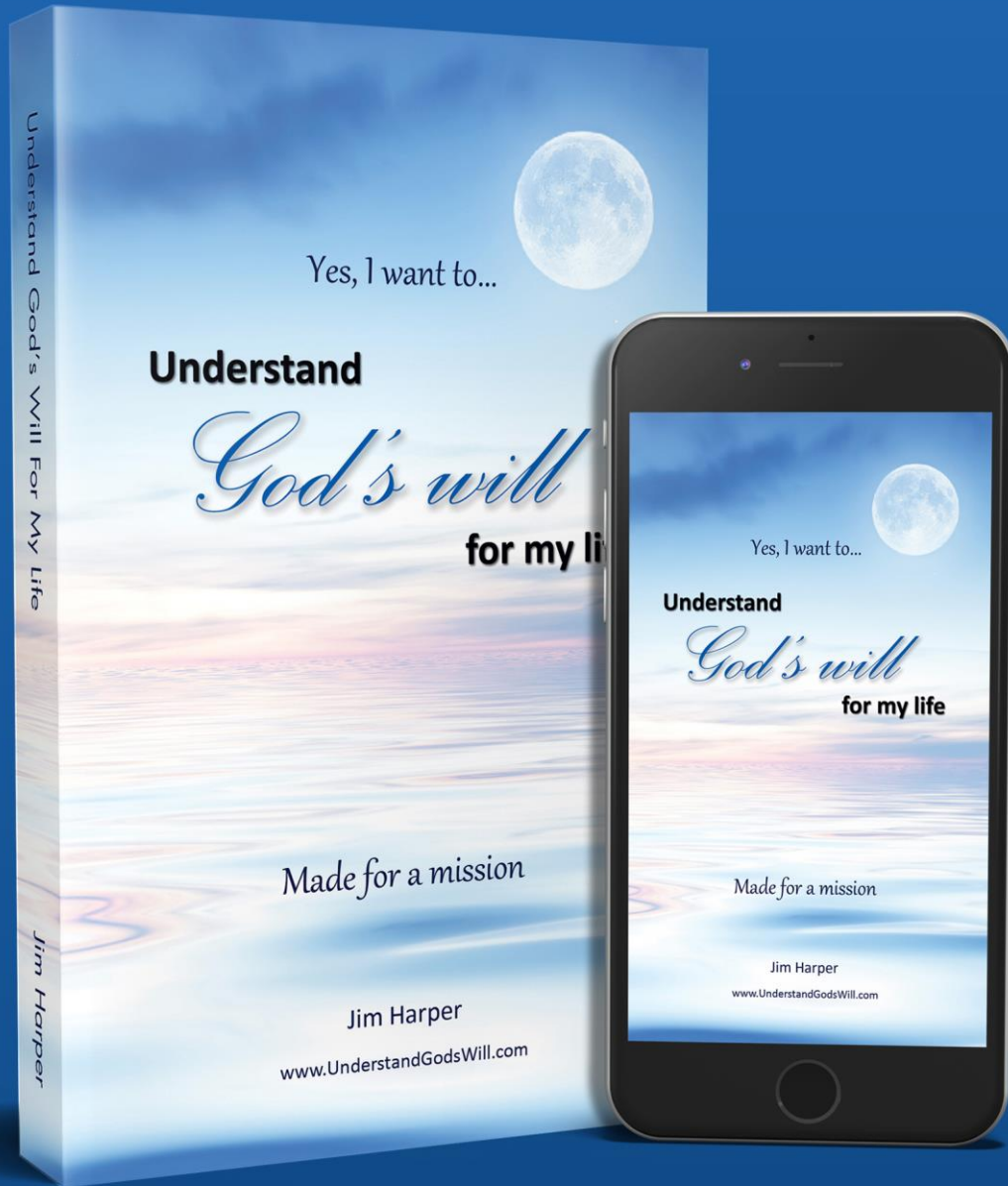


Group Leader Study Guide



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(Please tell others)

What readers are saying

From Dave T.

Jim, what a GREAT book! So many of my questions have been answered. My life and faith will be making some significant changes, in fact, it has already begun. Somehow, I "feel different" now. Thanks again and thanks for being my friend.

From Joyce L.

Aloha Jim, I am impressed and am being blessed as I read your book. I have a Bible Study in my home on Tuesday mornings with about 20 ladies. I will tell them about what I have read and the great value and effectiveness for all who will read the book. Now that I have your book I can think of several friends I'd like to give it to, so am even more eager. I told one of my friends about it and she would like to give it to her pastor. One of my passions is writing. I can't even imagine the amount of time you put into this amazing, easy to read, right on book. Love the way you substantiate everything you say with a scripture. I know God will use this in a mighty way.

From Vicky H.

Your book is a treasure for both the seeker who is searching for meaning and purpose in life, and those who are looking to deepen their faith and learn more from scripture. You provide friendly, teachable, and pragmatic examples of how one can live a purposeful life in today's world using God's advice. You make it simple by getting to the core of God's message in a relevant and personal way, guiding the reader through real life questions, and offering specific passages from both the New and Old Testament. Anyone who reads your book can glean valuable insight from hundreds of scriptural gems that are both thought-provoking and encouraging, with the goal to be life changing. I will highly recommend it to others!

From Darsi B.

Thank you for the privilege of reading your book. God led you to bring His foundational truths "front and center" and make them easy to digest and understand and without watering down their impact or power. Thank you for being obedient and thank you for sharing the Light of the world with everyone! Phil 1:6 "Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Jesus Christ." Be strong and courageous. The Lord your God is with you!

From Diane B.

Thank you for letting me read your book! I can see that you put your whole heart into it - and I pray the Lord uses it to bring many into a forever relationship with Him!

From Nikki F.

Jim, your book is AMAZING!!! I loved it! It is very, very good, and I can imagine a six week study around it. Thank you Jim! I am going to have my Jim read it now, starting at the beginning.

From Pastor Paul

Jim Harper has a real & honest faith. It shows in his encouraging & challenging book. The title really is a provocative question we all need to answer. Jim provides answers that connect with everyday life and are firmly grounded in the Bible. Definitely worth the read no matter what you currently believe.

From Chris N.

Thanks so much for giving me the opportunity to read your book. Wow, I'm just blown away. I LOVED it! It's so important to share the truth and shine the Light for Christ. Love to hear about how God is working through you to help "seek and save the lost" (Luke 19:10, NIV).

From Pastor Aaron

I really enjoyed reading a draft version of your book. You have done a fantastic job digging into the Word. You tackle a ton in this book. Once you get it edited and refined...it is going to be a powerful book. Well done!

