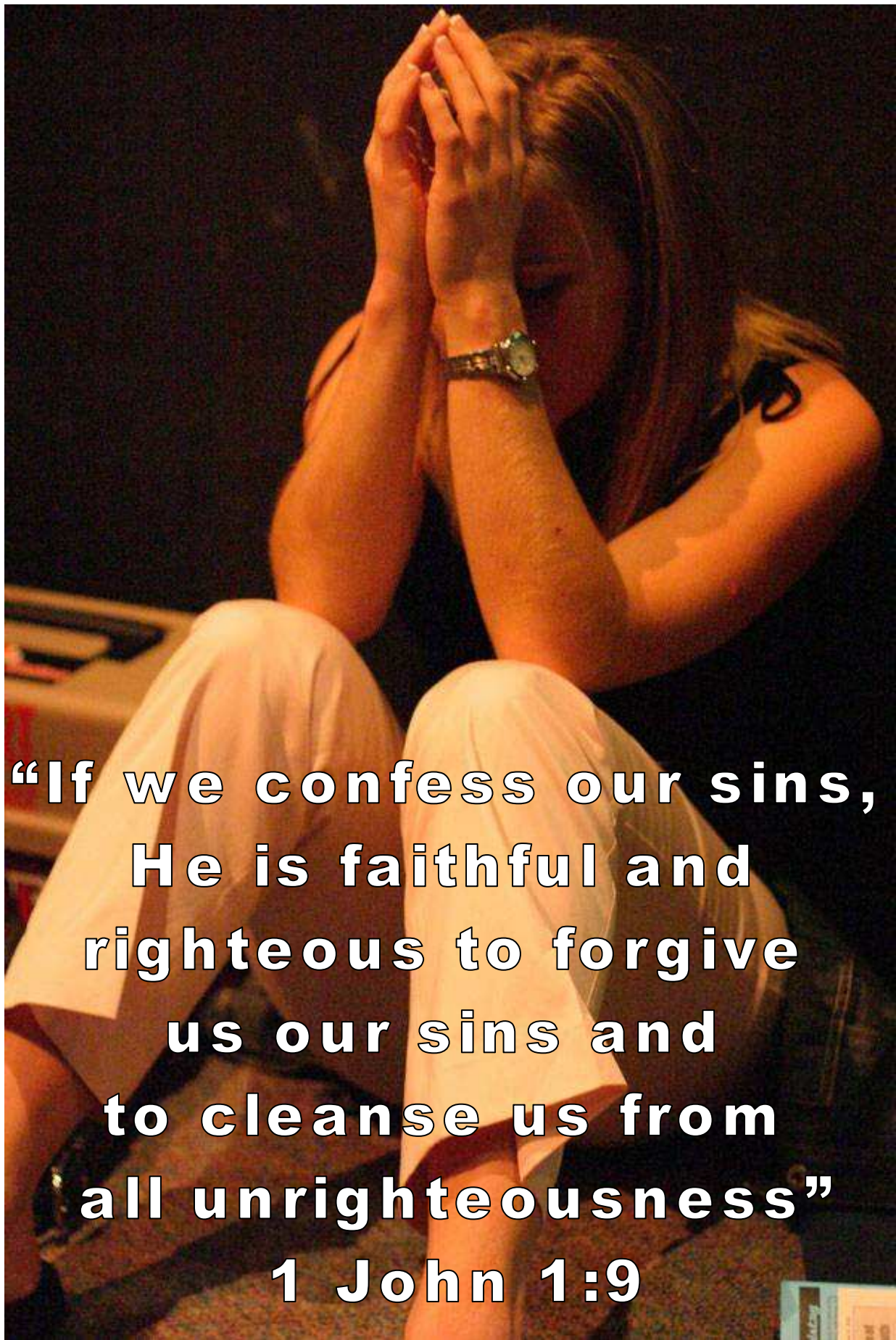
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**ORTINO C. HERRERA**

A photograph of a woman with long brown hair, wearing a white top and white pants, sitting on the floor with her hands clasped in prayer. She is wearing a watch on her left wrist and has a tattoo on her left shoulder. The background is dark, and the lighting is warm, highlighting her hands and the texture of her clothing.

**“If we confess our sins,  
He is faithful and  
righteous to forgive  
us our sins and  
to cleanse us from  
all unrighteousness”**

**1 John 1:9**

*Lord,  
I fervently pray that you  
would use me to bring  
\_\_\_\_\_ to your  
banqueting table.*

*Lord,  
I fervently pray that you  
would use me to bring  
\_\_\_\_\_ to your  
banqueting table.*

*Lord,  
I fervently pray that you  
would use me to bring  
\_\_\_\_\_ to your  
banqueting table.*

*Lord,  
I fervently pray that you  
would use me to bring  
\_\_\_\_\_ to your  
banqueting table.*

*Lord,  
I fervently pray that you  
would use me to bring  
\_\_\_\_\_ to your  
banqueting table.*

*Lord,  
I fervently pray that you  
would use me to bring  
\_\_\_\_\_ to your  
banqueting table.*

*Lord,  
I fervently pray that you  
would use me to bring  
\_\_\_\_\_ to your  
banqueting table.*

*Lord,  
I fervently pray that you  
would use me to bring  
\_\_\_\_\_ to your  
banqueting table.*



# *Parable of the Dinner*

*Luke 14:16-24*

*Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.'*

*"But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.'*

*"Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.'*

*"Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.'*

*"The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.'*

*" 'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.'*

*"Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.' "*

# Standing with Hands Raised

I will lift up my hands to your  
commands, which I love, and  
will meditate on your  
statutes.”

~ Psalm 119:48

# Kneeling

“Come, let us bow down in  
worship; let us kneel before  
the LORD our Maker.”

- Psalm 95:6

# **Kneeling with Hands Raised**

“Now he had made a bronze platform, five cubits long, five cubits wide and three cubits high, and had placed it in the center of the outer court. He stood on the platform and then knelt down before the whole assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven. He said: O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven or on earth—“

- 2 Chronicles 6:13-14a

# **Prostrate: Laying Face Down**

“Then David said to the whole assembly, ‘Praise the LORD your God.’ So they all praised the LORD, the God of their fathers; they bowed low and fell prostrate before the LORD and the king.”

~ 1 Chronicles 29:20

# Shoes Removed

## Standing with Face Hid

“When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses!” And Moses said, “Here I am.” “Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” Then he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.”

- Exodus 3:4-6

## Session Twenty-Eight

**Session Discipline:** Scripture Memory

**Session Verse/Passage:** Colossians 3:2

**Session Purpose:** To help students more earnestly desire to memorize scripture.

### Preparation:

- Today students will play a game of *Jeopardy!*, which will illustrate the ease with which they have memorized whatever it is they have prioritized. You will need to prepare a few items to conduct the game. Print a copy of the Jeopardy answer sheet for the “host” to use. In lieu of constructing a large Jeopardy board, you can simply use sheets of copier paper to list the five categories and point amounts, some masking tape, and a large wall. (See example, complete with instructions for playing the game, included in this material).
- **Leader’s Note:** *Our next session, Session Twenty-Nine, is a “ministry” session. The session is designed to involve students in an activity of ministry during the session time and involves a little more lead time for preparation. Be sure and look ahead to make plans for the session.*

### Session Teaching Plan:

- **Step One – 45 min.** Follow the instructions for *Jeopardy!* and play the game.
- **Step Two – 15 min.** Gather the students to discuss the game. Ask the students which questions were the easiest and which were the hardest in the game. Ask students, “Why do you think it is so hard to memorize scripture, but not lines from a movie or lyrics to a song?” Read Colossians 3:2. Remind students that every bit of information in that game will one day be gone and meaningless, except for the words of that last column; they will abide forever. Ask and allow time for students to share some of their favorite verses. Close in prayer.

<b>NAME THAT MOVIE</b> (Famous Movie Lines)	<b>TEXT MESSAGES</b> (Famous messages)	<b>NAME THAT TUNE</b> (Song lyrics)	<b>HAIL TO THE CHIEF</b> (Presidential Facts)	<b>BIBLE VERSES</b> (Book, chapter & verse)
<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>250</b>
"My momma always said life was like a box of chocolates..."	"The _____ are coming! The _____ are coming!"	"To all your friends you're delirious You're so consumed"	The presidential "cat" was the first left-handed president.	"All Scripture is God-breathed..."
What is Forrest Gump?	Who are the British? (Message by Paul Revere)	What is Beautiful? (Christina Aguilera)	Who was James Garfield?	What is 2 Timothy 3:16?
<b>200</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>500</b>
"Oh no, it wasn't the aeroplanes. It was Beauty killed the Beast."	"_____, come here. I need you!"	"You were my sun You were my earth But you didn't know all the ways I loved you"	This guy ended the "vacuum" of presidents being born west of the Mississippi by being the first.	"Do not be anxious about anything..."
What is King Kong?	Who is Watson? (Message by Alexander Graham Bell)	What is Cry Me A River? (Justin Timberlake)	Who was Herbert Hoover?	What is Philippians 4:6 ?
<b>300</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>750</b>
"Great Scott!"	"Yesterday, December 7, 1941—a date which will live in _____..."	Just to be with you, I'd do anything, There's not price I would not pay Just to be with you, I'd give anything. I would give my life away	This American "son" was the only president to serve in Congress.	"...He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit."
What is Back To The Future?	What is infamy? (Message by Franklin D. Roosevelt)	What is King of Glory? (Third Day)	Who was John Quincy Adams?	What is 1 Peter 3:18?



<b>NAME THAT MOVIE</b> (Famous Movie Lines)	<b>TEXT MESSAGES</b> (Famous messages)	<b>NAME THAT TUNE</b> (Song lyrics)	<b>HAIL TO THE CHIEF</b> (Presidential Facts)	<b>BIBLE VERSES</b> (Book, chapter & verse)
<b>400</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>1000</b>
"Look, guys. That's my sweetheart in there. I'm not leaving her. This is my home now. Your mother is my home."	"Old soldiers never die, they just _____."	"I hate living without you, Dead wrong to ever doubt you, But my demons lay in waiting, Tempting me away"	You would think he would be from Ohio, but this New Yorker was the only president elected to serve two nonconsecutive terms.	"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."
What is The Notebook?	What is fade away? (Message by Gen. Douglas MacArthur)	What is Comatose? (Skillet)	Who is Cleveland? (Grover Cleveland)	What is Mark 12:30?
<b>500</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>1500</b>
"No matter how many times you save the world, it always manages to get back in jeopardy again. Sometimes I just want it to stay saved, you know?"	"We did not ask you white men to come here. The Great _____ gave us this country as a home."	"Now come to the city where you can praise, if you're black, if you're white, if you're yellow or gray"	You might be shocked to know that Benjamin Harrison was the first president to use "this" in the White House.	"But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night."
What is The Incredibles?	What is Spirit? (Message by Crazy Horse)	What is Diverse City? (Toby Mac)	What is electricity?	What is Psalm 1:2 ?



### Instructions:

- Create signs like those to the right on sheets of copier paper and tape them to the wall.
- Form up to 5 groups of students
- Enlist a scorekeeper and keep score using the included scoring sheet.
- The “host” will begin the game by calling on Group #1 to name a category and an amount.
- The host then reads the statement for that category amount. (Remember, in Jeopardy, the contestants must answer in the form of a question.)
- Groups should answer within 30 seconds or they forfeit their turn.
- If the group answers correctly and in time, they get the points indicated and the sign for that category amount is removed. If they are incorrect, do not answer in the form of a question, or do not answer in time the sign remains and the next team is up.
- Without buzzers, the only fair way to conduct the game is to allow only one selection per turn, and then move to the next group. Groups do not continue to control the board if they answer correctly.
- This procedure is repeated until all categories and amounts have been correctly answered, and the board has been cleared.
- The points are tallied and a winner is declared.

NAME THAT MOVIE (Famous Movie Lines)	TEXT MESSAGES (Famous Messages)	NAME THAT TUNE (Song Lyrics)	HAIL TO THE CHIEF (Presidential Facts)	BIBLE VERSES (Book, Chapter & Verse)
100	100	100	100	250
200	200	200	200	500
300	300	300	300	750
400	400	400	400	1000
500	500	500	500	1500

## Session Twenty-Nine

**Session Discipline:** Ministry  
**Session Verse/Passage:** 2 Corinthians 4:5-6  
**Session Purpose:** To focus and engage students in the call to good works.

### Preparation:

- ***SPECIAL NOTE TO LEADERS:*** *This session has been prepared from the perspective that your Sumpherō group will carry out a ministry activity during this session. However, if you would like to use this session time to “plan” for a ministry activity to be performed at a later date, you may certainly do so. The option is yours.*
- Secure a large plastic trash bag for each student.
- Secure a particular community location to perform trash pick-up duties. Be sure and gain any needed permissions before engaging in the task.
- Secure transportation for students for any activity that is not within walking distance of your meeting location.

### Session Teaching Plan:

- ***Step One – 5 min.*** When students arrive, remind them this year they have committed to engaging in acts of ministry to those in “Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the World.” Also remind them of our “specialized” identification of those areas: Jerusalem – Family, Judea – Church, Samaria – School, World – Community. Read 2 Corinthians 4:5-6 and say, “God again is calling us to be His servants. This week we will minister to our civic leaders by picking up trash at \_\_\_\_\_ (location).”
- ***Step Two – 55 min.*** Prep students in your mission and give each one a trash bag. Be sure and remind them that they are the “face of Christ” to others as they serve. Tell them to be friendly to everyone they encounter and feel free to engage people in conversation if they ask about the activity. Pray for God to use this hour of service to His glory.

## Session Thirty

**Session Discipline:**

Meditation

**Session Verse/Passage:**

Colossians 3:16

**Session Purpose:**

To engage students in meditating on God's word in spiritual songs

### Preparation:

- For this session, you will need to prepare enough copies of the Spiritual Songs Handout, to give one to each student.
- You will need pens or pencils for each student.
- Make enough copies of the Scripture Meditation Handout to give to each student.
- Students will be looking up verses of scripture during this session, so make sure you have some extra Bibles on hand.

### Session Teaching Plan:

- **Step One – 30 min.** After students arrive, say “Today we are again focusing on the spiritual discipline of meditation. You will be spending time in individual meditation using your Bibles and the lyrics of some classic spiritual songs.” Read Colossians 3:16 and then distribute the Spiritual Songs Handout and instruct students to take a pen/pencil to make notes on the handout. Students should read through the songs and then look up the verses and match up the scriptures with the correct song.
- **Step Two – 30 min.** Ask students, “Which of the three songs was your favorite and why? If you were to write a hymn or spiritual song, what verse would you like to use as your prompt? Why is music such an important part of our worship?” Allow time for students to respond. Close the session as a group, by singing a familiar hymn or chorus.

## I Know Whom I Have Believed

Daniel Whittle

I know not why God's wondrous grace  
To me He hath made known,  
Nor why, unworthy, Christ in love  
Redeemed me for His own.

Refrain:

But I know Whom I have believed,  
And am persuaded that He is able  
To keep that which I've committed  
Unto Him against that day.

I know not how this saving faith  
To me He did impart,  
Nor how believing in His Word  
Wrought peace within my heart.

Refrain

I know not how the Spirit moves,  
Convincing us of sin,  
Revealing Jesus through the Word,  
Creating faith in Him.

Refrain

I know not when my Lord may come,  
At night or noontide fair,  
Nor if I walk the vale with Him,  
Or meet Him in the air.

Refrain

## SCRIPTURE

Philippians 1:6

Matthew 3:4

Matthew 9:13

2 Corinthians 5:17

Hebrews 5:12

Matthew 25:44-45

Philippians 4:7

Matthew 25:13

1 Peter 4:14

## SPIRITUAL SONGS

## To Obey Is Better Than Sacrifice

Keith Green

To obey is better than sacrifice  
I don't need your money  
I want your life  
And I hear you say that I'm coming back soon  
But you act like I'll never return

Well you speak of grace and my love so sweet  
How you thrive on milk, but reject My meat  
And I can't help weeping of how it will be  
If you keep on ignoring My words  
Well you pray to prosper and succeed  
But your flesh is something I just can't feed

To obey is better than sacrifice  
I want more than Sunday and Wednesday  
nights  
Cause if you can't come to Me every day  
Then don't bother coming at all  
La, la, la etc.

To obey is better than sacrifice  
I want hearts of fire  
Not your prayers of ice  
And I'm coming quickly  
To give back to you  
According to what you have done  
According to what you have done  
According to what you have done

## Jesus Freak

DC Talk

Separated, I cut myself clean  
From a past that comes back in my darkest of dreams  
Been apprehended by a spiritual force  
And a grace that replaced all the me I've divorced

I saw a man with tat on his big fat belly  
It wiggled around like marmalade jelly  
It took me a while to catch what it said  
Cause I had to match the rhythm  
Of his belly with my head  
jesus saves is what it raved in a typical tattoo green  
He stood on a box in the middle of the city  
And claimed he had a dream

(chorus)

What will people think  
When they hear that I'm a jesus freak  
What will people do when they find that its true  
I don't really care if they label me a jesus freak  
There ain't no disguising the truth

Kamikaze, my death is gain  
I've been marked by my maker  
A peculiar display  
The high and lofty, they see me as weak  
Cause I wont live and die for the power they seek

There was a man from the desert with naps in his head  
The sand that he walked was also his bed  
The words that he spoke made the people assume  
There wasn't too much left in the upper room  
With skins on his back and hair on his face  
They thought he was strange by the locusts he ate  
The pharisees tripped when they heard him speak  
Until the king took the head of this jesus freak

(repeat chorus 2x)

People say I'm strange, does it make me a stranger  
That my best friend was born in a manger  
People say I'm strange, does it make me a stranger  
That my best friend was born in a manger

(repeat chorus 2x)

What will people think  
[what will people think]  
What will people do  
[what will people do]  
I don't really care  
[what else can I say]  
There ain't no disguising the truth  
[jesus is the way]

## Session Thirty-One

<b>Session Discipline:</b>	Fasting
<b>Session Verse/Passage:</b>	James 1:27, Psalms 146:9
<b>Session Purpose:</b>	To engage students in a fast designed to deepen their love for Christ and for widows and orphans.

### Preparation:

- **IMPORTANT:** *In advance of this week's session, you will need to enlist a couple of people, who will share their testimonies and participate in a question and answer time. One of these people needs to be an orphan, and the other a widow. If you do not know of someone in your church or community who is or was an orphan, and now is a believer and could give a testimony of how God has worked in their life, then you may consider contacting (if you are an Oklahoma church) the Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children offices (405-942-3000 x4628) to check on the availability of one of the current or former OBHC students coming to share at your meeting.* Here are some things to keep in mind about these testimonies:
  - The testimonies should highlight any of the difficulties that come with being an orphan or a widow.
  - The testimonies should focus on the individual's perception of God's provision for dealing with those difficulties.
  - The testimonies should direct students to how they can be sensitive to the needs of orphans and widows.
  - The question and answer time should be a time where students can openly ask questions that may not come up in the testimony time.
- Make as many copies of the Fasting Sign-up Sheet as you will need. This list is simply for you to keep a record of those who are committed to the fast. Also, print copies of the *Fast Cards* to cut out and distribute to each participant of the fast for them to use as a reminder.
- Make several copies of each of the handouts, "Facts About...Widows" and "Facts About...Orphans." The large group will be split into two groups during the session, and one group will receive the "orphans" handout and the other will receive the "widows" handout.

### Session Teaching Plan:

- **Step One – 15-20 min.** Gather students together and tell them this week they will be participating in the discipline of fasting. Tell them they will be fasting for the purpose of focusing their attentions on Christ's heart for widows and orphans. Break the students into two groups; one that will discuss issues concerning widows and one, which will discuss issues concerning orphans. Distribute several copies of the "Facts About Widows" handout to one group and several copies of the "Facts About Orphans" to the other. Tell the groups you will give them about 10 minutes to read the facts and the verses on the handouts and discuss the questions at the bottom of each page. Ask the students to begin. At the end of 10 minutes, lead the students in a talkback session. Have each group report their answers to the entire class. Allow for some honest discussion.

- **Step Two – 20-25 min.** Introduce your pre-selected guests and allow them time to share their testimonies. Be sure you have prepped your guests with the suggested information for testimonies from the **Preparation** section of this session. Once the testimonies have concluded, allow time for students to ask questions of the guests. Thank your guests for coming and then, lead your students in a special prayer time for your guests. Have the students surround them, lay their hands on them and pray for them. It is suggested that you ask for at least 3 students to pray and then close the prayer time by having a leader pray.
- **Step Three – 15 min.** Refocus the students' attention and tell them this week they will be participating in a Level 2, Convenience Fast. They will fast from any or all of the following items for two days: Ipod, Text Messages, Emailing, Computers, Cell phones, or another convenience of their own choosing. Remind students they have the opportunity and the responsibility to care for the widow and the orphan. Tell students to remain as quiet as possible while you read a few scriptures. Read:
  - Deuteronomy 10:17-18
  - Job 29:12-13
  - Psalm 68:5-6
  - Proverbs 15:25
  - Mark 12:41-44
  - End with these two verses: Psalm 10:17-18
- **Step Three – 5 min.** Remember to have students sign the Fasting sign-up sheet and to take a Fast Card as a reminder to fast during the week.



# Facts about...Orphans

*“Pure and undefiled religion before our God and Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained by the world.”*

*James 1:27*

*“The LORD protects foreigners and helps the fatherless and the widow, but He frustrates the ways of the wicked.”*

*Psalms 146:9*

## **In the World**

- There are 150 million orphans; 8% of all children are orphans
- 42,200 children are orphaned every day
- 10.6 million (8%) of all children will die of preventable causes before age five
- 5.4% of all children will die before age one

## **In Africa**

- Every 15 SECONDS, another child becomes an AIDS orphan
- Every DAY 5,760 more children become orphans
- Every YEAR 2,102,400 more children become orphans
- 143,000,000 orphans in the world today spend an average of 10 years in an orphanage or foster home
- Approximately 250,000 children are adopted annually, but...every YEAR 14,050,000 children still grow up as orphans and AGE OUT of the system
- Every DAY 38,493 children AGE OUT
- Every 2.2 SECONDS, another orphan child AGES OUT with no family to belong to and no place to call home

## **In Ukraine and Russia**

- 10%-15% of children who age out of an orphanage commit suicide before age 18.
- 60% of the girls are lured into prostitution.
- 70% of the boys become hardened criminals.
- Many of these children accept job offers that ultimately result in their being sold as slaves. Millions of girls are sex slaves today, simply because they were unfortunate enough to grow up as orphans.

## **Group Discussion Questions:**

- Why do you think God is so concerned about orphans?
- From the facts listed above, which ones stir your heart the most?
- In what ways can your youth group minister to orphans?

# Facts about...Widows

*“Pure and undefiled religion before our God and Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained by the world.”*

*James 1:27*

*“The LORD protects foreigners and helps the fatherless and the widow, but He frustrates the ways of the wicked.”*

*Psalm 146:9*

## In America

- Three out of four women outlive their spouses.
- The average age of widowhood is 56, and only 7 out of 100 of these widows will remarry.
- By age 65, more than half of all married American women are widowed.

## In Developing Countries

- When their husbands die widows in developing countries rarely have the right to inherit property or to have their rights enforced. They are frequently evicted from their property, their possessions taken from them, and often their children are also removed from their care and protection.
- Most widows live in severe poverty
- Widows are particularly vulnerable to violence, sexual abuse and rape. Domestic violence is particularly common.
- Homelessness, illiteracy, and poverty lead widows into exploitative work situations.
- The extreme poverty and precariousness of the widow's lives leaves their children, and particularly their daughters, in extremely vulnerable positions. Daughters of widows are more likely to marry very young, and become widows themselves, thus recreating the cycle of poverty in their own lives and in the next generation.
- Thousands of widows are very young; many are actually children.

## Group Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think God is so concerned about widows?
2. From the facts listed above, which ones stir your heart the most?
3. In what ways can your youth group minister to widows?

## FASTING CARD

### **Fasting Items: Level 2 – Conveniences**

(Ipod, Text Messages, Emailing, Computers, Cell phones, other)

You have agreed to fast from any or all of the items listed above for two days this week.  
(You can choose which days, but they must be back to back).

Remember, you are fasting for a purpose greater than self-deprivation. As you long for the item(s) you are giving up, focus on these two things: Christ, for whom we should consistently long, and the widows and orphans in the world.

## FASTING CARD

### **Fasting Items: Level 2 – Conveniences**

(Ipod, Text Messages, Emailing, Computers, Cell phones, other)

You have agreed to fast from any or all of the items listed above for two days this week.  
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You have agreed to fast from any or all of the items listed above for two days this week.  
(You can choose which days, but they must be back to back).

Remember, you are fasting for a purpose greater than self-deprivation. As you long for the item(s) you are giving up, focus on these two things: Christ, for whom we should consistently long, and the widows and orphans in the world.



## Session Thirty-Two

<b>Session Discipline:</b>	Evangelism
<b>Session Verse/Passage:</b>	2 Timothy 2:15
<b>Session Purpose:</b>	To engage students in developing tools used to defend the faith.

### Preparation:

- Print a copy of each of the four statements of belief. Use masking tape to mark off four areas on the floor of your meeting room. Place the following in the middle of each of the marked off areas:
  - One of the belief statements
  - A legal notepad
  - A pen
- Other supplies you will need: 4 Bibles, printed copies of each of the Apologetic Response Articles (the size of these articles range from 3 to 32 pages, so make sure you print these well in advance of the meeting)
- **OPTIONAL:** *You may want to close out the year by providing your students with a copy of Mere Christianity, by C. S. Lewis. You can find reasonably priced copies online at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). This is a classic apologetic.*

### Session Teaching Plan:

- **Step One – 10 min.** As students arrive, divide them into four groups. Assign each group to one of the marked areas on the floor of your meeting room. Tell the groups they have 10 minutes to write out as many responses as possible to the belief statement assigned to their group. They cannot use any resources but the following: pen, paper, and their minds. (No Bibles or outside sources. They can write down scriptural responses, but they must do so from memory.)
- **Step Two – 10 min.** Get the students' attention and read 2 Timothy 2:15. Now tell students they will be given another 10 minutes and they may use their Bibles as a resource for their responses. Encourage them to build a strong biblical argument for their response.
- **Step Three – 25 min.** Distribute to each group the Apologetic Response Article associated with the group's belief statement. (Ex: The article entitled, "The Problem of Suffering" would be given to the group with the belief statement, "There is too much suffering in this world for God to exist.") Tell the students to divide up the information in the article among the group and begin to fashion an even deeper response to the belief statement. They cannot use the article itself as their response. They should attempt to write a concise 3 to 5 bullet point answer, that represents an informed, strong biblical response.
- **Step Four – 15 min.** Have groups share their belief statements and responses. Encourage students to look for opportunities to share God's truth as they encounter these belief statements at school or at other places and times in their lives. (Option: Distribute copies of "Mere Christianity" to students and encourage them to read this classic to strengthen their faith.) Close in prayer.

# The Problem of Suffering

by Trevor Major, M.Sc., M.A.

Just to be human is to deal with emotional and physical pain on a day-to-day basis. This is the practical and existential problem of suffering that affects, and is affected by, our world view. Even Christians, who confess a living God (Matthew 16:16), may wonder: Where is this God when we need Him? Why doesn't He **do** something? These questions may lead to doubt, and then to disbelief. Atheists see only vindication in events like the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing. They hear a mother on the evening news proclaiming, "It's a miracle that my baby survived," and wonder: Would it have been much bother for God to have done the same for everyone else? This is not a new argument. But given academic freedom in the modern secular university, unbelievers are able to wield the extent and depth of human suffering with devastating effect on ungrounded faith.

If we understand the intellectual problem of suffering, we may have a better chance of coming through the emotional side of the problem. However, my primary goal is to defend theism, and Christianity in particular, against the charges leveled by atheists. In so doing, I intend to show how one common tactic may distract us from a God-centered response.

## THE ARGUMENT

The intellectual problem of suffering is a challenge unique to theists. By "theist" I mean anyone who believes in a Being Who exists beyond or outside the natural world, yet Who is able to be involved in the course of human events. This excludes deists, for example, who believe that a Supreme Being created the world, and left it alone. Christians, Jews, and Moslems, for the most part, count themselves as theists. Specifically, most readers of this article will be Christians who believe that God has attributes that are infinite in degree: that He is eternal, all-powerful, all-knowing, all-loving, and so on.

Then the following question arises: How do we reconcile the existence of suffering with the existence of an all-loving, all-knowing God? The argument goes something like this:

1. If God is all-powerful, He could do something to prevent or end suffering.
2. If God is all-loving, He would want to prevent or end suffering.
3. There is a tremendous amount of suffering in the world.
4. Therefore, God either is not all-loving or not all-powerful.

The reason I say that this is a problem for the theist is that the atheist does not believe in the first two premises. He rejects that there is a God Who **could** do something about suffering if He had the power, and he rejects that there is a God Who **would** do something about

suffering if He had the inclination. He does not deny the third premise—that there is suffering. Like every human being, he faces the existential problem of suffering. As far as he is concerned, suffering **just is**: it is part of our unplanned, purposeless existence. We live, we die—end of story. Only for the sake of the present argument does the atheist grant God’s existence. All he is asking us to do, as theists, is reconcile or justify suffering, given that God is supposed to be an all-loving and all-powerful Being.

### **Skirting the Problem**

Some people have tried to sidestep the problem by denying one of the three premises listed above. This was the approach taken by Harold Kushner, a Jewish rabbi who lost his son at an early age to a cruel and debilitating disease. God is infinitely good, Kushner concluded in his immensely popular book, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* (1981), but He is not all-powerful.

Other theologians have suggested that God neither is infinitely powerful nor infinitely good, but only in the **process** of acquiring these attributes. So it is understandable that there should be imperfections in our world because God, while great, likewise is imperfect or incomplete. Like Kushner, their “solution” is to abandon the God of conventional theism (e.g., Edwards, 1972, p. 213). Unfortunately, as John M. Frame has observed, such a finite god offers no “sure hope for the overcoming of evil” (1994, p. 157). In the end, this god is not the God that most Christians would want to defend.

Finally, someone may wish to deny the third premise by maintaining that suffering is not real. What we call “suffering,” they might say, is just an illusion. This is the position of Eastern mysticism, not of theism. Spinoza, a radical Jewish philosopher, maintained that evil was mere deprivation. When we think we are suffering, all we are doing is acting like children who have been denied toys or candy. If only we had a complete picture of reality, Spinoza would say, we would know God, and nothing would appear imperfect. But for Spinoza, nature and God were one and the same. Again, this is not the God of theism. Most Christians, like most atheists, acknowledge that suffering is all too real. Indeed, that Jesus suffered for the sake of mankind is a vital element of the Christian faith (Matthew 16:21; Luke 24:26; Acts 17:3; Philippians 3:10; 1 Peter 2:20-25; 4:12-19; etc.).

### **Dismissing the Problem**

So, let us say that we want to deal with this problem without giving up any of God’s essential characteristics. Where do we begin? One approach is to maintain that no explanation is necessary. We, as mere mortals, should not have to “justify the ways of God to Men” (to use a phrase of John Milton’s). Or, in the words of a Simon and Garfunkel song, “God has a plan, but

it's not available to the common man." If God is Who we think He is, then there must be an explanation, but it is beyond our grasp.

Alvin Plantinga (1977) takes a more defensive approach. He points out that suffering, and the claims about God, are not contradictory. It is **not** like saying, for example,

Only birds have feathers.

Tweety has feathers.

Therefore, Tweety is not a bird.

Clearly, the last line contradicts the preceding lines. But where is the contradiction in affirming both that there is suffering, and that God is an all-loving and all-powerful Being? What a critic must do is supply some extra premises (e.g., Mackie, 1990, p. 26). He would have to insist, for instance, that the theist's perfectly good God always would eliminate evil insofar as He could. That there is so much evil is supposed to show that God is not all-good. Further, a critic would have to insist that there are no limits to what this Being could do. That there is so much evil is supposed to show that God's powers are limited.

The trouble is, these additional claims for what God would or could do fail to take into account a complete picture of God. For God to "eliminate evil insofar as He could" still may mean that we have a lot of evil in the world, because to reduce it any further might violate one of God's other attributes. We simply do not know what conditions would make the existence of both God and evil logically contradictory (also see Pike, 1990, pp. 48,52). As to God's power, there are no limits as to what He **could** bring to bear in any one situation. However, the **actual** power He uses would depend on other characteristics, such as grace, love, mercy, and so on. At the time of His arrest, the Son of God could have called on twelve legions of angels, but not without contradicting the promises of His Father in heaven (Matthew 26:52-56).

Plantinga has given us a good place to start. Theists could say, at least initially, that there is nothing irrational about believing in God and acknowledging the reality of evil. Still, people may think that this is a problem that Christians need to address. Have we got anything more to say?

### **Answering the Problem**

One reason to suspect that there must be more answers is that the Bible—the foundation of our faith (Romans 10:17)—is not exactly silent on the subject. The Book of Job shows that God stood back and allowed a man to suffer at the hands of the Adversary. Job's world collapsed around him. He lost his property, his children, and his health. During this time, he had no idea why these things were happening to him. Job's wife told him to "curse God and



die" (2:9). Three of his friends thought terrible sins must lie at the root of such misfortunes. Job himself came to question God's goodness and power. In the end, of course, Job regained his faith, wealth, and much more.

But could we say that all these terrible events were necessary? Perhaps we can learn something from these events, but how can we justify the collateral damage? A great wind collapsed a house on Job's children, killing everyone inside (1:18-19). Natural calamities killed his animals, and raiders killed his servants (1:15-17). Was all this death necessary to teach Job, and us, a lesson about suffering?

And what about the death of Christ? Maybe—just maybe—the skeptic might go along with us and agree that Jesus had to die to save us from our sins. But why did He have to die with such humiliation, with scourging and beatings, and a tortuous death on the cross? Why did God not do a better job of arranging events so that His own Son could die in a more humane way? Besides, if humankind is guilty, why not punish the whole of mankind? Why did it have to be taken out on Someone else?