Study Guide

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Note: the questions in this study guide are listed in the same order that you will read them in our book, or hear them in our audio book (http://understandgodswill.com/listen_to_our_book.aspx). This means if you read our book or listen to our audio book with this study guide in front of you – you will be able to write down your answers in the same order that you will read or hear them. Also, if you listen to our audio book you will also be able to “pause” the audio player during the writing of your answers or during any group discussion that you have.

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Chapter 1: I was made – to know God

(Please listen to our Chapter 1 audio file on our web site)

Study Questions

1. To learn who God is – what is extremely important?

You must open your heart. Your heart is the door through which God will enter so you can understand who He is.¹ God cannot reveal Himself to you if your heart is closed. If you seek Him with all your heart He promises you that you will find Him.²

2. God told us He was coming to live among us hundreds of years before He actually came. What are some of the things that He foretold in the Old Testament?

- He told us He would be coming to live among us.^{3 4}
- He told us He would be born of a virgin and His name would be Immanuel, Prince of Peace, Wonderful Counselor, and Mighty God.^{5 6}

¹ Matthew 7:8 For everyone who asks receives. He who seeks finds. To him who knocks it will be opened.

² Deuteronomy 4:29 But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul.

³ Zechariah 2:10 Sing for joy and be glad, O daughter of Zion; for behold I am coming and I will dwell in your midst," declares the LORD. ¹¹ "Many nations will join themselves to the LORD in that day and will become My people. Then I will dwell in your midst, and you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you.

⁴ Leviticus 26:12 I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you will be my people.

⁵ Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin will conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel ("Immanuel" means "God with us.").

⁶ Isaiah 9:6 For to us a child is born. To us a son is given; and the government will be on his shoulders. His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Chapter 1: I was made - to know God Study Guide for the Group Leader

- He told us that for a long time He had kept silent about sending His son to earth to save us.⁷
- He told us He would bring justice to the nations⁸ and He would make a new covenant for His people.⁹
- He told us He would write His laws in our minds and on our hearts.¹⁰
- He told us that He would bear the sins of many¹¹ and that our sins would be forgiven.^{12 13}
- He told us He would die, be pierced for our transgressions, be crushed for our iniquities, and by His wounds we would be healed!¹⁴
- He told us He would rise from the dead.¹⁵
- He told us He would ascend to heaven.¹⁶
- He told us He would pour out His Spirit on all people.^{17 18 19}

⁷ Isaiah 42:14 "I have been silent a long time. I have been quiet and restrained myself. Now I will cry out like a travailing woman. I will both gasp and pant. 15 I will destroy mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs. I will make the rivers islands, and will dry up the pools. 16 I will bring the blind by a way that they don't know. I will lead them in paths that they don't know. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked places straight. I will do these things, and I will not forsake them.

⁸ Isaiah 42:1 "Behold, my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen, in whom my soul delights-- I have put my Spirit on him. He will bring justice to the nations.

⁹ Jeremiah 31:31 "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. ³³ "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

¹⁰ Hebrews 8:10 "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. After those days," says the Lord; "I will put my laws into their mind, I will also write them on their heart. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

¹¹ Isaiah 53:6 All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.

¹² Isaiah 1:18 "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

¹³ Zechariah 3:9 For behold, the stone that I have set before Joshua; on one stone are seven eyes. Behold, I will engrave an inscription on it,' declares the LORD of hosts, 'and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.

¹⁴ Isaiah 53:5 But he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought our peace was on him; and by his wounds we are healed.

¹⁵ Psalms 16:10 For you will not leave my soul in Sheol, neither will you allow your holy one to see corruption.

¹⁶ Psalms 68:18 You have ascended on high. You have led away captives. You have received gifts among men, yes, among the rebellious also, that Yah God might dwell there.

¹⁷ Isaiah 44:3 For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, and streams on the dry ground. I will pour my Spirit on your seed, and my blessing on your offspring.

¹⁸ Joel 2:28 "It will happen afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; and your sons and your daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams. Your young men will see visions. 29 And also on the servants and on the handmaids in those days, I will pour out my Spirit.

¹⁹ Ezekiel 39:29 I will not hide My face from them any longer, for I will have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel," declares the Lord GOD.

3. After Jesus started His ministry - what did He tell us regarding His reason for coming?

- He told us He is the image of the invisible God.^{20 21}
- He told us why He had to be made human in every way.²²
- He told us He had to come to reach the sinners.^{23 24}
- He told us He would provide a new temple (Himself) after three days - not built by human hands.²⁵
- He told us He came to give His life for many.²⁶
- He told one of his followers (Peter) that he would deny Him three times - before it actually happened.²⁷
- He told one of his followers (Judas) that he would betray Him - before it actually happened.^{28 29}
- He told His followers that He would be condemned to death and that He would be mocked, flogged, beaten, spit upon, and killed. He told his followers that after all of this happened He would rise from the dead after three days.^{30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39}

²⁰ Colossians 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

²¹ Hebrews 1:3 His Son is the radiance of his glory, the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself made purification for our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

²² Hebrews 2:17 Therefore he was obligated in all things to be made like his brothers, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make atonement for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For in that he himself has suffered being tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted.

²³ Matthew 9:12 When Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are healthy have no need for a physician, but those who are sick do. ¹³ But you go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' for I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

²⁴ Isaiah 53:5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. ⁶ All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.

²⁵ Mark 14:58 "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.'"

²⁶ Matthew 20:28 even as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

²⁷ Mark 14:29 But Peter said to him, "Although all will be offended, yet I will not." ³⁰ Jesus said to him, "Most certainly I tell you, that you today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." ³¹ But he spoke all the more, "If I must die with you, I will not deny you." They all said the same thing.

²⁸ John 13:18 I don't speak concerning all of you. I know whom I have chosen. But that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'He who eats bread with me has lifted up his heel against me.' ¹⁹ From now on, I tell you before it happens, that when it happens, you may believe that I am he.

²⁹ Mark 14:17 When it was evening he came with the twelve. ¹⁸ As they sat and were eating, Jesus said, "Most certainly I tell you, one of you will betray me--he who eats with me."

³⁰ Luke 18:32 For he will be delivered up to the Gentiles, will be mocked, treated shamefully, and spit on. ³³ They will scourge and kill him. On the third day, he will rise again.

³¹ Mark 9:31 "The Son of Man is being handed over to the hands of men, and they will kill him; and when he is killed, on the third day he will rise again."