To those outside the faith, all this makes no sense, yet it is central to Christianity. And therein lies the problem. When I say it "makes no sense," I mean it makes no sense without appeal to religious concepts found in Scripture. "But why should I believe the Bible?," a critic will respond. That is a good question, to which Christians can offer all sorts of good reasons, but that is not what the skeptic has asked us to do in this case. The fact is, every concept important to Christianity comes from the Bible, and so it is to the Bible we must go if we are to find answers that are consistent with the claims we are making about Christianity. Ultimately, I suspect, this is why well-grounded Christians remain immune to the atheists' attacks on this front. To some degree or another, they know that suffering does not reflect badly on what they understand of God.

Likewise, if we introduce concepts such as sin, salvation, miracles, and so on, the atheist often will respond, "Yes, but they depend on the existence of God. If God does not exist, then these explanations disappear." Again, whether God exists is beside the point. Atheists have challenged us to reconcile certain attributes of God with the existence of evil. They were not challenging us (on this occasion) to defend the existence of God. The very problem, as it is posed to us, grants that God exists.

This is such a common tactic that I must make this point absolutely clear: the atheist cannot accuse us of a contradiction within our faith, and then block us from introducing the entire content of that faith (as opposed to discussing just the logical claims that are made about God's attributes). Perhaps this is why the argument gets bogged down in philosophy, when really, it is a theological issue. Marilyn McCord Adams agrees:

Where the internal coherence of a system of religious beliefs is at stake, successful arguments for its inconsistency must draw on premisses (explicitly or implicitly) internal to that system or obviously acceptable to its adherents; likewise for successful rebuttals or explanations of consistency (1990, p. 210).

## **SOME ANSWERS**

### **The Origin of Suffering**

As is often the case, the Book of Beginnings is the best place to start in dealing with fundamental questions. Genesis tells us that God put Adam and Eve in the Garden, and gave them access to the Tree of Life. They would live forever as long as they could eat from this tree (Genesis 3:22), but they were not immortal. God told them not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, otherwise they would surely die (Genesis 2:17).

At some point, apparently not too long after the creation week, Satan tempted Eve to eat the forbidden fruit and she, in turn, convinced Adam to do the same. This brought judgment from God. He separated them from the Tree of Life, and promised that people would suffer, and that Satan would be defeated (Genesis 3:14-19). It is difficult to grasp the enormity of this situation. We suffer—even innocent children suffer—because of the sin of two people. How could God allow so much suffering to exist for so long?

### **God is Sovereign**

From God's perspective, the first step is not to answer a question like this, but to deal with our accusations. Job is a case in point. The old patriarch accused God of

- judging him falsely (9:20)
- wronging him (19:6)
- persecuting him (19:22)
- not judging the wicked (24:1-12), and
- ignoring all his good works (31:1ff.).
- Job's cry, like our own, seems to be "Why God? **Why?!"**

God's response was to ask some probing questions of Job:

Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct Him? He who rebukes God, let him answer it.... Would you indeed annul My judgment? Would you condemn Me that you may be justified? (40:2,8).

In his questioning, Job assumed that God was at fault. His three friends—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar—assumed that Job was at fault for some great sin that he must have committed, and God chastened them for this presumption, too (42:7ff.).

Finally, young Elihu recognized that, on occasion, suffering can have a purpose. God can use it to judge the wicked, strengthen the faithful, aid the oppressed, and bless the righteous. And yet, throughout his criticism of Job, the level-headed Elihu affirmed the sovereignty of God: “Why do you contend with Him? For He does not give an accounting of any of His words” (33:13).

Paul followed the same theme in Romans 9. The apostle was responding to a “not fair” claim on the part of Jewish Christians. Apparently, some of them felt that they, as descendants of Abraham, merited a greater share in the inheritance of God’s kingdom. Of course, as Paul pointed out in verse 8, it is the children of the **promise**, not the children of **flesh**, who were to be the children of God and, therefore, heirs of salvation. He illustrated this with the example of Esau and Jacob. Some might point out that Jacob’s having a higher place than his older brother was an injustice, but God had a plan that did not take into account manmade customs of inheritance. To anyone who would accuse God of being unjust in this case (vs. 14), Paul would remind them of God’s sovereignty: “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion” (vs. 15).

While he was at it, Paul dealt with another familiar accusation: “You will say to me then, ‘Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?’” (vs. 19). In other words, “if the things that happen in my life are God’s will, then surely they are out of my control, and if my life is not my own, then why should God hold me responsible for the things I do? It’s not fair for us to suffer if God is supposed to be in control.” Again, Paul responded with a countercharge: “Who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why have you made me like this?’” (vs. 20). Our duty is to do what is right, not to worry about what God is doing and why.

On returning to the original question concerning Gentiles, Paul pointed out that God had been working throughout history to bring about His mercy. Along the way, He suffered the disobedience of Gentiles and Jews alike. God “endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction” (vs. 22). But, by His teaching and the unveiling of a redemptive plan, God had made “known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy” (vs. 23). Both Jews and Gentiles were vessels filled with iniquity, but God rescued those whom He called, and has filled them with His mercy (vs. 24).

### **God is Just**

Paul’s comments about mercy lead us to a second response: not only is God sovereign, but His mercy demonstrates that He is just. Mercy is revealed in God’s redemptive plan: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). God’s goal is redemption. He does not wish suffering on any of us; He wishes that we were with Him in heaven where there is no pain and suffering. Let us revisit Romans, but chapter 3 this time. Paul wrote: “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation [an appeasing sacrifice—TM] by His blood, through faith” (vss. 23-25a).

By justifying us, God shows that He is just; by making us righteous, He shows that He is righteous. We are justified through faith

...to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (vss. 25b-26).

Often we think of God's justifying us, but here we see that God's justness is revealed to us at the same time. This was not so evident to the people of the Old Testament who lacked the clear testimony of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. If God already has revealed so much to us in history, we can only wait in wonder to see what will be revealed to us in the future: "If we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance" (Romans 8:18,25).

In Frame's view, Romans is the New Testament equivalent of Job. It is as much about the justification of God (a theodicy) as it is about the justification of man.

Romans confirms, therefore, what we have seen elsewhere in Scripture. (1) We have no right to complain against God, and when we do, we expose ourselves as disobedient. (2) God is under no obligation to give us an intellectually satisfying answer to the problem of evil. He expects us to trust him in spite of that. (3) God's sovereignty is not to be questioned in connection with the problem of evil; it is rather to be underscored. (4) God's word, his truth, is altogether reliable. (5) As a matter of fact, God is not unjust. He is holy, just, and good (Frame, 1994, p. 178).

## CONCLUSION

God is all-good, God is all-powerful, and yes, there is an abundance of suffering. People have struggled with this apparent dilemma throughout the ages. Sometimes we mortals may try to vindicate our God by presuming to know His mind, but God says "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" (Exodus 33:19). In short, God is sovereign. There is nothing wrong with asking "why" questions, but when they turn into accusations, we challenge His sovereignty. Why was this woman raped? Why did thousands die in a tropical cyclone? No one can answer these specific questions adequately, anymore than the two-year old can understand why she must undergo heart surgery (Adams, 1990, p. 217; see also Frame, 1994, pp. 150-151). The little girl does not hate her parents for the pain, but continues to love and trust them based on her life experience.

Given the tremendous amount of suffering in this world, could we not assume that God is sovereign, but some sort of malevolent ruler? On the contrary, Christ's willing sacrifice on the cross has shown God to be just.

Well-grounded Christians, I am convinced, have a strong intuition that the atheists' standard arguments on the problem of suffering are wrong. The answers they find have

more to do with the “how” of Christian faith, than the “why” of presumption against God. They want to respond with Job, and they want to respond with Christ, because these examples make sense out of suffering for them, but the atheists always try to block this part of the conversation. They ridicule the Bible and the Christian experience. They give anecdotal stories about people who lost their faith in the face of suffering. They admit freely that the intellectual problem of suffering was crucial to their own walk away from faith. And, if all else fails, there is the old standby of incredulity: “I just can’t believe you [are stupid enough to] worship a God Who [is so heinous that He] would allow so much suffering in this world.” Yet the conditions of the discussion at the very outset assume that God exists. From that point on, it does not matter **for the sake of argument** whether the critics believe that the Bible is true, or that we all are sinners in need of salvation, or that God raised His Son from the grave. As Adams argues:

Just as philosophers may or may not find the existence of God plausible, so they may be variously attracted or repelled by Christian values of grace and redemptive sacrifice. But agreement on truth-value is not necessary to consensus on internal consistency. My contention has been that it is not only legitimate, but, given horrendous evils, necessary for Christians to dip into their richer store of valuables to exhibit the consistency of [an all-loving, all-powerful God] and [the existence of evil] (1990, p. 220).

This “richer store of valuables” for the Christian includes not only an intellectual acceptance of God’s sovereignty and justice, but an abiding experience of God in their lives. Hope for a better world has enabled Christians to survive the worst of times. This is not an explanation for why we have suffering, but a justification of God’s love, in that we would expect our Creator to endow us with the ability to find an essential worth in our own existence (Adams, 1990, p. 216).

Contrary to the atheists’ assertion, a Christian’s faith in God is not a humiliating emotional crutch, but a source of joy in overcoming the practical and existential problem of suffering. Christians, I believe, know within themselves that their faith has been a source of strength. All they see in the atheists’ charges is an allegation of internal inconsistency leveled by people who, frequently, know little to nothing of Scripture, and who, perhaps, never have experienced a full, spiritual life.

Only by being faithful to God can we attest to the perfect revealing of His redemptive plan, which is for us to live with Him forever. “Don’t you think it’s awful,” the atheist speaks with incredulity once more, “that God will condemn all those people who don’t bow down and worship Him and only Him?” What would be worse is if there were no God to punish the Neros, Hitlers, and child molesters of this world. There is a God, if there is any justice at all. In the meantime, the words of Peter remind us that the Lord “is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). God is just before us; the only question that remains is: Are we just before Him?

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# Reasoning About the Resurrection of Christ

by Eric Lyons, M.Min.

The resurrection of Christ is central to the faith of every Christian. Without a firm belief that "God has raised Him from the dead" (Romans 10:9), salvation from sin is impossible. Paul wrote: "If Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:17). Without the good news of Jesus' defeat of death, the Gospel is void of its power to save mankind (cf. Romans 1:16). If Christ was not "raised from the dead by the glory of the Father," there would be no "newness of life" (Romans 6:4). Rather, every accountable person would lie "dead in trespasses" (Ephesians 2:1,5) without hope of becoming "a new creation" in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). Truly, the resurrection of Christ provides the substance for the Christian's hope and the solid foundation on which to build his faith.

Is it any surprise, then, that first-century evangelists put so much emphasis on Jesus' resurrection? Peter specifically mentioned how the apostle chosen to take the place of Judas was to become a witness of Jesus' resurrection (Acts 1:22). A short while later, Peter preached to thousands of Jews in Jerusalem a sermon that hinged on the empty tomb of Christ (Acts 2:24,31-32). He then spoke in the temple about the Lord's resurrection (Acts 3:15,26), and afterward witnessed to this fact before the highest court of the Jews (4:10; 5:29-32). The apostle similarly witnessed to the Gentiles, beginning with Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:30). Paul repeatedly spoke of the resurrection of Christ in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:30,33,34,37), reasoned from the Scriptures about it in Thessalonica (Acts 17:3), and then gave testimony of this fact before both Festus and Agrippa (Acts 26:22-25).

First-century Christians frequently discussed the resurrection of Christ and were prepared to defend it using logical arguments comprised of sufficient evidence (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:3-8; Acts 1:3; 26:22-23). Christ's resurrection was fundamental to their faith and prominent in their preaching. It should be no less today. Hundreds of millions of people on Earth disbelieve in Jesus' death-defying power. Skeptics scoff at the idea of Jesus coming back to life. Infidels in classrooms and media outlets throughout the world adamantly argue against it, alleging that "the bodily resurrection of Jesus did not happen on good biblical grounds," and it certainly "did not happen on good historical grounds" (Barker, 1996).

In the past, we have discussed various irrefutable proofs for the resurrection of Christ (see Butt, 2002). In this issue of *Reason & Revelation*, we respond to four questions that skeptics are fond of asking as they attempt to discredit the Bible's portrayal of this earth-shaking event (Matthew 28:2).

## WHAT'S SO IMPORTANT ABOUT JESUS' RESURRECTION?



Most anyone who has spent much time reading the Scriptures knows that the Bible writers mentioned several individuals who rose from the dead. After the widow's son of Zarephath died, Elijah prayed to God, "and the soul of the child came back to him, and he revived" (1 Kings 17:22). A few years later, the prophet Elisha raised the dead son of a Shunammite (2 Kings 4:32-35). Then, after Elisha's death, a dead man, in the process of being buried in the tomb of Elisha, was restored to life after touching Elisha's bones (2 Kings 13:20-21). While on Earth Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead (Mark 8:21-24,35-43), as well as the widow of Nain's son (Luke 7:11-16), and Lazarus—who had been buried for four days (John 11:1-45). Matthew recorded how after Jesus' death and resurrection "the graves were opened; and **many** bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many" (27:52-53, emp. added). Then later, during the early years of the church, Peter raised Tabitha from the dead (Acts 9:36-43), while Paul raised the young man Eutychus, who had died after falling from a third-story window (Acts 20:7-12).

All of these people died and later rose to live again. Although some of the individuals arose very shortly after death, Lazarus and (most likely) the saints who were raised after the resurrection of Jesus were entombed longer than was Jesus. In view of all of these resurrections, some have asked, "What is so important about **Jesus'** resurrection?" If others in the past have died to live again, what makes **His** resurrection so special? The former editor of *Biblical Errancy*, Dennis McKinsey, once mockingly asked:

Why would it [Jesus' resurrection—EL] be of any consequence since...many others rose before Jesus? By the time he rose this was a rather common occurrence. I would think it would have been met by a resounding yawn rather than surprise followed by: So what else can you do? Adam's act of coming into the world as a full grown adult is more spectacular (n.d.).

Given the fact that Jesus is not the only person ever to come back to life, what is it that makes His resurrection unique? Why is the resurrection of **Jesus** more significant than any other?

First, the resurrection of Jesus is more significant than any other resurrection simply because the inspired apostles and prophets said that it was. Critics may sneer at this response, but it is a valid point. Jesus did certain things that others did, including being raised from the dead, but His actions were more significant because of the statements attached to them. Consider the miracles Jesus performed in order to set Himself apart as the Son of God and promised Messiah. Many people throughout the Bible worked miracles in order to confirm their divine message (cf. Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:1-4), but only Jesus did them as proof of His divine **nature**. Once, during the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, a group of Jews surrounded Jesus and asked, "How long do you keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly" (John

10:24)? Jesus responded to them saying, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me.... I and My Father are one" (John 10:25,30). These Jews understood that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God in the flesh (cf. 10:33,36), and Jesus wanted them to understand that this truth could be confirmed by the miracles that He worked.

The miracles testified to His deity (John 20:30-31). Why? **Because He said they did** (10:25,35-38; cf. John 5:36). The miracles that Jesus performed bore witness to the fact that He was from the Father (John 5:36), **because He said He was from the Father**. A miracle in and of itself did not mean the person who worked it was deity. Moses, Elijah, Elisha, Peter, Paul, and a host of others worked miracles, with some even raising people from the dead. But none did so for the purpose of proving they were God in the flesh. The apostles and prophets of the New Testament worked miracles to confirm their message that **Jesus** was the Son of God, not to prove that **they** were God (cf. Acts 14:8-18). Jesus, on the other hand, performed miracles to bear witness that **He** was the Son of God, just as He claimed to be (cf. John 9:35-38).

Similarly, one fundamental reason that Jesus' miraculous resurrection is more important to a Christian than the resurrections of Lazarus, Tabitha, Eutychus, or anyone else who was raised from the dead, is simply because the Bible writers explained that it was more important. There is no record of anyone alleging that Lazarus was God's Son based on his resurrection, nor did the early church claim divinity for Eutychus or Tabitha because they died and came back to life. None of the aforementioned individuals who was resurrected ever claimed that the resurrection was proof of deity, nor did any inspired prophet or apostle. On the other hand, Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:4). His resurrection was different because of Who He was—the Son of God. Thus, just as the miracles He worked during His earthly ministry testified of His divine message, and hence His divine nature, so did His resurrection.

A second reason why Jesus' resurrection stands out above all others is because it alone was specifically foretold in the Old Testament. In his sermon on the day of Pentecost, Peter affirmed that God had raised Jesus from the dead because it was not possible for the grave to hold Him. As proof, he quoted Psalm 16:8-11 in the following words:

I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken. Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence (Acts 2:25-28).

Peter then explained this quote from the book of Psalms by saying:

Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses (Acts 2:29-32).

The apostle Paul also believed that the psalmist bore witness to Christ, and spoke of His resurrection. In his address at Antioch of Pisidia, he said:

And we declare to you glad tidings—that promise which was made to the fathers. God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: “You are My Son, today I have begotten You.” And that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus: “I will give you the sure mercies of David.” Therefore He also says in another Psalm: “You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption.” For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption; but He whom God raised up saw no corruption. Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses (Acts 13:32-39).

Where is the prophecy for the resurrection of Jairus’ daughter? When did the prophets ever foretell of Eutychus or Tabitha’s resurrection? They did not. No resurrected person other than Jesus had his or her resurrection foretold by an Old Testament prophet, nor did any inspired apostle or prophet in the first century apply Old Testament prophecies to them. This certainly makes Jesus’ resurrection unique.

Third, Jesus’ resurrection is more significant than any other because He prophesied numerous times that He would rise from the dead, even foretelling the exact day on which it would occur. Jesus told some scribes and Pharisees on one occasion, “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, **so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth**” (Matthew 12:40, emp. added). Matthew, Mark, and Luke all recorded how Jesus “began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and **be raised the third day** (Matthew 16:21, emp. added; cf. Mark 8:31-32; Luke 9:22). While Jesus and His disciples were in Galilee, Jesus reminded them, saying, “The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and **the third day He will be raised up**” (Matthew 17:22-23, emp. added).



Christians do not serve a lifeless lord, but a Risen Redeemer  
Whose tomb was found empty nearly 2,000 years ago.

Just before His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus again reminded His disciples, saying, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. **And the third day He will rise again**" (Matthew 20:18-19, emp. added). Jesus' prophecies concerning His resurrection and the specific day on which it would occur were so widely known that, after Jesus' death, His enemies requested that Pilate place a guard at the tomb, saying, "Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.' Therefore command that the tomb be made secure **until the third day...**" (Matthew 27:63-64, emp. added). They knew exactly what Jesus had said He would do, and they did everything in their power to stop it.

Where are the prophecies from the widow's son of Zarephath? Did he prophesy of his resurrection prior to his death? Or what about the son of the Shunammite woman that Elisha raised from the dead? Where are his personal prophecies? Truly, no one who rose from the dead except Jesus prophesied about his or her own resurrection. And certainly no one ever prophesied about the exact day on which he or she would rise from the dead, save Jesus. This prior knowledge and prophecy makes His resurrection a significant event. He overcame death,

just as He predicted. He did **exactly** what he said He was going to do, on the **exact** day He said He would do it.

Fourth, the uniqueness of Jesus' resurrection is seen in the fact that He is the only resurrected person ever to have lived and died without having committed one sin during His lifetime. He was "pure" and "righteous" (1 John 3:3; 2:1), "Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth" (1 Peter 2:22). He was "a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:19), "Who knew no sin" (2 Corinthians 5:21). No one else who has risen from the dead ever lived a perfect life, and then died prior to his or her resurrection for the purpose of taking away the sins of the world (cf. John 1:29). Because Jesus lived a sinless life, died, and then overcame death in His resurrection, He alone has the honor of being called "the Lamb of God" and the "great High Priest" (Hebrews 4:14). "Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many," and because of His resurrection, "those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation" (Hebrews 9:28).

Finally, and perhaps most important, the significance of Jesus' resurrection is seen in the fact that He was the first to rise from the dead **never to die again**. Since no one who has risen from the dead is still living on Earth, and since there is no evidence in the Bible that God ever took someone who had risen from the dead into heaven without his dying again, it is reasonable to conclude that all who ever rose from the dead, died in later years. Jesus, however, never died again. He rose from the grave to live forevermore. All others who previously were raised from the dead, died again, and are among those who "sleep" and continue to wait for the bodily resurrection. Only Jesus truly has conquered death. Only His bodily resurrection was followed by eternal life, rather than another physical death.

Skeptics have argued that "it's the Resurrection, per se, that matters, **not the fact that Jesus never died again**" (see McKinsey, 1983, p. 1, emp. added). However, the inspired apostles said otherwise. Paul actually linked the two together while preaching in Antioch of Pisidia, saying, God "raised Him from the dead, **no more to return to corruption.... He whom God raised saw no corruption**" (Acts 13:34,37, emp. added). Paul also impressed upon the minds of the Christians in Rome how Jesus, "having been raised from the dead, **dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him**" (Romans 6:9, emp. added). [Is it any wonder Paul testified before Agrippa and Festus how Jesus was "the first to rise from the dead" (Acts 26:23)? "[H]e was the first who rose again from the dead to return no more into the empire of death" (Clarke, 1996).] Jesus said of Himself: "I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive **forevermore**" (Revelation 1:17-18, emp. added). Furthermore, the writer of Hebrews argued for a better life through Jesus on the basis of His termination of death. One reason for the inadequacy of the old priesthood was because "they were prevented by death." Jesus, however, because He rose never to die again, "continues forever" in "an unchangeable priesthood," and lives to make intercession for His

people (Hebrews 7:23-25). As so often is the case, skeptics comment on the Bible without really knowing what the Bible says. To say, that “it’s the Resurrection, per se, that matters, not the fact that Jesus never died again” (McKinsey, 1983, p. 1), is to deny (or ignore) what the apostles and prophets actually stated.

Whether or not Eutychus, Tabitha, Lazarus, etc., rose from the grave, our relationship with God is not affected. Without Jesus’ resurrection, however, there would be no “Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:31). Without Jesus’ resurrection, no suitable High Priest would be able to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25). Without Jesus’ resurrection, we would have no assurance of His coming and subsequent judgment (Acts 17:31). Without Jesus’ resurrection, “we are of all men the most pitiable” (1 Corinthians 15:19).

Jesus’ resurrection **is** significant—more so than any other resurrection. Only Jesus’ resurrection was verbalized by inspired men as proof of His deity. Only Jesus’ resurrection was prophesied in the Old Testament. Only Jesus foretold of the precise day on which He would rise from the grave—and then fulfilled that prediction. Only Jesus’ resurrection was preceded by a perfect life—a life lived, given up, and restored in the resurrection for the purpose of becoming man’s Prince, Savior, and Mediator. And, only Jesus rose never to die again.

### **WHY IS CHRIST CALLED THE “FIRST FRUITS”?**

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul wrote at length concerning the resurrection of the dead because some of the Christians in Corinth taught “that there is no resurrection of the dead” (vs. 12). As one of his proofs for the Christian’s eventual resurrection, Paul pointed to the fact that Christ rose, and showed that the general resurrection stands or falls with Christ’s resurrection, saying, “if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile” (vss. 16-17)! After hypothetically arguing from the absurd in an attempt to help the Corinthian Christians to see that their stance on the final resurrection completely undermined Christianity, Paul proceeded to demonstrate that Christ **had** risen, making the resurrection of the dead inevitable. It is in this section of Scripture that some find a difficulty. Beginning with verse 20, Paul wrote:

But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become **the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep**. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But **each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits**, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming (1 Corinthians 15:20-23, emp. added).

In view of the fact that Jesus was not the first person ever to rise from the dead (as previously discussed), some have questioned why Paul twice described Jesus as “the firstfruits” from the dead. Did Paul err? Was he ignorant of all of the previous resurrections? In what sense did Paul speak of Christ as “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep”?

One could respond reasonably to these questions by pointing out the aforementioned fact that Jesus was the first to rise from the dead—**never to die again**. In this sense, Christ is “the firstborn from the dead” (Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:5). Another (and perhaps better) explanation to the question surrounding 1 Corinthians 15:20,23 and Paul’s use of the word “firstfruits” (Greek *aparche*) is to recognize the metaphor Paul employed. Under the old law, the firstfruits were the earliest gathered grains, fruits, and vegetables that the people dedicated to God in recognition of His faithfulness for providing the necessities of life. The Israelites were to offer to God a sheaf of the first grain that was harvested on the day after the Sabbath following the Passover feast (Leviticus 23:9-14). Paul used the term “firstfruits” in this letter to the Corinthian church to reinforce the certainty of the resurrection. Just as the term “firstfruits” indicates that “the first sheaf of the forthcoming grain harvest will be followed by the rest of the sheaves, Christ, the firstfruits raised from the dead, is the guarantee for all those who belong to him that they also will share in his resurrection” (Kistemaker, 1993, p. 548). Jesus is God’s “firstfruits” of the resurrection. And, like the Israelites, God will gather the rest of the harvest at the final resurrection. Paul seemingly wanted the Corinthians to understand (by way of metaphor) that Christ’s resurrection is **a pledge** of our resurrection. It is inevitable—a full harvest guaranteed by God Himself.

### **ON WHAT DAY DID JESUS RISE FROM THE DEAD?**

The most frequent reference to Jesus’ resurrection reveals that He rose from the grave **on** the third day of His entombment. Matthew and Luke both record Jesus as prophesying that He would rise from the grave on this day (Matthew 17:23; Luke 9:22). The apostle Paul wrote in his first epistle to the Corinthians that Jesus arose from the grave “**the third day** according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:4, emp. added). And while preaching to Cornelius and his household, Peter taught that God raised Jesus up “**on** the third day” (Acts 10:40, emp. added). Skeptics are quick to contend, however, that these scriptures contradict various other passages. For example, Jesus predicted that He would “be killed, and **after** three days rise again” (Mark 8:31, emp. added). On another occasion, Jesus told His apostles how His enemies would “mock Him and spit upon Him, and scourge Him, and kill Him, and three days **later** He will rise again” (Mark 10:34, emp. added, NASB). In addition, He informed the Pharisees that He would be in the heart of the Earth for as long as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish—for “three days and three nights” (Matthew 12:40). How can a person be expected to believe that Jesus rose from the grave if Jesus and the Bible writers could not even decide whether He rose from the grave on the third day or the fourth day?

In an attempt to solve this difficulty, some seemingly well-meaning individuals have espoused the idea that Jesus must have been crucified on Wednesday or Thursday, rather than on Friday (eg., Scroggie, 1948, pp. 569-577; Rusk, 1974, pp. 4-6). Because Jesus could not possibly have been in the grave for three nights if He died on Friday and rose on Sunday, some believe He must have died a day or two earlier. However, this is highly improbable. First, Mark 15:42 states that the evening of Christ's crucifixion "was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath," and "[b]oth the Scriptures (Matt 27:62; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:14,31,42) and Josephus indicate the day of preparation is the day before the weekly Sabbaths, namely, Friday" (Hoehner, 1974, 131:245; cf. Josephus, 16:6:2). Second, if Jesus died on Wednesday and rose on Sunday then He must have risen from the grave **on** the fourth day rather than "the third day." What's more, all attempts to place Jesus' crucifixion and burial on Wednesday or Thursday instead of Friday are based more on a misunderstanding of a Hebrew idiom concerning time than actual evidence.

While statements such as "on the third day," "after three days," and "three days and three nights" may appear contradictory at first glance, in reality they harmonize perfectly if one understands the more liberal methods ancients used to reckon time. In the first century, any part of a day could be computed for the whole day and the night following it (cf. Lightfoot, 1979, pp. 210-211). The *Jerusalem Talmud* quotes rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah, who lived around A.D. 100, as saying: "A day and night are an Onah [a portion of time] and the portion of an Onah is as the whole of it" (Shabbath ix. 3, as quoted in Hoehner, 1974, 131:248-249, bracketed comment in orig.). Azariah indicated that a portion of a twenty-four hour period could be considered the same "as the whole of it." Thus, in Jesus' time one would have been correct in teaching that Jesus' burial would last "three days and three nights," even though it was not three complete 24-hour days.

Scripture is peppered with references which demonstrate that a part of a day was oftentimes equivalent to a whole day.

- According to Genesis 7:12, the rain of the Noahic Flood was upon the Earth "forty days and forty nights." Verse seventeen of that same chapter says it was on the Earth for just "forty days." Obviously, "forty days" and "forty days and forty nights" refer to the same time period in this context.
- During the reign of King Ahab, Israel and Syria "encamped opposite each other **for seven days**" (1 Kings 29:20, emp. added). Yet, "**on** the seventh day the battle was joined" and Israel killed 100,000 Syrian foot soldiers (29:20). Clearly, the two armies did not occupy their camps for a full seven days, but for six days and a part of the seventh. The remainder of day seven was spent in battle.
- When Joseph's brothers came to visit him for the first time since selling him into Egyptian bondage more than a decade earlier (Genesis 37:12-36), Joseph incarcerated



- them for “three days” (Genesis 42:17). The text then reveals that he spoke to them “**the** third day,” and 42:18-24 represents them as being released that day—i.e., the third day. If Joseph’s brothers (with the exception of Simeon, 42:24) were released on day three of their imprisonment, then the “three days” they spent in the prison (42:17) are not equivalent to three 24-hour periods, but rather parts of three days.
- When the Israelites visited King Rehoboam and asked him to lighten their burdens (2 Chronicles 10:3-4), he wanted time to contemplate their request, so he instructed Jeroboam and the people of Israel to return “**after** three days” (10:5, emp. added). Verse twelve of that chapter indicates that Jeroboam and the people of Israel came to Rehoboam “**on** the third day, **as the king had directed**, saying, ‘Come back to me **the third day**’” (emp. added). Fascinating, is it not, that even though Rehoboam instructed his people to return “**after** three days,” they understood him to mean “**on** the third day” (cf. 1 Kings 12:5,12).
  - When Queen Esther was about to risk her life by going before King Ahasuerus uninvited, she instructed her fellow Jews to follow her example by not eating or drinking “**for three days, night or day**” (Esther 4:16, emp. added). Yet, the text then tells us that Esther went in to the king “**on** the third day” (5:1, emp. added).

By studying these and other passages, one can see clearly that the Bible uses expressions like “three days,” “the third day,” “on the third day,” “after three days,” and “three days and three nights” to signify the **same** period of time. Again, “[a]ccording to the Oriental mode of reckoning, three consecutive **parts** of days were counted three days” (Jamieson, et. al., 1997, emp. added).

From Acts 10, we can glean further insight into the ancient practice of counting consecutive days (in part or in whole) as complete days. Luke recorded how an angel appeared to Cornelius at “about the ninth hour of the day” (approximately 3:00 p.m.; 10:3). “**The next day**” (10:9) Peter received a vision from God and welcomed visitors sent by Cornelius. “**On the next day**” (10:23) Peter and the servants of Cornelius departed for Caesarea. “**And the following day** they entered Caesarea” where Peter taught Cornelius and his household the Gospel (10:24). At one point during Peter’s visit, Cornelius spoke about his encounter with the angel of God. Notice carefully how he began the rehearsal of the event. He stated: “**Four days ago to this hour**, I was praying in my house during the ninth hour...” (10:30, NASB, emp. added). Although the event really had occurred only 72 hours (or three literal days) earlier, Cornelius spoke of it as taking place “four days ago to this hour.” Why four days instead of three? Because according to the first-century method of reckoning time, a part of the first day and a part of the fourth day were counted as whole days. Surely one can see how this information aligns itself perfectly with Jesus’ burial taking place on Friday and His resurrection occurring on Sunday. A part of Friday, all day Saturday, and a part of Sunday would be considered **three** days in ancient times, not one or two.

Even though in 21st-century America some may find this reasoning somewhat confusing, similar idiomatic expressions are used frequently today. For example, we consider a baseball game that ends after only completing 8½ innings a “9-inning game.” And even though the losing pitcher on the visiting team only pitched 8 innings (and not 9 innings like the winning pitcher from the home team), he is said to have pitched a **complete** game. Think about the college student who explains to his professor that he worked on a research project “day and night for four weeks.” He obviously does not mean that he worked for a solid 672 hours (24 hours x 7 days x 4 weeks) without sleeping. It may be that he worked from 6:00 a.m. to 12:00 a.m. for four weeks on the project, but not 672 sleepless hours. If he only slept five or six hours a night, and worked on the project nearly every hour he was awake, we would consider this person as one who truly did work “day and night for four weeks.” Finally, consider the guest at a hotel who checks in at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, and checks out at 3:30 p.m. Thursday—less than 24 hours later. Did the man stay one day or two days at the hotel? Technically, the guest was there for less than one full day (24-hour period), yet the hotel legally can charge him for two days since he did not leave before the mandatory 11:00 a.m. checkout time. Considering how flexible we are in measuring time, perhaps we should not be surprised at how liberal the ancients were in calculating time.

Further evidence proving that Jesus’ statements regarding His burial were not contradictory center around the fact that even His enemies did not accuse Him of contradicting Himself. No doubt this was due to their familiarity with and use of the flexible, customary method of stating time. In fact, the chief priests and Pharisees even said to Pilate the day after Jesus was crucified: “Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, ‘**After** three days I will rise.’ Therefore command that the tomb be made secure **until** the third day” (Matthew 27:63-64, emp. added). The phrase “after three days” must have been equivalent to “the third day,” else surely the Pharisees would have asked for a guard of soldiers until the fourth day. Interesting, is it not, that modern skeptics charge Jesus with contradicting Himself, but not the hypocritical Pharisees of His own day.

The idiomatic expressions that Jesus and the Bible writers employed to denote how long Jesus would remain in the grave does not mean that He literally was buried for 72 hours. If we interpret the account of Jesus’ crucifixion, burial, and resurrection in light of the cultural setting of the first century, and not according to the present-day (mis)understanding of skeptics, we find no errors in any of the expressions that Jesus and the gospel writers used.