³² John 16:16 A little while, and you will not see me. Again a little while, and you will see me." ¹⁷ Some of his disciples therefore said to one another, "What is this that he says to us, 'A little while, and you won't see me, and again a little while, and you will see me;' and, 'Because I go to the Father?'" ¹⁸ They said therefore, "What is this that he says, 'A little while?' We don't know what he is saying." ¹⁹ Therefore Jesus perceived that they wanted to ask him, and he said to them, "Do you inquire among yourselves concerning this, that I said, 'A little while, and you won't see me, and again a little while, and you will see me?'" ²⁰ Most certainly I tell you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy.

³³ Mark 10:33 "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem. The Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes. They will condemn him to death, and will deliver him to the Gentiles. ³⁴ They will mock him, spit on him, scourge him, and kill him. On the third day he will rise again."

³⁴ John 17:11 I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them through your name which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are.

³⁵ Luke 24:45 Then he opened their minds, that they might understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ Behold, I send forth the promise of my Father on you. But wait in the city of Jerusalem until you are clothed with power from on high."

³⁶ Luke 13:32 He said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I complete my mission. ³³ Nevertheless I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the next day, for it can't be that a prophet perish outside of Jerusalem.'

³⁷ Luke 18:31 He took the twelve aside, and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all the things that are written through the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be completed. ³² For he will be delivered up to the Gentiles, will be mocked, treated shamefully, and spit on. ³³ They will scourge and kill him. On the third day, he will rise again."

³⁸ Matthew 17:22 While they were staying in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is about to be delivered up into the hands of men, ²³ and they will kill him, and the third day he will be raised up." They were exceedingly sorry.

³⁹ Matthew 16:21 From that time, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up.

- He told us that His death would begin a new covenant for all people.⁴⁰
- He told us that for those who believe in Him their sins would be forgiven⁴¹ and they will find life.⁴²
- After He rose from the dead He told us that He had defeated Satan and that unless He left the earth - God's Holy Spirit couldn't come to live within us.⁴³

4. Why did God need to live among us?

God sent his Son, Jesus, to live among us because no matter who we are, or what we have done, God has incredible love for each and every one of us.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. John 3:16-17

God's desire was, and continues to be, to deliver His truth in a world full of untruths. Because He knew we would sin, He knew we would be in need of a redeemer. He also knew that we could never redeem ourselves. No person with any amount of sin could qualify to redeem us with his life. This would be a sinful man trying to redeem a sinful man - and this equation just doesn't work. It had to be a person without sin - and no human could ever qualify.

In the Bible darkness is representative of sin and judgment.⁴⁴ Sin in our life darkens our understanding and knocks us out of alignment with God's will. It is like hitting a pothole while driving a car. We all hit potholes (i.e., we all sin), and every time we hit a pothole our internal steering is knocked out of alignment with God's will. If we hit a pothole that is really deep it can cause serious problems, possible injury, and even death.

5. What is God's message associated with? And why?

We all know what light is. We depend on light when we are in the dark so we don't stumble. This is why God's message is associated with light⁴⁵ because it provides a direction and a way out of a dark world. Jesus came to earth so we don't need to live in darkness. He came so we can have life - and live it more abundantly.⁴⁶ And when we live according to His truth we can also shine God's light⁴⁷ toward others who are driving toward potholes - so they can see and avoid problems that are ahead of them as well.

⁴⁰ Isaiah 42:6 I am the LORD, I have called You in righteousness, I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You, and I will appoint You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the dungeon and those who dwell in darkness from the prison.

⁴¹ Acts 13:38 Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, ³⁹ and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses.

⁴² Proverbs 8:35 "For he who finds me finds life and obtains favor from the LORD. ³⁶ "But he who sins against me injures himself; all those who hate me love death."

⁴³ John 16:7 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I don't go away, the Counselor won't come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸ When he has come, he will convict the world about sin, about righteousness, and about judgment; ⁹ about sin, because they don't believe in me; ¹⁰ about righteousness, because I am going to my Father, and you won't see me anymore; ¹¹ about judgment, because the prince of this world has been judged.

⁴⁴ 1 John 1:5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.

⁴⁵ Psalm 18:28 You, Lord, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light.

⁴⁶ John 10:10 The thief only comes to steal, kill, and destroy. I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.

⁴⁷ Matthew 5:16 Even so, let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

6. Does God love you even if you don't love Him?

Do you know that God loves you even when you don't love Him?⁴⁸ God is at work in your life even if you don't know Him or love Him.

Not wanting to learn who God is can result in a spiritual death which will create a separation from the One who created you. If you are indifferent about God (i.e., you choose to ignore Him), or if you choose to actively oppose Him (i.e., you deny Him), both of these will result in a separation from God and you will never learn His plan for your life.

If we accept God and His Word we will begin to gain the wisdom and knowledge that He wishes for each of us.⁴⁹ It's a free gift - but we must accept His gift. We must invite Him into our heart so He can reveal Himself to us.

7. What does Satan want? What tactics does Satan use?

Satan does not want you to learn God's plan for your life and the inheritance God has for you.⁵⁰ Satan is opposed to God's plan and he wants everyone who has been created in God's image to be destroyed.^{51 52}

Satan would prefer to destroy God, but he can't, so next in line is you and me. Satan knows that if he can destroy you and me he can make God very sad - and Satan is working overtime to do just that. Simply turn on the news and you will see how successful he is. Someday Satan and all of his minions will be vanquished, but for now he has free reign and he is destroying people at a record pace. But it doesn't need to be this way; we simply need to learn his tricks. We need to become wise to his deceptions, and we need to learn how to avoid Satan's potholes that are meant to hurt us.

One of Satan's spirits, a fallen angel, even interrupted Jesus once as Jesus was preaching in a synagogue.⁵³ If the devil will attempt to interrupt Jesus in a synagogue, he will certainly attempt to interrupt you as you attempt to learn God's will for your life. So be on guard. We must all learn to recognize God's voice the same way we recognize a friend's voice.

⁴⁸ 1 John 4:10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son as the atoning sacrifice.

⁴⁹ Proverbs 2:1 My son, if you will receive my words and treasure my commandments within you, ² make your ear attentive to wisdom, incline your heart to understanding; ³ for if you cry for discernment, lift your voice for understanding; ⁴ if you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures; ⁵ then you will discern the fear of the LORD and discover the knowledge of God. ⁶ For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding. ⁷ He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk in integrity, ⁸ guarding the paths of justice, and He preserves the way of His godly ones. ⁹ Then you will discern righteousness and justice and equity and every good course. ¹⁰ For wisdom will enter your heart and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; ¹¹ discretion will guard you, understanding will watch over you.

⁵⁰ Ephesians 1:11 in whom also we were assigned an inheritance, having been foreordained according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his will;

⁵¹ John 10:10 The thief only comes to steal, kill, and destroy. I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.