### **DID JESUS HAVE THE SAME PHYSICAL BODY AFTER HIS RESURRECTION AS BEFORE?**

A gentleman once e-mailed our offices at Apologetics Press, questioning whether Jesus had the same body after His resurrection as He did before being raised from the grave. According

to this man, Jesus “appeared to people He knew but nobody recognized Him.... It’s as though He had a different body”—and possibly one that was not physical.

At the outset, it is incorrect to assert that “nobody recognized Him,” because Matthew 28:9,17 clearly implies that at least some of Jesus’ disciples knew Who He was and worshiped Him. Moreover, that Jesus had essentially the same body after His resurrection that He had when He died on the cross is evident from at least three different passages. In Luke 24:39, Jesus stated: “Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.” Jesus expected His disciples to observe **His physical** body. Later in the same chapter, we read that Jesus ate a meal with His disciples (24:42-43; cf. Acts 10:41). And then in John 20:25-29, which is the most frequently cited passage in defense of Christ having a physical body, Jesus asked Thomas to touch His nail-scared hands and reach into His side that had been pierced with the Roman spear.

But what about those occasions when some of His disciples did not recognize Him? Do such verses as Luke 24:31,37 and John 20:10-16 represent a contradictory element in the resurrection story? First, just because the text says that the disciples thought they had seen a spirit when they actually saw Jesus (Luke 24:37), does not indicate that He looked different. Since they knew He had been killed, seeing His resurrected body caused them to think that He was in spirit form rather than physical. On one occasion, before Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection, His disciples were startled at His appearance, supposing He was a ghost (Mark 6:49). A similar thing happened to Peter when some thought his unexpected presence must have been an indication that it was “his angel” (Acts 12:15).

Second, the reason the two disciples who were traveling on the road to Emmaus failed to recognize Jesus initially was not because Jesus had a different body, but because God miraculously prevented them from recognizing Him. Luke 24:16 indicates that at the beginning of their conversation with Jesus “their eyes were restrained,” but then just before Jesus vanished from their sight, “their eyes were opened and they knew Him” (24:31). Thus, the disciples’ recognition ability failed, not because Jesus possessed a different body, but because their eyes were miraculously restrained.

A final person often mentioned as not having recognized the Savior (allegedly because Jesus had a different body) is Mary Magdalene. John 20:11-18 certainly testifies of her initial inability to identify Jesus. The question is: Was Mary’s failure to recognize Jesus **her** fault, or the result of Jesus having a different body? As with the above cases, there is no indication in John 20:11-18 that Jesus had anything other than His risen crucified body (cf. 20:25-29). There are at least four possibilities, however, as to why Mary failed to recognize Jesus right at first.

1. The Sun may not have risen all the way yet, thus making it difficult to see (cf. 20:1).
2. Mary was engaged in deep weeping that likely obscured her vision (20:11,13). In fact, the first words Jesus said to Mary were, "Woman, why are you weeping?" (vs. 15).
3. Considering Jesus' clothes were taken from Him when He was crucified (John 19:23-24), and that the linen cloths which were used in His burial were lying in the tomb (John 20:6-7), Jesus likely was wearing clothes that made His exact identity less conspicuous at first glance. Perhaps His post-resurrection attire was similar to what a gardener or watchman would wear (cf. John 20:15).
4. It also is possible that Mary's eyes were restrained miraculously, as were the eyes of the disciples with whom Jesus conversed on the road to Emmaus.

Once all of the Scriptures are taken into account, one can see that Jesus physically rose from the grave in essentially the same body that was crucified on the cross. The fact that some of Jesus' disciples did not immediately recognize Him in no way contradicts His physical resurrection.

### **CONCLUSION**

The inspired accounts of the risen Redeemer have been the focus of much criticism through the years (cf. Barker, 1992, pp. 178-184; McKinsey, 2000, pp. 447-454). However, when the honest, open-hearted student of the Bible looks carefully at the evidence, he will come to realize that these criticisms are actually the result either of insufficient knowledge or hardened hearts. Truly, the more one studies the passages of Scripture in which Jesus' resurrection is discussed, as well as the historical context in which this momentous event occurred, the more he will see how incredibly accurate and trustworthy the Bible writers were.

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## What Does it Mean to Say Jesus is the "Son of God"?

by Brad Bromling

**Q.**

What does it mean to say that Jesus is the "Son of God"?

**A.**

The New Testament employs a variety of terms in its effort to define the personal identity of Jesus. Strictly speaking, His name simply is Jesus (meaning "Yahweh is salvation"). Recognition of His messiahship quickly led His followers to call Him **Christ** (*christos* is the Greek equivalent to the Hebrew word Messiah), **Christ Jesus**, and the more common **Jesus Christ**. In addition, He also is called:

- **Lord**—an Old Testament designation for God, as well as a term of respect like "Sir";
- **Son of Man**—the designation Jesus most often applied to Himself that can indicate "a human," or point to a mysterious heavenly figure (Daniel 7:13);
- **Son of David**—an indicator of messianic lineage; and
- **"I AM"**—an apparent echo of the unutterable divine name (Exodus 3:14).

All of these titles make exalted claims for the Man from Galilee. For many Christians, though, **Son of God** is the most familiar term used to identify Jesus. This is understandable in light of passages like 1 John 4:15: "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God," and John 20:30-31: "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." There is power in the confession that Jesus is the "Son of God," but what does it mean?

The earliest Christians were Jews who were familiar with at least two distinct applications of the term "son of God." In the first place, the term had a general application to all Israelites. When their ancestors were held in Egyptian bondage, Moses was sent to Pharaoh with these words: "Thus says the Lord: Israel is My son, My firstborn. So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me" (Exodus 4:22-23; see also Hosea 11:1). Through the years, Yahweh loved, protected, comforted, and chastened Israel, just as a loving parent would nurture and discipline children (Malachi 2:10; Isaiah 66:13; et al.).

The second usage was more specific. Historically, the term had a royal connotation for many nations of the Ancient Near East. It was commonplace for Egyptian, Babylonian, Canaanite, and Roman rulers to be called "son of God" (Fossum, 1992, pp. 128-137). These kings even were deified and surrounded by legends about their miraculous births—often including stories of gods copulating with humans (Sanders, 1993, pp. 243-245).

This royal connotation also was known in Israel, although they did not deify their kings (O'Collins, 1995, p. 117).

When the New Testament writers referred to Jesus as "Son of God," they sometimes employed the term in ways that echoed these two common uses. After those who threatened the life of the child Jesus died, Joseph was given instructions in a dream to return from Egypt to his homeland. When Matthew reported this event, he said it fulfilled Hosea 11:1: "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son" (see Matthew 2:15). In other words, Jesus was God's Son as an Israelite, and in a real sense, the **True** Israelite.

In the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus' ministry began with a pronouncement from heaven: "This is my beloved Son..." (Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:11). The same is heard at the transfiguration (Matthew 17:5). In the Gospel of John, the baptizer testified that Jesus "ranks ahead of" him, and by virtue of the Spirit's descending upon Jesus, he testified that Jesus is the "Son of God" (John 1:30, NRSV). These references are reminiscent of the decree of royal sonship (Psalm 2:6-7; see also Luke 1:32-33). When the Jewish leaders put Jesus on trial, they asked: "Are you the Son of God, then?" Satisfied with His answer, they told Pilate Jesus was claiming to be "a king" (Luke 22:70; 23:2). As Jesus died on the cross, the only accusation assigned to Him was, "This is the king of the Jews" (Luke 23:38). According to Paul and the writer of Hebrews, this regal distinction was especially manifest after Jesus was raised from the dead (Acts 13:33; Romans 1:4; Hebrews 1:5).

While Jesus' identity certainly included these then-prevailing ideas of sonship, it is obvious they do not exhaust the significance of the term for Him. Over and over again, Jesus referred to God as His Father (Matthew 7:21; 10:32; 11:27, et al.). Since the Jews also saw themselves as sons and daughters of God, this should not have bothered them. But it did bother them, precisely because they perceived Jesus to be making a unique—and seemingly blasphemous—claim of sonship.

This uniqueness reached its zenith when Jesus addressed God as "Abba, Father" in prayer (Mark 14:36). "Abba" was the word a Jewish child used to refer to his or her "original person of reference" (i.e., mother or father). This bespoke an "unheard-of closeness" between Jesus and God (Moltmann, 1993, p. 142). Jesus demonstrated this closeness throughout His life. And it was in this intimacy that Jesus' sonship is best defined. Gerald O'Collins has observed:

[Jesus] not only spoke like "the Son" but he also acted like "the Son" in knowing and revealing truth about God, in changing the divine law, in forgiving sins, in being the one through whom others could become children of God, and in acting with total obedience as the agent of God's final kingdom (1995, p. 126).

To see through the eyes of faith that Jesus is the Son of God is to see that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19).



Finally, in the Gospel of John, Jesus referred to Himself as the “Son” Who was “sent” from the Father (John 3:16-17; 5:23; 6:40; 10:36). Clearly, this is a special claim. On one of those occasions, Jesus based His authority to heal on the Sabbath on the fact that His Father was working. This infuriated some of the Jews. John explained: “Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God” (John 5:18).

In summary, to identify Jesus as the Son of God is to acknowledge His genealogical connection to Israel, His right to the throne of David, and His unparalleled nearness to God. To **confess** that Jesus is the Son of God is to declare as true Jesus’ claim: “He who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

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# Is Evolution a "Fact" of Science?

by Bert Thompson, Ph.D.

## INTRODUCTION

Origins. The mere mention of the word has the power to evoke deep-seated emotions, because this is one issue on which almost everyone has an opinion. From the very earliest times, men have inquired about their origin, and the question, "Whence have I come?" has not been far from either their minds or their lips. In our day and age it often is the case that **any** discussion of origins stirs quite a controversy, as proponents of competing theories battle each other in public debates, in the news media, in the classroom, in the courtroom, and through the printed word.

Such controversy, however, is not always bad. While it is true that at times more heat than light has been generated, this is not necessarily the case. Not infrequently, people who have had the temerity to question have been rewarded by the fruits of their inquiry. In many instances, people have been caused for the first time to consider seriously (or reconsider) their own privately held positions on these matters. They have sought answers, and have been amazed at the evidence (or lack of evidence) supporting their belief system—when previously they may have been somewhat complacent about the matter of their own beginnings. Oftentimes, as people have explored the matter of their ultimate origin, they also have discovered, quite inadvertently, certain implications that invariably accompany the suggested scenarios—implications that affect them in their everyday lives as they consider such weighty matters as ethics, morals, truth, and a host of other concepts of real importance to humankind. The controversy over origins (rather, the end results of that controversy) may have proven either a blight or a blessing, but to those who go to the trouble to investigate, one thing is certain: the quest never is dull.

There are two fundamentally different, and diametrically opposed, explanations for the origin of the Universe, the origin of life in that Universe, and the origin of new types of varying life forms. Each of these explanations is a cosmogony—an entire world view, or philosophy, of origins and destinies, of life and its meaning. One of these cosmogonies is known as **evolution** (often referred to as organic evolution, the theory of evolution, the evolution model, atheistic evolution, etc.). The second alternate and opposing view is **creation** (often referred to as special creation, the theory of creation, the creation model, etc.).

## ATHEISTIC EVOLUTION DEFINED

The term "evolution" derives from the Latin word, *evolvere*, which means literally to "unroll, unfold, or change." The word "evolution" may be used legitimately to speak of a bud's development into the flower, the metamorphosis of the butterfly, or even the production of new varieties of organisms (see Bales, 1971, 2[3]:1-4). However, this is not what the average person has in mind when he speaks of evolution. In everyday parlance, the word carries quite a different meaning.

In 1960, G.A. Kerkut, the renowned British physiologist and evolutionist, authored *The Implications of Evolution*. In that small-but-powerful volume, he defined two theories of evolution that are of importance for the discussion here. He termed one of those the Special Theory of Evolution (often referred to as **microevolution**). This is the kind of evolution to which practically all people subscribe, and over which there is no controversy. It suggests that limited change, within narrow limits, occurs throughout all living things. I know of no one who would deny this point. Creationists agree to its factuality, as do atheistic evolutionists. Years ago (to list just three examples), Brangus cattle, Cockapoo dogs, and 1,000+ varieties of roses did not exist. But today they do. Why? Simply stated, it is because evolution has occurred.

But as everyone recognizes, this "evolution" produced only small changes that did not cross what biologists refer to as "phylogenetic boundaries." That is to say, the Brangus is still a cow, the Cockapoo is still a dog, and (to employ an old adage), a rose by any other name is still a rose. While the Special Theory of Evolution allows for change **within** groups, it does not allow for change **between** groups. It is not the Special Theory of Evolution that I will be investigating in the pages that follow; rather, I intend to examine the other theory of evolution mentioned by Kerkut.

In addition to the Special Theory, Dr. Kerkut also identified, defined, and discussed what he termed the General Theory of Evolution (often referred to as **macroevolution**). He stated: "On the other hand, there is the theory that all the living forms in the world have arisen from a single source which itself came from an inorganic form. This theory can be called the 'General Theory of Evolution'..." (1960, p. 157). This is what is referred to commonly as organic evolution, atheistic evolution, or simply "evolution." Through the years, numerous investigators have offered various definitions of evolution. The same year that Dr. Kerkut offered his definitions, Simpson wrote:

Evolution is a fully natural process, inherent in the physical properties of the universe, by which life arose in the first place, and by which all living things, past or present, have since developed, divergently and progressively (1960, 131:969).

This definition has been accepted widely because of: (a) Dr. Simpson's reputation in the evolutionary community; and (b) its succinct statement of what evolution is and allegedly does. Previously, Simpson and his coauthors had defined the theory by suggesting:

First, there is the theory of evolution in the strict sense. This states that all living organisms have evolved from common ancestors in a gradual historical process of change and diversification. The theory rejects the notion that all organisms were designed and created at the beginning of time (Simpson, et al., 1957, pp. 25-26).

Dr. Simpson's Harvard colleague, the famous zoologist P.D. Darlington, reiterated these same points twenty-three years later.

The outstanding evolutionary mystery now is how matter has originated and evolved, why it has taken its present form in the universe and on the earth, and why it is capable of forming itself into complex living sets of molecules. This capability is inherent in matter as we know it, in its organization and energy.... It is a fundamental evolutionary generalization that no external agent imposes life on matter. Matter takes the form it does because it has the inherent capacity to do so. This is one of the most remarkable and mysterious facts about our universe: that matter exists that has the capacity to form itself into the most complex patterns of life (1980, pp. 15,234).

While disavowing its factuality, creationists agree with evolutionists about the definition of their theory. One creationist publication defined evolution as:

...the hypothesis that millions of years ago lifeless matter, acted upon by natural forces, gave origin to one or more minute living organisms which have since evolved into all living and extinct plants and animals, including man. The theory of evolution has to do with the origin of life and the origin of species, and should not be confused with the ordinary development or natural history of living plants and animals which we see all around us and which is an entirely different phenomenon. In its wider aspects, the theory of evolution embraces the origin and development of the whole universe... (*Evolution*, n.d., p. 7).

Wilbert H. Rusch, a creationist, defined evolution as:

...the theory that large groups or kinds of basic organisms change with the passage of time. Then it is held that their descendants will now be as different from them as they were different from their ancestors. It would follow that, given the passage of a sufficient time span, the life forms at any given point in time will be radically different from the life forms present at any time during the past. It really involves what might be termed transspecific change. According to this theory, modern plants and animals are all the modified descendants of plants and

animals from the past. All present taxa are then somehow descended from a common ancestry over vast periods of time. This would call for a continuum from the beginning of life to the present, with no distinct groups. This continuum would be made up of all fossil as well as present forms of life... (1991, pp. 13-14).

Notice the common thread running through each definition. First, evolution is a **fully natural** process. Second, no "external agent" (i.e., "Creator") is responsible for inanimate matter becoming animate; evolution "rejects the notion that all organisms were designed and created...." Third, all life descended (evolved) from a common source, which owes its own existence to inorganic matter. Fourth, evolution is a process of "change and diversification" which ultimately produces living organisms that develop "divergently and progressively." In summary then, by definition evolution precludes the supernatural, a Creator, any divine guidance of the natural processes involved, and the creation of organisms as separate and distinct entities not having descended from a common ancestor.

### **IS ATHEISTIC EVOLUTION POPULAR?**

Although atheistic evolution is not nearly as old a viewpoint as creation, it has amassed to itself a rather large following among the peoples of the world. R.L. Wysong, in his book, *The Creation-Evolution Controversy*, commented that "It is downright hard to find anyone who does not believe in evolution in one form or another" (1976, p. 63). Conway Zirkle stated that "practically every educated man believes in evolution.... [E]volution is incorporated in the thinking of our time" (1959, p. 19). A university biology textbook used widely for almost two decades began with these words:

Organic evolution is the greatest principle in biology. Its implications extend far beyond the confines of that science, ramifying into all phases of human life and activity. Accordingly, understanding of evolution should be part of the intellectual equipment of all educated persons (Moody, 1962, p. 1x).

For the past century, evolution has been in the limelight. And for the past quarter of a century or more, it has been taught as **scientific fact** in many elementary, junior high, and senior high schools, as well as in most colleges and universities. As Stephen J. Gould of Harvard put it: "The fact of evolution is as well established as anything in science (as secure as the revolution of the earth around the sun)..." [1987, 8[1]:64, parenthetical comment in orig.]. There can be little doubt that belief in evolution is popular. But **why** is this the case?