⁵² Mark 4:15 The ones by the road are the ones where the word is sown; and when they have heard, immediately Satan comes, and takes away the word which has been sown in them.

⁵³ Mark 1:21 They went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath day he entered into the synagogue and taught. ²² They were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as having authority, and not as the scribes. ²³ Immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, ²⁴ saying, "Ha! What do we have to do with you, Jesus, you Nazarene? Have you come to destroy us? I know you who you are: the Holy One of God!" ²⁵ Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" ²⁶ The unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him.

8. What must I do to protect myself from Satan's many schemes?

Do you think the Lord sits by as Satan roars his messages to the world and remains silent? Not at all.⁵⁴ The Lord is constantly convicting us to testify to His truth.⁵⁵ His Word pierces our conscience. We must continue to keep watch because Satan is unrelenting. If we can recognize that certain messages do not align with the Lord's truth we will have the confidence to say "No!" to those messages. We will also have the ability to warn others about Satan's many schemes as well.

In trying to recognize the Lord's voice it is important to understand that some people, even some of our closest friends, can cause interference. Actually, it's more like static. The static can be so bad it can drown out God's Word. It is absolutely critical that we learn what sin is, especially sin in our own lives. We must be able to clear away the static. We must be willing to talk with people who are willing to talk about sin, and sin for what it is: a violation of God's standards.

So we need to watch out for static in our lives, which might include some of our friends. Sin is a sin and none of our friends' static (i.e., their opinions) can change that. Don't let your friends' static try to convince you that it is okay because "everybody else is doing it." It isn't. It's a violation of God's standards. Read the instruction manual. The instruction manual doesn't change.

9. Who has been given control of the world in which we live?

God has given Satan control of the world until the end times^{56 57} at which time Satan will be vanquished and sent to hell for eternity. But until that time we must become wise and our minds must be transformed⁵⁸ so we can recognize Satan's many deceptions. Remember, Satan is constantly looking for people to devour.⁵⁹ He is so cunning he even attempts to deceive teachers of the Bible.⁶⁰ But God promises us that He will instruct us and guide us⁶¹ and He will lead us in the right direction - around the potholes - if we follow Him. This will require that we study His Word so we can make decisions that are compatible with and in alignment with His will.

⁵⁴ Isaiah 30:30 And the LORD will cause His voice of authority to be heard, and the descending of His arm to be seen in fierce anger, and in the flame of a consuming fire in cloudburst, downpour and hailstones.

⁵⁵ John 18:37 Pilate therefore said to him, "Are you a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this reason I have been born, and for this reason I have come into the world, that I should testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."

⁵⁶ Revelation 17:17 For God has put in their hearts to do what he has in mind, and to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God should be accomplished.

⁵⁷ 2 Corinthians 4:4 in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the Good News of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn on them.

⁵⁸ Romans 12:2 Don't be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what is the good, well-pleasing, and perfect will of God.

⁵⁹ 1 Peter 5:8 Be sober and self-controlled. Be watchful. Your adversary the devil, walks around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. 9 Withstand him steadfast in your faith, knowing that your brothers who are in the world are undergoing the same sufferings..

⁶⁰ Mark 13:22 For there will arise false christs and false prophets, and will show signs and wonders, that they may lead astray, if possible, even the chosen ones. 23 But you watch. "Behold, I have told you all things beforehand.

⁶¹ Psalms 32:8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go. I will counsel you with my eye on you.

10. What are some things that God wants us to know?

Here are some things that God wants you to know:

- He will give you wisdom if you ask and believe that He will give it to you.⁶²
- He has a plan for you.⁶³
- God's will is that you have a relationship with Him through His Son.⁶⁴
- Honor God and believe in Him so He can reveal Himself to you.⁶⁵

As you hear God's voice and follow Him, constantly ask Him to evaluate your motives. You must be willing to change direction as He leads you.⁶⁶

⁶² James 1:5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach; and it will be given to him.

⁶³ Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. ¹² Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. ¹³ You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

⁶⁴ 1 Timothy 2:4 who desires all people to be saved and come to full knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all; the testimony in its own times;.

⁶⁵ Romans 12:1 Therefore I urge you, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service. 2 Don't be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what is the good, well-pleasing, and perfect will of God.

⁶⁶ James 1:5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach; and it will be given to him



Chapter 2: I was made – in God's image

(Please listen to our Chapter 2 audio file on our web site)

Study Questions

1. Who was around when the universe was created? When the earth was created? When mankind was created?

In the beginning, God said "Let us make mankind in our image."⁶⁷ Did you ever notice the word "our" in this verse? Who do you think "our" is? This will be explained in more detail a little later but "our" is (1) God the Father, (2) God's Son, Jesus, and (3) God's Holy Spirit.

So when God said "Let us make mankind in our image" - this means God the Father, Jesus, and God's Holy Spirit were all present when mankind was created.⁶⁸ Yes, even Jesus was there. Jesus was there when the universe was created,⁶⁹ and Jesus was there when the earth began.⁷⁰ And yes, Jesus was there when a plan was put in place at the beginning of time to defeat evil and sin.

God knew what He was doing. His plan was already in place when man sinned in the Garden of Eden - and Jesus was central to that plan.

⁶⁷ Genesis 1:26 God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the sky, and over the livestock, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 God created man in his own image. In God's image he created him; male and female he created them.

⁶⁸ Genesis 2:7 Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. ⁸ The LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed. ³ Out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

⁶⁹ Colossians 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

⁷⁰ Isaiah 48:13 Yes, my hand has laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand has spread out the heavens: when I call to them, they stand up together.

2. What type of creation are we?

The Bible says we all carry the image of God within us. Look closely in the mirror for a moment. Can you even begin to comprehend how complex you are? You are not the result of a spontaneous reorganization of molecules, or a close cousin of animals. You are a creation that is great and wonderfully made⁷¹ - the most excellent of all of God's creations and a special expression of His divine nature.⁷² You are an incredibly complex and exquisite piece of art that is a direct gift from God. God knew you before you were born and He predestined you to be created in the likeness of His Son, Jesus.⁷³

But this doesn't mean that we, as humans, have any of God's unlimited characteristics, such as omnipotence, omnipresence, or omniscience. We are limited in our capabilities but we do have God's likeness in many areas

3. How am I "like" God?

1. Spirit

God is Spirit⁷⁴ - which means God is invisible. When the Bible says that we are created in God's image it means we have been given a spirit. It does not mean that God is a physical being, or that we are like God in physical form. Did you know that your body is just a temporary "dwelling" place in which the real you - your soul and your spirit - resides? God created your human body for your soul to exist until such time that your physical body dies.