### **WHY DO PEOPLE BELIEVE IN EVOLUTION?**

As we make our way through the pilgrimage called "life," on occasion we invariably stop to reflect upon the nature and meaning of our own existence, because such matters variously enthrall, excite, or intrigue us. Nowhere is this more evident than in regard to our ultimate origin. Few there must be who do not pause, at some point in their earthly sojourn, to ponder such topics as the origin of the Universe, the origin of planet Earth, the origin of various life forms on the Earth, the possibility of life on other planets, and even their own origin and destiny.

One of the most mind-numbing mysteries for those who do **not** believe in evolution is trying to understand the people who **do**. [Perhaps evolutionists feel the same exasperation in regard to creationists' beliefs, but on that point I am less qualified to judge.] This observation is not intended to be derogatory, but is offered merely as a statement of fact. As one who writes and lectures often on the topics of creation and evolution, I frequently am asked the question: "Why do people believe in evolution?" Often the question is phrased in what are intended to be complimentary terms: "Why is it that so many **obviously intelligent** people believe in evolution?" Neither question is easy to answer because generally the querist wants a simple, concise response. It is difficult for him to understand why people whom he accepts as "obviously intelligent" believe a concept such as evolution that he, personally, considers so unworthy of acceptance or recommendation by intelligent people. It has been my experience that rarely is there a singular reply that can provide an answer to such a question, because rarely is there just a single reason that can explain adequately why a person believes what he does. Especially is this true in regard to belief in evolution.

At times, the controversy that centers on the topics of creation and evolution has generated more heat than light. This does not necessarily have to be the case, however. In an open society, the topic of origins, and the varying views that people hold on origins, ultimately will be discussed; in fact, they **should** be discussed. But because the subject matter has to do with deeply held convictions, emotions often run high. One good way to avoid emotional entanglement, and the "more heat than light" syndrome that generally accompanies it, is to work diligently to comprehend the other person's position as completely as possible, and therefore to discuss it as accurately and calmly as possible in any given situation. That task is made easier if there exists—at the beginning of the discussion—a basic understanding of **why** the person believes as he does. Again, especially is this true in regard to belief in evolution.

While it may seem somewhat of a truism to suggest that people believe in evolution for a variety of reasons, realization of this fact, and a legitimate exploration of the reasons people offer for believing what they do, can go a long way toward a better understanding of opposing views found within the creation/evolution controversy. With better understanding comes improved communication. And with improved communication comes increased opportunity for dialogue—which can set the stage for the presentation of other viewpoints that perhaps have

not been considered previously (e.g., in this particular instance, persuading the evolutionist to consider the evidence for creation).

As I respond to the question, "Why do so many **obviously intelligent** people believe in evolution?" I hope to be able to provide a better comprehension of the system of organic evolution, and of the people who accept it. Included among the reasons why people believe in evolution are the following.

### **Reason #1**

There can be little doubt that many today believe in evolution simply because it is what they have been taught. As I stated earlier, for the past quarter of a century or more evolution has been taught as scientific fact in most educational settings—from kindergarten through graduate school. Marshall and Sandra Hall noted:

In the first place, evolution is what is taught in the schools. At least two, and in some cases three and four generations, have used textbooks that presented it as proven fact. The teachers, who for the most part learned it as truth, pass it on as truth. Students are as thoroughly and surely indoctrinated with the concept of evolution as students have ever been indoctrinated with any unproven belief (1974, p. 10).

In their book, *Why Scientists Accept Evolution*, Bales and Clark confirmed such an observation. "Evolution," they wrote, "is taken for granted today and thus it is uncritically accepted by scientists as well as laymen. It is accepted by them today because it was already accepted by others who went before them and under whose direction they obtained their education" (1966, p. 106). People believe in evolution because they have been taught that it is true.

### **Reason #2**

To suggest that many people today accept evolution as true merely because they have been taught to believe it does not tell the whole story, however. Intellectual pride enters into the picture as well. Who among us does not want to present at least the appearance of being smart and well educated? Over the last century, we have been led to believe that if we wish to be considered intelligent, then we should believe in evolution, because intelligent people all over the world believe in evolution. As Henry Morris well stated the issue: "The main reason most educated people believe in evolution is simply because they have been told that most educated people believe in evolution!" (1963, p. 26).

Consider the hypothetical example of two college students discussing their professors and courses. One of the students, Joe, asks his friend, Mark, the following question: "Hey, Mark,

do you believe in evolution? My professor says all smart folks do." Honestly, what is Mark supposed to say? If he says, "No, Joe, I don't believe in evolution," by definition he has admitted to being outside the sphere of all the "smart folks." On the other hand, if he says, "Yes, Joe, I do believe in evolution," he may be admitting to a belief based not on an examination of the evidence, but on the idea that he does not wish to be viewed by his peers as anything but "smart." Undoubtedly, many people today fall into this category. They do not accept evolution because they have seen evidence that establishes it as true. Rather, they believe it because doing so places them in the same category as others whom they consider to be intelligent.

### **Reason #3**

Further exacerbating the problem is the fact that evolution has been given a "stamp of approval" by important spokespersons from practically every field of human endeavor. While there have been those from politics, the humanities, the arts, and other fields who openly have defended evolution as factual, in no other area has this defense been as pronounced as in the sciences. Because science has seen so many successes, and because these successes have been so visible and well publicized, scientists have been granted an aura of respectability that only can be envied by non-scientists. As a result, when scientists champion a cause, people take notice. After all, it is their workings through the scientific method that have eradicated smallpox, put men on the Moon, prevented polio, and lengthened life spans. We have grown used to seeing "experts" from various scientific disciplines ply their trade in an endless stream of amazing feats. Heart surgery has become commonplace; organ transplants have become routine; space shuttles flying to the heavens have become standard fare.

Thus, when evolution is presented as something that "all reputable scientists believe," there are many who accept such a statement at face value, and who fall in line with what they believe is a well-proven dictum that has been enshrouded with the cloak of scientific respectability. As philosopher Paul Ricci has written: "The reliability of evolution not only as a theory but as a principle of understanding is not contested by the vast majority of biologists, geologists, astronomers, and other scientists" (1986, p. 172).

Such statements leave the impression that evolution simply cannot be doubted by well-informed, intelligent people. The message is: "All scientists believe it; so should you." And many do, because, as Marshall and Sandra Hall have inquired: "How, then, are people with little or no special knowledge of the various sciences and related subjects to challenge the authorities? It is natural to accept what 'experts' say, and most people do" (1974, p. 10).

The simple fact is, however, that truth is not determined by popular opinion or majority vote. A thing may be, and often is, true even when accepted only by the minority. Believing



something based on the assumption that “everyone else” also believes it often can lead to disastrous results. As the late Guy N. Woods remarked: “It is dangerous to follow the multitude because the majority is almost always on the wrong side in this world” (1982, 124[1]:2).

#### **Reason #4**

Without a doubt, there are many who believe in evolution because they have rejected God. For those who refuse to believe in the Creator, evolution becomes their only escape. They generally make no pretense of believing it based on anything other than their disbelief in God. Henry Fairfield Osborn, one of the most famous evolutionists of the early twentieth century, suggested: “In truth, from the earliest stages of Greek thought man has been eager to discover some natural cause of evolution, and to abandon the idea of supernatural intervention in the order of nature” (1918, p. ix). Henry Morris has noted: “Evolution is the natural way to explain the origin of things for those who do not know and acknowledge the true God of creation. In fact, some kind of evolution is absolutely necessary for those who would reject God” (1966, p. 98).

Sir Arthur Keith of Great Britain wrote: “Evolution is unproved and unprovable. We believe it because the only alternative is special creation, and that is unthinkable” (as quoted in Criswell, 1972, p. 73). Professor D.M.S. Watson, who held the position of the Chair of Evolution at the University of London for over twenty years, echoed the same sentiments when he stated that “evolution itself is accepted by zoologists, not because it has been observed to occur or can be proven by logically coherent evidence to be true, but because the only alternative, special creation, is incredible” (1929, 123:233). Almost seventy years later, evolutionist Richard Lewontin wrote:

Our willingness to accept scientific claims against common sense is the key to an understanding of the real struggle between science and the supernatural. We take the side of science **in spite** of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, **in spite** of its failure to fulfill many of its extravagant promises of health and life, **in spite** of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to naturalism. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our *a priori* adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counter-intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door. The eminent Kant scholar Lewis Beck used to say that anyone who could believe in God could believe in anything. To appeal to

an omnipotent deity is to allow that at any moment the regularities of nature may be ruptured, that miracles may happen (1997, p. 31, emp. in orig.).

These kinds of statements leave little to the imagination, and make it clear that those who make them believe in evolution not because of the evidence, but instead because they have made up their minds, *a priori*, that they are not going to believe in God.

In his text, *Man's Origin: Man's Destiny*, the late, eminent United Nations scientist, A.E. Wilder-Smith, observed: "Darwinism and Neo-Darwinism, rightly or wrongly, have been used everywhere in the East and West, in the hands of the atheists and agnostics, as the main weapon against the biblical doctrine of origins" (1975, p. 31). For the person who stubbornly refuses to believe in God, belief in evolution becomes automatic. Similarly, opposition to God, the Bible, and the system of origins the Bible describes, becomes just as automatic. Whenever a person rids himself of God, he simultaneously (even if unwittingly) embraces evolution. By his disbelief, he has eliminated creation as an option regarding his origin.

#### **Reason #5**

Another reason people offer for their belief in evolution has to do with the fact that there is so much evil, pain, and suffering in the world. No rational, well-informed person can deny the widespread and unmistakable occurrence of "bad" things that happen, often engulfing those who seem undeserving of such tragic events. To some, no explanation from religionists—regardless of how elaborately stated or elegantly defended that explanation may be—ever will provide an adequate answer to the conundrum of how an omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent God can allow atrocities to fill His specially created world (see Thompson, 2000, pp. 95-105).

Evolution, on the other hand, provides what appears to be a perfectly logical explanation for such a scenario. According to evolutionary dogma, throughout the history of the world various species (including man) have been engaged in a struggle for survival and advancement. Charles Darwin (borrowing a phrase from his friend, English philosopher Herbert Spencer) referred to it as "survival of the fittest." The evolutionist—because of the nature of his theory—is forced to view the Universe and everything within it as the end result of numerous purposeless accidents. All living things, including man, exist on the Earth not because of any Grand Plan, but because of fortuitous occurrences that resulted from chance happenings in nature. And, to survive—and thrive—in such a world may seem to justify a "might makes right/strong subjugates the weak/to the victor go the spoils" attitude. "It's a jungle out there"—and in the jungle it is the law of tooth and claw that prevails.

Since man is viewed as little more than a naked ape, why should he somehow be exempt from the perils that continually befall other species of animals? These animals live their entire lives with one eye looking over their shoulder, as it were, because they exist in a dog-eat-dog world with no set moral standard. Man, according to evolutionary theory, is no different. His claim to fame lies in the fact that (so far) he occupies the last rung of the evolutionary ladder.

But nature confers on him no special rights, privileges, or protection. In a world where evolution is considered as true, and "survival of the fittest" is touted as nature's way of weeding out the weak, it should be no surprise that evil, pain, and suffering exist. In fact, from the evolutionary vantage point, whenever competition occurs for such things as food supplies, adequate shelter, reproductive advantages, etc., humanity has to learn to cope with evil, pain, and suffering. Granted, at first this may sound harsh, but from the evolutionists' perspective it is consistent, and offers an attempted explanation for the undeniable existence of "bad" things in our world. Unfortunately, all too often the answers offered by religionists for the problem of evil, pain, and suffering have fallen short of the mark, and as a result people have accepted evolution as providing a legitimate explanation for a very real problem in their lives.

#### **Reason #6**

As unpleasant as it is to have to admit it, some people believe in evolution because they have heard about, witnessed, or experienced firsthand the mistakes of religionists through the ages. Whether it is the offering of young virgins to an imaginary deity, the burning of alleged witches at the stake, or the adultery of a highly visible televangelist, the truth of the matter is that on occasion believers in God have set a very poor example—one that sensitive, thinking people naturally would have difficulty following.

To some, the very history of religion makes it suspect from the outset. Attempts to force people to accept a certain religion (as in the Crusades), or misguided attempts to squelch open discussion of important issues (as in the Catholic Church's censure of Galileo), have left a bitter taste in the mouths of many. Add to that the hypocrisy of, or word spoken in anger by, a person who wears the name "Christian," and the damage may be such that even in a lifetime it cannot be repaired. The result is that those who have been offended want nothing whatsoever to do with the God of the Bible, and as they reject Him, they also reject His account of the creation of the world in which they live.

#### **Reason #7**

While it is undeniable that some reject creation because of inappropriate conduct on the part of those who advocate it, likewise it is true that some reject God, and creation, to excuse or

legitimize their own inappropriate personal conduct. In other words, they believe in evolution because it allows them to avoid any objective moral standard of behavior. It keeps them "out of reach" of any deity. It provides a subjective climate of situation ethics where any and all behavior, no matter how absurd or perverse, is acceptable. It nourishes a "do your own thing" attitude that precludes rules and regulations, in a vain attempt to circumvent the guilt that inevitably comes from doing wrong.

In the evolutionary scenario, humans are merely the last in a long line of amoebas, crocodiles, and orangutans resulting from fortuitous cosmic accidents. In such an arrangement, it is futile to speak of "personal responsibility." There exists, in the grand scheme of things, no reason why one "ought" or "ought not" to act a certain way, or to do/not do a certain thing. Aldous Huxley stated the matter succinctly in his article, "Confessions of a Professed Atheist"?

I had motives for not wanting the world to have meaning; consequently, assumed it had none, and was able without any difficulty to find reasons for this assumption.... The philosopher who finds no meaning in the world is not concerned exclusively with a problem in pure metaphysics; he is also concerned to prove there is no valid reason why he personally should not do as he wants to do.... For myself, as no doubt for most of my contemporaries, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation. The liberation we desired was simultaneously liberation from a certain political and economic system and liberation from a certain system of morality. **We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom** (1966, 3:19, emp. added).

If Huxley and his cohorts had abandoned belief in evolution and accepted the existence of God, it would have "interfered with their sexual freedom." Realizing that, they chose instead to abandon belief in God. That left them with only one option—belief in evolution. It was not something they did because of the weight of the evidence. Rather, it was something they did because they desired to avoid personal accountability to the Creator. Their actions belied their motives. As Woods remarked: "Convince a man that he came from a monkey, and he'll act like one!" (1976, 118[33]:514).

### **Reason #8**

Lastly, we may state that some people accept evolution because they are convinced that it is the correct answer to the question of origins. They have examined the evidence and, on the basis of their examination, have concluded that evolution is the only plausible explanation for the Universe and all that it contains. These people generally are both sincere and open-minded. They are not attempting to rid themselves of the idea of God. They do not feel the need to be "intellectually correct." They are not reacting to unkind treatment at the hand of

religionists. They are not searching for a way to justify worldly behavior. They simply believe the evidence favors evolution, and thus have accepted it as the correct view of origins.

### **IS EVOLUTION A "FACT" OF SCIENCE?**

When we talk about the origin of the Universe and those things in it, we cannot speak as eyewitnesses or firsthand observers. None of us was present when the origin of the Universe occurred. Therefore, any scientific discussion must be based on assumptions, hypotheses, and theories put in place after the fact.

An **assumption** is something taken for granted, and represents a legitimate starting point for an investigation. A **hypothesis** is an educated guess or tentative assumption. A **theory** is a plausible or scientifically acceptable general principle or body of principles to explain phenomena.

It generally is alleged by the more spirited evolutionists that evolution has been proven, and therefore must be spoken of not as theory, but fact. As far back as 1944, evolutionist W.W. Howells wrote in *Mankind So Far* that "there is also the mystery of how and why evolution takes place at all.... Evolution is a fact, like digestion..." (p. 5). On May 2, 1966, Nobel laureate Hermann J. Muller circulated a manifesto that affirmed:

It has for many years been well established scientifically that all known forms of life, including man, have come into being by a lengthy process of evolution. There are no hypotheses, alternative to the principle of evolution with its "tree of life," that any competent biologist of today takes seriously. Moreover, the principle is so important for an understanding of the world we live in and of ourselves that the public in general, including students taking biology in high school, should be made aware of it, and of the fact that it is firmly established even as the rotundity of the earth is firmly established (1966, p. 2).

Affixing their names to Dr. Muller's manifesto to signify their agreement were 177 of the world's most eminent evolutionary scientists.

In this day and age, most evolutionists no longer speak of the "theory" of evolution, but refer instead to the "fact" of evolution. The widely accepted Biological Sciences Curriculum Study, financed by the National Science Foundation, organized the entire treatment of biological science around the "fact" of the evolutionary framework of life history. Almost all books on biology published by secular publishers for at least the past two generations have been written as though evolutionary presuppositions were fact instead of theory. In introducing the papers in the three-volume work on evolution stemming from the 1959 Darwinian Centennial Convocation in Chicago, Sir Julian Huxley eulogized Darwin as follows:

Charles Darwin has rightly been described as the “Newton of biology”; he did more than any single individual before or since to change man’s attitude to the phenomena of life and to provide a coherent scientific framework of ideas for biology, in place of an approach in large part compounded of hearsay, myth, and superstition. He rendered evolution inescapable as a fact, comprehensible as a process, all-embracing as a concept (1960a, pp. 1-2).

Huxley maintained that “after Darwin it was no longer necessary to deduce the existence of divine purpose for the facts of biological adaptation” (1946, p. 87). Compare also Huxley’s categorical statement at the Chicago convocation: “In the evolutionary pattern of thought there is no longer need or room for the supernatural. The earth was not created; it evolved. So did all the animals and plants that inhabit it, including our human selves, mind, and soul as well as brain and body. So did religion” (1960b, pp. 252-253). Jacques Barzun, in his book, *Darwin, Marx, Wagner*, raised this question:

Why was evolution more precious than scientific suspense of judgment? Why do scientists to this day speak with considerable warmth of “the fact of evolution,” as if it were in the same category as the fact of combustion, which “may be observed by anyone who will take the necessary trouble”? (1958, p. 65).

Barzun went on to point out why evolution is accepted as a fact, by stating that it gave scientists complete freedom over “everything in heaven and earth without restriction.” He also observed that it put everything under one cause (1958, p. 65).

The codiscoverer of the DNA molecule, James Watson, is on record as stating: “Today the theory of evolution is an accepted fact for everyone but a fundamentalist minority” (1987, p. 2). Joining Dr. Watson in that assessment is Harvard paleontologist, Stephen J. Gould, one of the evolutionary establishment’s fieriest apologists, and an indefatigable crusader on behalf of organic evolution. He is a cogent writer, a gifted speaker, and a tireless worker for “the cause.” He also is one of science’s most prolific and best-read authors (along with such late colleagues as Carl Sagan and Isaac Asimov), and is highly regarded in many scientific circles (the January 1982 issue of *Discover* magazine voted him “Scientist of the Year”). Through the years, Dr. Gould’s articles have appeared not only in refereed scientific journals (e.g., *Nature*, *New Scientist*, *Science*, et al.), but in popular science magazines as well (*Discover*, *Omni*, *Science Digest*, *Science Digest*, et al.). Therefore, when Dr. Gould speaks, many people listen. To quote him directly: “When we come to popular writing about evolution, I suppose that my own essays are as well read as any” (1987, 8[1]:65). And therein lies the problem.

In the January 1987 issue of *Discover*, Dr. Gould authored a lengthy article titled “Darwinism Defined: The Difference Between Fact and Theory.” In this particular article, Gould expressed his extreme agitation at the inability of certain people (who should know better, he said) to

properly address evolution by its rightful designation—as a **fact**, not a theory. The specific cause (this time) for his discomfiture was an article in the September 30, 1986 issue of the *New York Times* by Irving Kristol (“Room for Darwinism and the Bible”). Dr. Gould acknowledged both his dismay and dissatisfaction at the apparent inability of people like Mr. Kristol to distinguish (to use his own words) “the central distinction between secure fact and healthy debate about theory” (p. 64). Dr. Gould then explained himself when he noted:

Facts are the world’s data; theories are explanations proposed to interpret and coordinate facts. The fact of evolution is as well established as anything in science (as secure as the revolution of the earth about the sun), though absolute certainty has no place in our lexicon. Theories, or statements about the causes of documented evolutionary change, are now in a period of intense debate—a good mark of science in its healthiest state. Facts don’t disappear while scientists debate theories (p. 64, parenthetical comment in orig.).

Later, Gould commented that “...evolution is also a fact of nature, and so do we teach it as well, just as our geological colleagues describe the structure of silicate minerals, and astronomers the elliptical orbits of the planets” (p. 65).

What could be clearer? Dr. Gould wants everyone to know that evolution is a fact. **How** evolution occurred may be considered by some to be merely a “theory,” but **that** evolution has occurred is a fact not open for further discussion. Gould even commented, “I don’t want to sound like a shrill dogmatist shouting ‘rally ‘round the flag boys,’ but biologists have reached a consensus...about the fact of evolution” (p. 69). [In a guest editorial in the August 23, 1999 issue of *Time* magazine, Dr. Gould boasted that “evolution is as well documented as any phenomenon in science, as strongly as the earth’s revolution around the sun rather than vice versa. In this sense, we can call evolution a ‘fact’ ” (1999, 154[8]:59).] Dr. Gould is upset because there are those who refuse to acknowledge evolution as a fact. According to him, “Evolution is a fact, like apples falling out of trees” (as quoted in Adler, 1980, p. 95). Gould’s colleagues could not agree more. In the March 1987 issue of *Natural History*, Douglas J. Futuyma wrote in his review of Richard Dawkins’ book, *The Blind Watchmaker*:

In the last ten years or so, evolution has been under severe attack, especially in the United States. It is important here to recognize the distinction between the proposition that evolution has occurred and the theory that describes the causes of evolutionary change. That evolution has occurred—that diverse organisms have descended from common ancestors by a history of modification and divergence—is accepted as fact by virtually all biologists. “Fact” here means a proposition, like the proposition that the earth revolves about the sun, supported by so much evidence that to disbelieve it would require disbelieving a large, successful edifice of scientific achievement. The historical reality of evolution is doubted chiefly by creationists, mostly on doctrinaire religious grounds (96[3]:34).

Of course, such renowned scientists as Gould and Futuyma are not even willing to concern themselves with creationists. In fact, Dr. Gould commented:

I don't speak of the militant fundamentalists who label themselves with the oxymoron "scientific creationists," and try to sneak their Genesis literalism into high school classrooms under the guise of scientific dissent. I'm used to their rhetoric, their dishonest mis- and half-quotations, their constant repetition of "useful" arguments that even they must recognize as nonsense.... Our struggle with these ideologues is political, not intellectual. I speak instead of our allies among people committed to reason and honorable argument (1987, 8[1]:64).

This point should not be overlooked. Gould suggests that his concern is about people who are "committed to reason and honorable argument." That, by his definition, would eliminate any and all "creationists."

The purpose of the writings of Gould and Futuyma (and other evolutionists) is to convince people to stop speaking of the "theory" of evolution, and to speak instead of the "fact" of evolution. But, in order to accomplish this, they have to redefine the word "fact" as it is used in science. I might note here that they are by no means the first to attempt such a redefinition. Simpson and Beck tried the exact same thing in their biology text, *Life: An Introduction to Biology*, and ended their "redefining" section by claiming that theories ultimately

...may be just as certain—merit just as much confidence—as what are popularly called "facts." Belief that the sun will rise tomorrow is the confident application of a generalization. The theory that life has evolved is founded on much more evidence than supports the generalization that the sun rises every day. In the vernacular, we are justified in calling both "facts" (1965, p. 16).

A fact usually is defined as an actual occurrence or something that has actual existence. With that standard-usage definition in mind, consider the following.

Charles Darwin, in his *Origin of Species*, stated: "Long before the reader has arrived at this part of my work, a crowd of difficulties will have occurred to him. Some of them are so serious that to this day I can hardly reflect on them without being in some degree staggered" (1859, p. 158). Theodosius Dobzhansky, the late, eminent geneticist of the Rockefeller University, stated in his book, *The Biological Basis of Human Freedom*: "Evolution as a historical fact was proved beyond reasonable doubt not later than in the closing decades of the nineteenth century." Yet two pages later he stated: "There is no doubt that both the historical and the causal aspects of the evolutionary process are **far from completely known**. ...The causes which have brought about the development of the human species **can be only dimly**



**discerned**" (1956, pp. 6,8,9, emp. added). Notice Dobzhansky's admission that both the historical (what Gould refers to as the "fact" of evolution) and the causal (what Gould refers to as the "theory" of evolution) are "far from completely known."

In other words, on the one hand evolution is declared to be a fact, yet on the other hand it is acknowledged that the process is "far from completely known," with its causes "only dimly discerned," and the difficulties "staggering." Evolutionist W. LeGros Clark wrote: "What was the ultimate origin of man? ...Unfortunately, any answers which can at present be given to these questions are based on indirect evidence and thus **are largely conjectural**" (1955, p. 174, emp. added). Kerkut, as an evolutionist, stated:

...I believe that the theory of Evolution as presented by orthodox evolutionists is in many ways a satisfying explanation of some of the evidence. At the same time I think that the attempt to explain all living forms in terms of evolution from a unique source...is premature and **not satisfactorily supported by present-day evidence**.... [T]he supporting evidence remains to be discovered.... We can, if we like, believe that such an evolutionary system has taken place, but I for one do not think that "it has been proven beyond all reasonable doubt." ...It is very depressing to find that many subjects are being encased in scientific dogmatism (1960, pp. vii, viii, emp. added).

After listing and discussing the seven **non-provable assumptions** upon which evolution is based, Dr. Kerkut then observed: "The first point that I should like to make is that these seven assumptions by their nature **are not capable of experimental verification**" (p. 7, emp. added).

This stinging rebuke of the alleged factuality of evolution is not an isolated instance. W.R. Thompson, while Director of the Commonwealth Institute of Biological Control in Canada, penned the "Introduction" to the 1956 edition of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, in which he wrote:

Darwin did not show in the *Origin* that species had originated by natural selection; he merely showed, on the basis of certain facts and assumptions, how this **might** have happened, and as he had convinced himself he was able to convince others.... On the other hand, it does appear to me that Darwin in the *Origin* was not able to produce palaeontological evidence sufficient to prove his views but that **the evidence he did produce was adverse to them**; and I may note that the position is not notably different today. The modern Darwinian palaeontologists are obliged, just like their predecessors and like Darwin, to **water down the facts** with subsidiary hypotheses which, however plausible, are in the nature of things unverifiable (pp. xii, xix, emp. added).

Evolutionists dogmatically assert that evolution is a fact, yet admit that it: (a) is based upon **non-provable assumptions** that are “not capable of experimental verification”? (b) bases its conclusions upon answers that are “largely conjectural”? (c) is faced with evidence “adverse” to the available facts; (d) must continually be found guilty of “watering down the facts”? and (e) has both historical and causal aspects that “are far from completely known.” Little wonder Dr. Kerkut stated concerning the theory of evolution: “The evidence that supports it is not sufficiently strong to allow us to consider it anything more than a working hypothesis” (1960, p. 157). Robert Millikan, Nobel laureate in physics, opined: “The pathetic thing is that we have scientists who are trying to prove evolution, which no scientist can ever prove” (1925). What a far cry from the assessments of Gould and his colleagues in the modern evolutionary camp.

Someone might object, however, that the quotations I have employed (from evolutionists such as Dobzhansky, Clark, and others) to document the nonverifiability of evolution were written during the 1950s and 1960s. Much scientific research on evolution has occurred in the decades that followed, and thus it might be considered unfair to rely on such “dated” critiques of a concept like evolution that changes so rapidly and that has been studied so intently.

My response to such an objection would be to point out that I used the quotations from the 1950s and 1960s intentionally, in order to document that the situation over the past four decades has not improved. By the 1970s, for example, little had changed. At the height of his professional career, Pierre-Paul Grassé was considered by many to be France’s greatest living zoologist. In fact, Dobzhansky wrote of him: “Now one can disagree with Grassé, but not ignore him. He is the most distinguished of French zoologists, the editor of the 28 volumes of *Traité de Zoologie*, author of numerous original investigations, and ex-president of the Academie des Sciences. His knowledge of the living world is encyclopedic” (1975, 29:376). In 1977, Grassé wrote in *The Evolution of Living Organisms*:

Today our duty is to destroy the myth of evolution, considered as a simple, understood, and explained phenomenon which keeps rapidly unfolding before us. Biologists must be encouraged to think about the weaknesses and extrapolations that theoreticians put forward or lay down as established truths. The deceit is sometimes unconscious, but not always, since some people, owing to their sectarianism, purposely overlook reality and refuse to acknowledge the inadequacies and falsity of their beliefs.

Their success among certain biologists, philosophers, and sociologists notwithstanding, **the explanatory doctrines of biological evolution do not stand up to an objective, in-depth criticism.** They prove to be either in conflict with reality or else incapable of solving the major problems involved (pp. 8,202, emp. added).

Three years later, in 1980, British physicist H.S. Lipson produced a thought-provoking piece in the May issue of *Physics Bulletin*, a refereed science journal. In his article, "A Physicist Looks at Evolution," Dr. Lipson commented first on his interest in life's origin and, second, on his non-association with creationists. He then noted: "In fact, evolution became in a sense a scientific religion; almost all scientists have accepted it and many are prepared to 'bend' their observations to fit with it." Dr. Lipson went on to ask how well evolution has withstood the years of scientific testing, and suggested that "to my mind, the theory does not stand up at all."

After reviewing many of the problems (especially from thermodynamics) involved in producing something living from something nonliving, he asked: "If living matter is not, then, caused by the interplay of atoms, natural forces, and radiation, how has it come into being?" After dismissing any sort of "directed evolution," Lipson concluded: "I think, however, that we must go further than this and admit that the only acceptable explanation is **creation**." Like other evolutionists who have voiced similar views, Dr. Lipson hardly is ecstatic about his conclusion—a fact he made clear when he wrote: "I know that this is anathema to physicists, as indeed it is to me, but we must not reject a theory that we do not like if the experimental evidence supports it" (31:138, emp. in orig.).

Just a little over a year later, on November 5, 1981, the late Colin Patterson (who at the time was the senior paleontologist of the British Museum of Natural History in London, the editor of the professional journal published by the museum, and one of the world's foremost fossil experts) delivered a public address to his evolutionist colleagues at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. In his speech, Dr. Patterson astonished those colleagues when he stated that he had been "kicking around" non-evolutionary, or "anti-evolutionary," ideas for about eighteen months. As he went on to describe it:

One morning I woke up and something had happened in the night, and it struck me that I had been working on this stuff for twenty years and there was not one thing I knew about it. That's quite a shock to learn that one can be misled so long. Either there was something wrong with me, or there was something wrong with evolution theory (1981).

Dr. Patterson said he knew there was nothing wrong with him, so he started asking various individuals and groups a simple question: "Can you tell me anything you know about evolution, any one thing that is true? I tried that question on the geology staff at the Field Museum of Natural History, and the only answer I got was silence." He tried it on the Evolutionary Morphology Seminar at the University of Chicago, a very prestigious body of evolutionists, and all he got there "was silence for a long time and eventually one person said, 'I do know one thing—it ought not to be taught in high school.' " He then remarked, "It does

seem that the level of knowledge about evolution is remarkably shallow. We know it ought not to be taught in high school, and that's all we know about it."

Dr. Patterson went on to say: "Then I woke up and realized that all my life I had been duped into taking evolution as revealed truth in some way." But more important, he termed evolution an "anti-theory" that produced "anti-knowledge." He also suggested that "the explanatory value of the hypothesis is nil," and that evolution theory is "a void that has the function of knowledge but conveys none." To use Patterson's wording, "I feel that the effects of hypotheses of common ancestry in systematics has not been merely boring, not just a lack of knowledge, I think it has been positively anti-knowledge" (1981; cf. Bethell, 1985, 270:49-52,56-58,60-61).

Dr. Patterson made it clear, as I wish to do here, that he had no fondness for the creationist position. Yet he did refer to his stance as "anti-evolutionary," which was quite a change for a man who had authored several books (one of which was titled simply *Evolution*) in the field that he later acknowledged was capable of producing only "anti-knowledge."

Colin Patterson was not the only one expressing such views, however. Over the past two decades, distinguished British astronomer Sir Fred Hoyle has stressed the serious problems—once again, especially from the fields of thermodynamics—with various theories about the naturalistic origin of life on the Earth. The same year that Dr. Patterson traveled to America to speak, Dr. Hoyle wrote:

I don't know how long it is going to be before astronomers generally recognize that the combinatorial arrangement of not even one among the many thousands of biopolymers on which life depends could have been arrived at by natural processes here on the Earth. Astronomers will have a little difficulty in understanding this because they will be assured by biologists that it is not so, the biologists having been assured in their turn by others that it is not so. The "others" are a group of persons who believe, quite openly, in mathematical miracles. They advocate the belief that tucked away in nature, outside of normal physics, there is a law which performs miracles (provided the miracles are in the aid of biology). This curious situation sits oddly on a profession that for long has been dedicated to coming up with logical explanations of biblical miracles.... It is quite otherwise, however, with the modern miracle workers, who are always to be found living in the twilight fringes of thermodynamics (1981a, 92:526, parenthetical comment in orig.).

In fact, Dr. Hoyle has described the evolutionary concept that disorder gives rise to order in a rather picturesque manner.

The chance that higher forms have emerged in this way is comparable with the chance that a tornado sweeping through a junk-yard might assemble a Boeing 747 from the materials therein (1981b, 294:105).

And, in order to make his position perfectly clear, he provided his readers with the following analogy:

At all events, anyone with even a nodding acquaintance with the Rubik cube will concede the near-impossibility of a solution being obtained by a blind person moving the cubic faces at random. Now imagine  $10^{50}$  blind persons each with a scrambled Rubik cube, and try to conceive of the chance of them all **simultaneously** arriving at the solved form. You then have the chance of arriving by random shuffling at just one of the many biopolymers on which life depends. The notion that not only biopolymers but the operating programme of a living cell could be arrived at by chance in a primordial organic soup here on the Earth is evidently nonsense of a high order (1981a, 92:527, emp. in orig.).