2. Heart – Your Feelings and Emotions

God placed something else in your soul when He created you. He gave you a heart. We are not talking about the heart that pumps blood. We are talking about the heart that gives you the ability to feel: your emotions, your thoughts, and your beliefs. God gave you a heart so you can feel love, and compassion, as well as hundreds of other emotions. He has given you these feelings so you can better know Him and understand Him.

God wants you to understand the very intentions of His heart. God gave you the capacity to feel the same emotions that He feels. God wants you to love what He loves, and hate what He hates. God wants you to love Him with all your heart, mind, and soul.⁷⁵ That is why He created you in His own image, and that is also why He gave you a heart.

3. Relationships and Fellowship

Our Creator also created you to have a relationship with Him. God wants to have a rich and meaningful relationship with every one of His creations. The great news is, we can - if we choose to. But God will never force this relationship. He will never force His way into your heart. If He forces His way in, it won't be a relationship. When He knocks on your door (of your heart) He is hoping you will let Him in so He can tell you where you are going. He has a wonderful trip planned. But, unless you open the door of your heart you will never learn where His trip will take you. It's a destination you won't want to miss.

4. Free Will

God permits everyone to choose their own path and to make their own decisions. This is called free will. Just like the angels, we all possess free will. We can follow God's path (i.e., God's rules, meant to protect us), or we can follow our own path. If we don't follow God's path don't expect His protection. He will let you reap what you sow.

⁷¹ Psalms 139:13 For you formed my inmost being. You knit me together in my mother's womb. 14 I will give thanks to you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful. My soul knows that very well.

⁷² 2 Peter 1:4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

⁷³ Romans 8:29 For whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers 30 Whom he predestined, those he also called. Whom he called, those he also justified. Whom he justified, those he also glorified.

⁷⁴ John 4:24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

⁷⁵ Deuteronomy 6:5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶ These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart.

5. Conscience and Knowledge

You have been endowed with an intellect that is far superior to any animal, and you have also been given a mind that is capable of understanding. But where God's knowledge is unlimited,^{76 77} you are limited in your knowledge.⁷⁸ While animals act primarily on instinct, you are capable of looking beyond your needs. The Bible says that we all have knowledge of right and wrong implanted in our hearts.⁷⁹ Perhaps our ability to

6. Creativity

Just look around. Look at all that God has created on earth, in the sea, and in the heavens above.^{80 81 82 83} Also look around and see all of the incredible things that humans have created. It is quite obvious that humans are incredibly creative.

7. Wisdom

Wisdom is a characteristic that both God and man possess. Theologians usually use the term "omniscient" when speaking of God's infinite knowledge. God knows everything about everything. He knows what we are thinking,^{84 85} and He knows everything that will happen.⁸⁶ God cannot devise a bad plan because He knows the answer. His omniscience supports His wisdom. God also gives us wisdom,⁸⁷ but the wisdom of God and the wisdom of man is not the same. In fact, they are incompatible with each other.⁸⁸ True wisdom does not come from man, it comes from God.

God, through His wisdom, will bring about what He has promised in ways that you and I cannot even imagine.⁸⁹ But you must follow Him to learn what that is. If you lack wisdom you can ask God for it.⁹⁰ Wisdom, if used properly, can ensure moral goodness, and it can also be a guiding light for your life. Wisdom will steer you clear of Satan's potholes. Having true wisdom is not knowing about good and evil, it is knowing good *from* evil.⁹¹ Wisdom is about making proper choices. Believing in God, and Jesus, can be the beginning of your wisdom.⁹²

⁷⁶ Psalms 147:5 Great is our Lord, and mighty in power. His understanding is infinite.

⁷⁷ Isaiah 40:13 Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, or as His counselor has informed Him? ¹⁴With whom did He consult and who gave Him understanding? And who taught Him in the path of justice and taught Him knowledge and informed Him of the way of understanding.

⁷⁸ Isaiah 55:8 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nNor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. ⁹"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.

⁷⁹ Romans 2:15 in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, ¹⁶on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.

⁸⁰ Genesis 1:21 God created the large sea creatures, and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed, after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind. God saw that it was good.

⁸¹ Colossians 1:16 For by him all things were created, in the heavens and on the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through him, and for him.

⁸² Isaiah 40:26 Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these, who brings out their army by number. He calls them all by name. by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power, Not one is lacking.

⁸³ Isaiah 45:18 For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens, "I am the LORD, and there is none else."

⁸⁴ Ezekiel 11:5 Then the Spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and He said to me, "Say, 'Thus says the LORD, "So you think, house of Israel, for I know.

⁸⁵ Luke 5:22 But Jesus, perceiving their thoughts, answered them, "Why are you reasoning so in your hearts??"

⁸⁶ 2 Kings 8:10 Then Elisha said to him, "Go, say to him, 'You will surely recover,' but the LORD has shown me that he will certainly die."

⁸⁷ Proverbs 8:10 Take my instruction and not silver, and knowledge rather than choicest gold. ¹¹For wisdom is better than jewels; and all desirable things cannot compare with her.

⁸⁸ 1 Corinthians 1:18 For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are dying, but to us who are saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, I will bring the discernment of the discerning to nothing." ²⁰Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the lawyer of this world? Hasn't God made foolish the wisdom of this world? ²¹For seeing that in the wisdom of God, the world through its wisdom didn't know God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save those who believe.

⁸⁹ 1 Corinthians 2:9 But as it is written, "Things which an eye didn't see, and an ear didn't hear, which didn't enter into the heart of man, these God has prepared for those who love him." ¹⁰But to us, God revealed them through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.

⁹⁰ James 1:5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach; and it will be given to him. ⁶But let him ask in faith, without any doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed.

⁹¹ Isaiah 5:20 Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! ²¹Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight.

⁹² Psalms 111:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments; His praise endures forever!

8. Sovereign / Authority

We are also "like God" in the sense that we have sovereign authority. God has sovereign authority over the universe, and we have been given sovereign authority over the world in which we live.^{93 94} This sovereign authority, however, is not a birthright. It is a gift from God.⁹⁵ Just as God created and formed our world to His liking, we are now responsible for managing it. This is a responsibility that has been entrusted to us and we should not take it for granted. We will someday answer to God for the condition we leave it in.

9. Eternal Being

God is eternal⁹⁶ and the spirit within us is also eternal. If you haven't looked up the word "eternal" in the dictionary lately - it means "without a beginning, and without an end." Being eternal means it will last forever. The important question for all of us is: after our physical body dies will we live eternally in heaven,⁹⁷ or eternally in hell?^{98 99 100}
¹⁰¹ Eternity is a very long time.

⁹³ Genesis 9:3 Every moving thing that lives will be food for you. As the green herb, I have given everything to you.

⁹⁴ Genesis 9:7 Be fruitful and multiply. Bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply in it.

⁹⁵ Daniel 7:14 He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

⁹⁶ Daniel 4:3 How great are his signs! and how mighty are his wonders! his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation.

⁹⁷ Matthew 19:29 Everyone who has left houses, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, will receive one hundred times, and will inherit eternal life.

⁹⁸ Matthew 25:46 These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

⁹⁹ Revelation 14:11 The smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever.

¹⁰⁰ 2 Thessalonians 1:9 who will pay the penalty: eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might,

¹⁰¹ Revelation 21:8 But for the cowardly, unbelieving, sinners, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their part is in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.

4. Am I unique? And, does God really know everything about me?

Yes, you are different. You are very different from every other person who has ever lived. It was God's plan from the very beginning that all of His creations would inhabit the earth¹⁰² and that every person would be unique and fearfully and wonderfully made.¹⁰³ You weren't born by accident. God knit you together in your mother's womb.¹⁰⁴

From the very beginning God wanted you to be unique - while giving you some of the attributes and characteristics of your parents. That is why you may have some of your parent's physical features, and maybe even some of their behaviors, both good and bad.

When God created you He broke the mold. There is no other person on earth just like you. You are a "one and only." It says in the Bible that we were the clay and God was the potter.^{105 106} We were formed in His hand for a special purpose¹⁰⁷ which someday will be revealed. God was involved in your physical and psychological formation from the very beginning. He knows how many days you will live, and He knows all of the experiences that you will go through during your lifetime. He has a plan for you - a glorious plan. But you must believe. He can't reveal Himself to you, and He can't reveal His plan for you,¹⁰⁸ unless you open your heart and let Him in.

5. What does the Lord want to give me?

When you begin to understand that God designed you for a special purpose, and that His will is perfect, you will begin to understand that the unique gifts He has given you are meant to bless you. And when you delight in the gifts that God has given you He will give you the desires of your heart.¹⁰⁹ And when you have the right desires, He will fulfill those desires. It's a win-win. If we focus on the gifts the Lord has given us¹¹⁰ we can be content and we will no longer desire what others have. We won't need anything - except God. This is the Lord's plan for each of us. So be grateful for your uniqueness. Cherish your uniqueness. Don't try to be like others. It would be a very boring world indeed if God made us all alike.

¹⁰² Acts 17:26 He made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the surface of the earth, having determined appointed seasons, and the boundaries of their dwellings, 27 that they should seek the Lord, if perhaps they might reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. 28 'For in him we live, and move, and have our being.'

¹⁰³ Psalms 139:14 I will give thanks to you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful. My soul knows that very well.

¹⁰⁴ Psalms 139:13 For you formed my inmost being. You knit me together in my mother's womb.

¹⁰⁵ Isaiah 64:8 But now, O LORD, You are our Father, we are the clay, and You our potter; and all of us are the work of Your hand.

¹⁰⁶ Lamentations 4:2 The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, How are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!

¹⁰⁷ Romans 9:21 Or hasn't the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel for honor, and another for dishonor?

¹⁰⁸ Luke 2:26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah.

¹⁰⁹ Psalms 37:4 Delight yourself in the LORD; and He will give you the desires of your heart.

¹¹⁰ Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared before that we would walk in them.

6. When did the Lord put His plan in place for me?

Did you know that God put a plan in place for you and your life before the earth was formed?^{111 112 113} He also predestined you eons ago to live the life that you are living.¹¹⁴ His plan might include taking you over some bumpy roads in the bus that He is driving, but each of these bumpy roads has a purpose. They are for our spiritual development. You might be riding over some bumpy roads right now.

Riding over bumpy roads might be something that God feels that you need to experience. He might want you to see something, or feel something, or maybe experience something. It might include experiencing hardship. It might include experiencing pain, or loss. It might include experiencing His grace, possibly even a miracle. But it's all for a reason. God came and lived with us so we can believe in Him and trust in Him with our life and our future. Following Him requires faith, and with just a little bit of faith He promises us that nothing will be impossible for us.¹¹⁵

7. Did God create me this way (the way I am...) for a reason?

In God's eyes we have all been created just the way He wants us. We are all wonderfully made and His treasured possession.^{116 117} He has a plan for every single one of us.¹¹⁸ This means there is a special work that God has planned for you that only you can do, in just the way you can do it. There is nothing in your life that will be wasted. God uses your past, your present, and all of the hardships that you have been through to prepare you for the future. Ask God for wisdom to help you understand why He made you the way you are and why He placed you on this earth so you can be effective in your work for Him. He has a beautiful plan for you. You were created for Him to do good works.

¹¹¹ Psalms 139:13 For you formed my inmost being. You knit me together in my mother's womb. 14 I will give thanks to you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful. My soul knows that very well. 15 My frame wasn't hidden from you, when I was made in secret, woven together in the depths of the earth. 16 Your eyes saw my body. In your book they were all written, the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there were none of them.

¹¹² Proverbs 8:22 The LORD possessed me at the beginning of His way, before His works of old. ²³ "From everlasting I was established, from the beginning, from the earliest times of the earth.

¹¹³ Jeremiah 1:5 Before I formed you in the belly I knew you, and before you came forth out of the womb I sanctified you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.

¹¹⁴ Romans 8:29 For whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 Whom he predestined, those he also called. Whom he called, those he also justified. Whom he justified, those he also glorified.

¹¹⁵ Matthew 17:20 He said to them, "Because of your unbelief. For most certainly I tell you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will tell this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you."

¹¹⁶ Psalms 139:13 For you formed my inmost being. You knit me together in my mother's womb. 14 I will give thanks to you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful. My soul knows that very well. 15 My frame wasn't hidden from you, when I was made in secret, woven together in the depths of the earth. 16 Your eyes saw my body. In your book they were all written, the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there were none of them.

¹¹⁷ Deuteronomy 7:6 For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

¹¹⁸ Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. ¹² Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. ¹³ You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.



Chapter 3: I was made – to live through many difficulties

(Please listen to our Chapter 3 audio file on our web site)

Study Questions

1. Was I born a sinner?

God didn't create man to sin. God created man upright.¹¹⁹ But, God also gave us free will - the ability to make our own decisions. This means we can make decisions that align with God's standards, or we can make decisions that do not align with God's standards, also known as sin. And He has given us the ability to choose. This means that God has given us the ability to ignore Him, and even deny Him. But the great thing is, it's our choice.