Hoyle and Chandra Wickramasinghe (who is a professor of astronomy and applied mathematics at the University College, Cardiff, Wales) went even further. Using probability figures applied to cosmic time (not just geologic time here on the Earth), their conclusion was:

Once we see, however, that the probability of life originating at random is so utterly minuscule as to make the random concept absurd, it becomes sensible to think that the favourable properties of physics on which life depends, are in every respect deliberate.... It is therefore almost inevitable that our own measure of intelligence must reflect in a valid way the higher intelligences...even to the extreme idealized limit of **God** (1981, pp. 141,144, emp. in orig.).

Hoyle and Wickramasinghe suggested, however, that this "higher intelligence" did not necessarily have to be, as far as they were concerned, what most people would call "God," but simply a being with an intelligence "to the limit of God." They, personally, opted for "directed panspermia," a view which suggests that life was "planted" on the Earth via genetic material that originated from a "higher intelligence" somewhere in the Universe. But just one year later, in 1982, Dr. Hoyle wrote:

A common sense interpretation of the facts suggests that **a superintellect** has monkeyed with physics, as well as with chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature. The numbers one calculates from the facts seem to me so overwhelming as to put this conclusion almost beyond question (20:16, emp. added).

Three years after that, in 1985, molecular biologist Michael Denton authored *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, in which he stated:

In this book, I have adopted the radical approach. By presenting a systematic critique of the current Darwinian model, ranging from paleontology to molecular biology, I have tried to show why I believe that the problems are too severe and too intractable to offer any hope of resolution in terms of the orthodox Darwinian framework, and that consequently the conservative view is no longer tenable.

The intuitive feeling that pure chance could never have achieved the degree of complexity and ingenuity so ubiquitous in nature has been a continuing source of scepticism ever since the publication of the *Origin*; and throughout the past century there has always existed a significant minority of first-rate biologists who have never been able to bring themselves to accept the validity of Darwinian claims. In fact, the number of biologists who have expressed some degree of disillusionment is practically endless.

The anti-evolutionary thesis argued in this book, the idea that life might be fundamentally a discontinuous phenomenon, runs counter to the whole thrust of modern biological thought.... Put simply, no one has ever observed the interconnecting continuum of functional forms linking all known past and present species of life. The concept of the continuity of nature has existed in the mind of man, **never** in the facts of nature (pp. 16,327,353, emp. in orig.).

In 1987, two years after Denton's book was published, Swedish biologist Søren Løvtrup wrote in an even stronger vein:

After this step-wise elimination, only one possibility remains: **the Darwinian theory of natural selection**, whether or not coupled with Mendelism, **is false**. I have already shown that the arguments advanced by the early champions were not very compelling, and that there are now considerable numbers of empirical facts which do not fit with the theory. Hence, **to all intents and purposes the theory has been falsified**, so why has it not been abandoned? I think the answer is that current evolutionists follow Darwin's example—they refuse to accept falsifying evidence (p. 352, emp. added).

In his 1988 book, *The Cosmic Blueprint: New Discoveries in Nature's Creative Ability to Order the Universe*, Australian physicist Paul Davies wrote: "There is for me powerful evidence that there is something going on behind it all. It seems as though somebody has fine-tuned nature's numbers to make the Universe. **The impression of design is overwhelming**" (p. 203, emp. added). That same year, evolutionary physicist George Greenstein wrote:

As we survey all the evidence, the thought insistently arises that some supernatural agency—or, rather, Agency—must be involved. Is it possible that suddenly, without intending to, we have stumbled upon scientific proof of the existence of a Supreme Being? Was it God who stepped in and so providentially crafted the cosmos for our benefit? (1988, p. 27).

In 1992, Arno Penzias (who fourteen years earlier had shared the 1978 Nobel Prize in physics with Robert W. Wilson for their discovery of the so-called "background radiation" left over from the Big Bang) declared:

Astronomy leads us to a unique event, a universe which was created out of nothing, one with the very delicate balance needed to provide exactly the conditions required to permit life, and one which has an underlying (one might say "supernatural") plan [p. 83, parenthetical comment in orig.].

In his 1994 book, *The Physics of Immortality*, Frank Tipler (who coauthored with John D. Barrow the massive 1986 volume, *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle*) wrote:

When I began my career as a cosmologist some twenty years ago, I was a convinced atheist. I never in my wildest dreams imagined that one day I would be writing a book purporting to show that the central claims of Judeo-Christian theology are in fact true, that these claims are straightforward deductions of the laws of physics as we now understand them. I have been forced into these conclusions by the inexorable logic of my own special branch of physics (Preface).

One year later, NASA astronomer John O'Keefe admitted:

We are, by astronomical standards, a pampered, cosseted, cherished group of creatures.... If the Universe had not been made with the most exacting precision we could never have come into existence. It is my view that these circumstances indicate the universe was created for man to live in (1995, p. 200).

Then, in 1998, evolutionist Michael Denton shocked everyone with his new book, *Nature's Destiny*, when he admitted:

Because this book presents a teleological interpretation of the cosmos which has obvious theological implications, it is important to emphasize at the outset that the argument presented here is entirely consistent with the basic naturalistic assumption of modern science—that the cosmos is a **seamless unity which can be comprehended ultimately in its entirety by human reason and in which all phenomena, including life and evolution and the origin of man, are ultimately explicable in terms of natural processes....**

Although this is obviously a book with many theological implications, my initial intention was not specifically to develop an argument for design; however, as I researched more deeply into the topic and as the manuscript went through successive drafts, it became increasingly clear that the laws of nature were fine-tuned on earth to a remarkable degree and that the

emerging picture provided powerful and self-evident support for the traditional anthropocentric teleological view of the cosmos. Thus, by the time the final draft was finished, the book had become in effect an essay in natural theology in the spirit and tradition of William Paley's *Natural Theology* (pp. xvii-xviii,xi-xii, emp. in orig.).

Such quotations could be multiplied almost endlessly. Even a cursory examination shows that there is much more that is "unknown" than "known" in the evolutionary scenario.

First, evolution cannot be proven true unless nonliving can give rise to living—that is to say, spontaneous generation must have occurred. Evolution, in its entirety, is based on this principle. But what evidence is there that the concept of spontaneous generation is, in fact, correct? What evidence is there that life arose from nonlife? In their 1965 biology textbook, *Life: An Introduction to Biology*, evolutionists Simpson and Beck begrudgingly admitted that the spontaneous generation of life "does not occur in any known case" (p. 261). Twelve years later, in his book, *Until the Sun Dies*, Robert Jastrow, the founder and former director of the Goddard Institute for Space Studies at NASA, summarized the situation as follows:

According to this story, every tree, every blade of grass, and every creature in the sea and on the land evolved out of one parent strand of molecular matter drifting lazily in a warm pool. What concrete evidence supports that remarkable theory of the origin of life? There is none (1977, p. 60).

Four years after that, in 1981, renowned British astrophysicist Sir Fred Hoyle complained in *Nature* magazine:

The likelihood of the spontaneous formation of life from inanimate matter is one to a number with 40,000 noughts after it.... It is big enough to bury Darwin and the whole theory of evolution. There was no primeval soup, neither on this planet nor on any other, and **if the beginnings of life were not random, they must therefore have been the product of purposeful intelligence** (1981b, 294:148, emp. added).

A decade later, in 1991, Hoyle and Wickramasinghe published in *New Scientist* an article with a catchy title ("Where Microbes Boldly Went") but a dismal message—dismal, that is, for evolutionists who are forced by their theory to believe in the concept of biochemical evolution that allegedly produced the first life on Earth by chance processes.

Precious little in the way of biochemical evolution could have happened on the Earth. It is easy to show that the two thousand or so enzymes that span the whole of life could not have evolved on the Earth. If one counts the number of trial assemblies of amino acids that are



needed to give rise to the enzymes, the probability of their discovery by random shufflings turns out to be less than 1 in  $10^{40,000}$  (91:415).

Those “40,000 noughts” with which Dr. Hoyle was struggling in 1981 still were a thorn in his side ten years later. And the situation has not improved in the years since. One of the “scientific heavyweights” in origin-of-life studies from an evolutionary viewpoint is Leslie Orgel, who has spent most of his professional career attempting to uncover the secrets of how life began on this planet. In the October 1994 issue of *Scientific American*, Dr. Orgel authored an article titled “The Origin of Life on Earth” in which he admitted:

It is extremely improbable that proteins and nucleic acids, both of which are structurally complex, arose spontaneously in the same place at the same time. Yet it also seems impossible to have one without the other. **And so, at first glance, one might have to conclude that life could never, in fact, have originated by chemical means....**

We proposed that RNA might well have come first and established what is now called the RNA world.... This scenario could have occurred, we noted, **if prebiotic** RNA had two properties not evident today: a capacity to replicate without the help of proteins and an ability to catalyze every step of protein synthesis....

The precise events giving rise to the RNA world remain unclear. As we have seen, investigators have proposed many hypotheses, but evidence in favor of each of them is fragmentary at best. **The full details of how the RNA world, and life, emerged may not be revealed in the near future** (271:78,83, emp. added).

It is not enough, of course, “just” to establish the possibility of spontaneous generation/biochemical evolution. Evolutionists also must explain the origin of the dazzlingly complex DNA/RNA genetic code that is the basis of every living organism. But, just as their fanciful-but-failed scenarios for the explanation of the naturalistic origin of life have left them lacking any substantive answers, so their theories regarding the origin of the genetic code have failed just as miserably. One evolutionist, John Maddox, confessed as much in a curiously titled but revealing article, “The Genesis Code by Numbers,” in *Nature*.

It was already clear that the genetic code is not merely an abstraction but the embodiment of life’s mechanisms; the consecutive triplets of nucleotides in DNA (called codons) are inherited but they also guide the construction of proteins. **So it is disappointing that the origin of the genetic code is still as obscure as the origin of life itself** (1994, 367:111, emp. added).

Second, not only is the inability of **how** to get life started a serious stumbling block for evolutionists, but now the **where** of this supposed happening has been called into question as well. Hoyle and Wickramasinghe have argued that life fell to Earth from space after having evolved from the warm, wet nucleus of a comet (see Gribbin, 1981, 89[3]:14; Hoyle and Wickramasinghe, 1981). Sir Francis Crick, co-discoverer of the DNA molecule, has suggested that life actually was sent here from other planets (1981). Meanwhile, back on Earth, Sidney Fox and colleagues have proposed that life began on the side of a primitive volcano on our primeval planet when a number of dry amino acids “somehow” formed there at exactly the right temperature, for exactly the right length of time, to form exactly the right molecules necessary for living systems (1977). Evolutionists are fond of saying (remember Gould?) that there is no controversy over the **fact** of evolution; it is only the “how” about which they disagree. Not true. They cannot even agree on the “where.”

Of course, some evolutionists will attempt to argue that such matters are not properly discussed as a part of the evolutionary process, and that evolution *per se* only applies to biological change. Dobzhansky, however, settled that issue when he stated:

Evolution comprises all the stages of development of the universe: the cosmic, biological, and human or cultural developments. Attempts to restrict the concept of evolution to biology are gratuitous. Life is a product of the evolution of inorganic matter, and man is a product of the evolution of life (1967, 155:409).

Third, in his January 1987 *Discover* article, Dr. Gould, discussed some of the “data” that establish evolution as a “fact” (his statement was that “facts are the world’s data”). An examination of these data **disproves** the very thing that Gould was attempting to prove—the “factuality” of evolution. He commented:

We have direct evidence of small-scale changes in controlled laboratory experiments of the past hundred years (on bacteria, on almost every measurable property of the fruit fly *Drosophila*), or observed in nature (color changes in moth wings, development of metal tolerance in plants growing near industrial waste heaps) or produced during a few thousand years of human breeding and agriculture (8[1]:65, parenthetical items in orig.).

Dr. Gould thus wants us to believe that such changes **prove** evolution to be a fact. Yet notice what the professor conspicuously omitted. He failed to tell the reader what he stated publicly during a speech at Hobart College, February 14, 1980, when he said:

A mutation doesn’t produce major new raw material. You don’t make new species by mutating the species.... That’s a common idea people have; that evolution is due to random mutations.

A mutation is **not** the cause of evolutionary change (as quoted in Sunderland, 1984, p. 106, emp. in orig.).

On the one hand, Gould wants us to believe that bacteria and fruit flies have experienced “small-scale changes” via genetic mutations and thus serve as excellent examples of the “fact” of evolution. But on the other hand, he tells us that mutations (“Small-scale changes”) don’t cause evolution. Which is it?

On March 4, 1982, Colin Patterson participated in a radio interview for the British Broadcasting Corporation. In that interview, he admitted: “No one has ever produced a species by mechanisms of natural selection. No one has ever gotten near it and most of the current argument in neo-Darwinism is about this question: how a species originates” (1982). If evolution does not occur by mutation, and it does not occur by natural selection, how, then, could evolution be considered a “fact”? The only two known mechanisms have been admitted—even by evolutionists—to be completely impotent in this regard. Keith Thompson, professor of biology and dean of the graduate school at Yale University, admitted as much when he wrote in the *American Scientist*:

Twenty years ago Mayr, in his *Animal Species and Evolution*, seemed to have shown that if evolution is a jigsaw puzzle, then at least all the edge pieces were in place. But today we are less confident and the whole subject is in the most exciting ferment. Evolution is both troubled from without by the nagging insistence of antiscientists [his term for creationists—BT] and nagged from within by the troubling complexities of genetic and developmental mechanisms and new questions about the central mystery—speciation itself (1982, p. 529).

Further, notice that in his article Gould made the same mistake that Darwin made 128 years earlier—extrapolating far beyond the available evidence. Darwin looked at finches’ beaks, and from small changes he extrapolated to state that evolution from one group to another had occurred. Gould looked at changes in fruit flies or bacteria and did exactly the same thing, all the while failing to tell the reader that the bacteria never changed into anything else, and the fruit flies always remained fruit flies. If the “data” are the “facts,” and if the “data” actually **disprove** evolution, how is it then that evolution can be called, in any sense of the word, a “fact”?

The standard-usage dictionary definition of a fact is something that is “an actual occurrence,” something that has “actual existence.” Can any process be called “an actual occurrence” when the knowledge of how, when, where, what, and why is missing? Were someone to suggest that a certain skyscraper had merely “happened,” but that the how, when, where, what, and why were complete unknowns, would you be likely to call it a fact, or an “unproven assertion”? To ask is to answer. Gould, Futuyma, Simpson, and other evolutionists may ask us to believe

that their unproven hypothesis somehow has garnered to itself the status of a "fact," but if they do, they will have to come up with something based on evidence to substantiate their wishful thinking. Merely trying to alter, for their own purposes, the definition of fact will not suffice. Pardon us for our incredulity, but when the best they can offer is a completely insufficient explanation for life's origin in the first place, an equally insufficient mechanism for the evolution of that life once it "somehow" got started via naturalistic processes, and a fossil record full of "missing links" to document its supposed course through time, we will continue to relegate their "fact" to the status of a theory (or better yet, a hypothesis). Adulterating the definition of the word fact is a poor attempt by Gould (and others) to lend credence to a theory that lacks any factual merit whatsoever. Theodore N. Tahmisian, a nuclear physicist with the Atomic Energy Commission, once stated:

Scientists who go about teaching that evolution is a fact of life are great con men, and the story they are telling may be the greatest hoax ever. In explaining evolution we do not have one iota of fact.... It is a tangled mishmash of guessing games and figure juggling (as quoted in Jackson, 1974, p. 37).

James E. Lloyd, editor of the *Florida Entomologist*, condemned evolution with faint praise (while simultaneously attempting to prop up its alleged factuality) when he wrote:

Evolution is, for all practical purposes, fact. Natural selection, though it may be tautological and philosophically a poor theory in the various ways it is usually stated (e.g., "survival of the fittest"), and perhaps not even capable of being falsified, is nevertheless profound and axiomatic. It provides the most useful insight for problem solving that biological science has, and is the heart and soul of behavioral ecology (1982, 65:1).

Natural selection, says Lloyd, is a tautology (i.e., it reasons in circles). Yet its major flaws notwithstanding, evolution is to be accepted as a "fact" all the same. If this is the best evolutionists have to offer as support for their claim of evolution's factuality, it should be obvious to even the most casual observer that such a claim is completely vacuous. Little wonder, then, that evolutionist Michael Denton wrote concerning Darwin:

His general theory that all life on earth had originated and evolved by a gradual successive accumulation of fortuitous mutations, is still, as it was in Darwin's time, a highly speculative hypothesis entirely without direct factual support and very far from that self-evident axiom some of its more aggressive advocates would have us believe (1985, p. 77).

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I believe Jesus  
lived, but he  
was not the Son  
of God.

There is too  
much suffering  
in this world for  
God to exist.

The origin of man is the evolutionary process.

Jesus was a great leader, but he did not resurrect from the dead.