Who doesn't like having 100% control over our own decisions? Yahoo! It's like putting a child in a candy store and then leaving. Well, this is exactly what God has given each of us - total control over our decisions. To make matters worse, He has left the candy store owner (Satan) in the store to convince the child (us) to eat as much candy as we want. And being as naïve as we are, and if we don't take our parent's warnings seriously, we will listen to the candy store owner. The candy looks so good, how can it possibly hurt us? Satan will also work overtime convincing you that the candy is healthy for you. Oh boy, this is bad.

When God created us He knew the only way He could ever have a relationship with us was to give us the option of having a relationship with Him, and the option of listening to Him, otherwise it wouldn't be a relationship. Love is not love if it is in any way coerced. So, God permits all of us to choose our own path even if it means we choose not to follow Him.

¹¹⁹ Ecclesiastes 7:29 Behold, this only have I found: that God made man upright.

Sin entered the world through one man, which was Adam, and has been passed down through the generations to every one of us.¹²⁰ We all inherited this sin nature at birth.^{121 122} This sin nature is the basis for our sinful thoughts and our sinful habits. Sin has its roots in our heart, which influences our mind, which eventually finds its expression through our body when we follow through with our sinful desire.^{123 124} Every time we sin we fall short of God's standards for our life.¹²⁵

2. How can I prove that I inherited a sin nature at birth?

It is relatively easy to prove that we all inherited a sin nature.¹²⁶ Just watch any small child. The child is naturally selfish and there was nobody who had to teach the child to be selfish. Being selfish is how we all started out. It is basically in our DNA.¹²⁷ Having a sin nature is a condition that we all inherited.

As the child begins to grow up he begins to learn right from wrong and that selfishness is not a great way to live. The child learns, sometimes the hard way, that people will get hurt if he continues along his selfish ways. He learns that it causes problems. He eventually learns to control his selfish desires and that sharing is a better way to live - for everyone. This is when his character starts to develop. He starts making conscious decisions about how he wishes to live: to share, or not share.

As he continues to grow and interact with others he is confronted with even more important choices - to do things that are right, or wrong, with kindness, or with evil - and this is when sin enters the picture. He now has to make decisions that align with God's standards,¹²⁸ or is contrary to God's standards, which is sin.

As we grow older we also learn about personal responsibility and accountability for our decisions. We learn, sometimes the hard way, that our decisions can have a very high price, such as contracting a disease, going to jail, drinking and getting into a car accident, and sometimes even death. As we approach adulthood we begin to learn that our decisions can have an everlasting consequence.

¹²⁰ Romans 5:12 Therefore, as sin entered into the world through one man, and death through sin; and so death passed to all men, because all sinned. 13 For until the law, sin was in the world; but sin is not charged when there is no law. 14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those whose sins weren't like Adam's disobedience, who is a foreshadowing of him who was to come.

¹²¹ Genesis 8:21 because the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.

¹²² Psalms 51:5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity. In sin my mother conceived me.

¹²³ Matthew 15:19 For out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual sins, thefts, false testimony, and blasphemies.

¹²⁴ Hebrews 3:12 Beware, brothers, lest perhaps there be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God.

¹²⁵ 1 John 3:4 Everyone who sins also commits lawlessness. Sin is lawlessness.

¹²⁶ Psalms 58:3 The wicked go astray from the womb. They are wayward as soon as they are born, speaking lies.

¹²⁷ Isaiah 48:8 for I knew that you did deal very treacherously, and was called a transgressor from the womb.

¹²⁸ Isaiah 7:15 He shall eat butter and honey when he knows to refuse the evil, and choose the good. 16 For before the child knows to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land whose two kings you abhor shall be forsaken.

3. Can God prevent my suffering?

Yes, God can prevent your pain and suffering. He's God, remember? But God allows pain and suffering because He wants you to lean on Him. We are all hard-wired to call out to God when we feel anguish, or sorrow, or despair. If you have ever ridden on an extremely bumpy plane ride you know exactly how it feels. You grab the armrest, or the person next to you, and you pray. You pray for deliverance.

He could have stopped His own suffering and His death, but He didn't. He had to die for you and me. This was all part of His grand plan - which He foretold to us through His prophets in the Old Testament.¹²⁹ It was His reason for coming. It was His plan from the very beginning. He knew that sin would rule the world¹³⁰ and He knew that there was no other way to save us from our sins. The very moment that Adam sinned in the Garden He knew that He would need to come to earth and die for us. He loves us that much. If God didn't know that Adam would sin, and Lucifer would rebel, then God made a mistake. But God doesn't make mistakes. He knew what would happen by giving us free will, and He knew He would need to save us from our sins.

So, God can definitely empathize with your suffering. He suffered¹³¹ and died for you so that you, if you believe in Him, can live with Him for eternity.¹³² If you don't believe in Him - well, your eternal destiny will be far worse.¹³³

4. Why do I need to suffer?

God can, with His infinite powers, save you. He can turn every bumpy ride that you experience in your life into something very good.¹³⁴ He knows that a bumpy ride will draw you closer to Him. And as we all know, pain and suffering happen all the time. When we have faith in God He can turn all of our poor choices, and even our pain and suffering, into something very good. It is through our pain that we find Him.

Just as a loving parent might need to allow a child to suffer through the consequences of their bad decisions, God must allow us to suffer through the consequences of our bad decisions. Unfortunately, this includes suffering through the consequences of what others do as well. We might not understand the lessons that God is teaching us at the time, but the painful consequences that we experience might result in a life changing event. And, in God's plan, life-changes are good - especially those that are created from pain. He wants us to be transformed by the renewing of our mind.¹³⁵ God desires that we all change so He can use us.

This means God allows us to experience problems and difficulties in our life^{136 137} so we will grow closer to Him. He needs us to be transformed into His way of thinking so He can use us and bless us. When we start to understand His will for our life this is when we can begin to understand why we were born and what our purpose is.

There is a true miracle in our suffering. God's sovereignty and His plan for each of us will use our difficulties and our suffering to strengthen our faith in Him. Our trials and our suffering is the means by which our faith is proven.¹³⁸ So, basically, our difficulties and our suffering is the means by which God perfects, strengthens, and molds us into the creation that He can use¹³⁹ - which will make us steadfast and able to withstand Satan's many

¹²⁹ Isaiah 42:14 "I have been silent a long time. I have been quiet and restrained myself. Now I will cry out like a travailing woman. I will both gasp and pant. 15 I will destroy mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs. I will make the rivers islands, and will dry up the pools. 16 I will bring the blind by a way that they don't know. I will lead them in paths that they don't know. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked places straight. I will do these things, and I will not forsake them.

¹³⁰ Isaiah 53:6 All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.

¹³¹ Isaiah 53:3 He was despised, and rejected by men; a man of suffering, and acquainted with disease. He was despised as one from whom men hide their face; and we didn't respect him.

¹³² 2 Corinthians 1:5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound to us, even so our comfort also abounds through Christ.

¹³³ Matthew 10:28 Don't be afraid of those who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul. Rather, fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell.

¹³⁴ Romans 8:28 We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose.

¹³⁵ Romans 12:2 but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

¹³⁶ Acts 14:22 and that through many afflictions we must enter into the Kingdom of God.

¹³⁷ John 16:33 I have told you these things, that in me you may have peace. In the world you have oppression; but cheer up! I have overcome the world.

¹³⁸ 1 Peter 1⁷ These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

schemes. The very same trials that Satan puts you through to destroy you, God uses for your deliverance and your development.¹⁴⁰

God tells us that He can use every bad experience that the evil one creates - and God can create something good out of it^{141 142} if we follow Him. This should give you great hope for whatever you are going through. This is so important we will repeat it: God can use every bad experience that the evil one has created in your life and He can turn it into something extremely good^{143 144} if you follow Him.

5. Does Satan have any power over me?

Satan has no real power over any of us other than to deceive us - but in this area he is extremely good. He can't physically hurt us, and he can't make us "do" anything, but he can whisper in our ear. He is so good we sometimes don't even realize that his lies are designed to hurt us - because everything he wants us to do is based on our human weaknesses and our human desires. He knows exactly where we are the weakest.

So we listen to him, and we believe his lies, and then afterward we realize we were duped - again. If we continue to let our desires run unchecked we will continue to inherit the consequences of trouble, hurt, pain, suffering, broken relationships, and so much more. Take a moment and connect the dots. Many of our problems are the result of not listening to God's voice and His teachings. We ignore God's warning beacons and we drive right into the potholes that are in front of us. And sometimes the potholes are very deep, and it hurts - a lot.

6. Does God ever test me? Does He tempt me?

God tests us¹⁴⁵ but He never tempts us.¹⁴⁶ We are tempted when we are dragged away by our own evil desires.¹⁴⁷ Jesus teaches us that sin begins with us.¹⁴⁸

Did you know that God allows Satan and his servants to tempt you? God could stop Satan in a second if He wanted to (He's God, remember?), but allowing Satan to tempt you is all part of His grand plan to build your faith in Him. God has total control over Satan¹⁴⁹ and God could prevent Satan and his servants from tempting you if He wanted to.¹⁵⁰ The Bible teaches us that at least some of Satan's requests to tempt you actually pass through Jesus first - and Jesus must say "Yes" to Satan's request. However, God promises to never allow Satan to tempt you in a way that is beyond your capability.¹⁵¹ During the Last Supper when Jesus told His disciples where He was going (i.e., to be crucified), Jesus told Peter that Satan had made a request to sift him as wheat.¹⁵² Sifting in this situation means Satan put in a request to test Peter. This means that some, and maybe all, of Satan's

¹³⁹ 1 Peter 1:7 that the proof of your faith, which is more precious than gold that perishes even though it is tested by fire, may be found to result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

¹⁴⁰ Romans 8:28 We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose.

¹⁴¹ Romans 8:28 We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose.

¹⁴² Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. ¹² Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. ¹³ You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

¹⁴³ Romans 8:28 We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose.

¹⁴⁴ Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. ¹² Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. ¹³ You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

¹⁴⁵ Deuteronomy 13:3 for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

¹⁴⁶ James 1:13 Let no man say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God," for God can't be tempted by evil, and he himself tempts no one. 14 But each one is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. 15 Then the lust, when it has conceived, bears sin; and the sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death..

¹⁴⁷ James 1: 13 Let no man say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God," for God can't be tempted by evil, and he himself tempts no one. 14 But each one is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. 15 Then the lust, when it has conceived, bears sin; and the sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death.

¹⁴⁸ Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly corrupt: who can know it?

¹⁴⁹ Matthew 28:18 Jesus came to them and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.

¹⁵⁰ Mark 3:27 But no one can enter into the house of the strong man to plunder, unless he first binds the strong man; and then he will plunder his house.

¹⁵¹ 1 Corinthians 10:13 God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able, but will with the temptation also make the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

¹⁵² Luke 22:31 The Lord said, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat, 32 but I prayed for you, that your faith wouldn't fail. You, when once you have turned again, establish your brothers."

requests to tempt you might pass through Jesus first. The reason Jesus allows this is to see if you can resist the temptation to prove your faith in Him.

As this is happening Jesus will pray that your faith will not fail, just as Jesus told Peter that He had prayed for him that his faith would not fail.¹⁵³ So, even if we aren't sure whether Satan asks Jesus to tempt us specifically - we should know that Satan does wish to attack us and sift us as wheat. This means we might be tested by many trials to determine if our faith is genuine.

Do you sometimes feel as though you are being sifted by Satan? Perhaps Satan has been given permission by Jesus to sift you as wheat. Is your faith strong enough to survive such a test?

7. How does God want me to feel when I am being tested and I face trials?

Everyone finds it hard to be joyful when they are being sifted as wheat. But God tells us to consider it pure joy whenever we face trials¹⁵⁴ - as the trials will test our faith, and the testing of our faith will develop perseverance, and perseverance must finish its work so we may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.¹⁵⁵

It is precisely when you place your faith in Jesus that you will be tested and you will face trials - so get ready. Who do you think Satan wants to test? Do you think Satan wants to sift those who do not believe in God and haven't put their faith in Jesus? Not at all. He already has these people. Satan wishes to test and attack those who are still learning to put their faith in Jesus. Satan still has a shot at winning these people over to their human desires so he can deceive and destroy them.

So, here is an important learning moment so please take note. We are to consider it pure joy when we are being tested.¹⁵⁶ Jesus might allow Satan to sift you in order to test your faith. And because you now understand how this works - you will win the fight because you now understand how the game is played. But, be ready. If Satan asks Jesus if he can sift you and if Jesus says "Yes" and then prays for your faith, this is when your trials could become extremely difficult. Hang on tight as it could become a very bumpy ride. But as soon as you learn to put your trust in God, and when Satan sees your new-found faith in God, Satan will learn that you are not one who can be easily deceived - so he will spend less time on you. Life will get easier. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.¹⁵⁷

8. What are two of Satan's key deceptions?

Pride.

You have to be especially on guard when things are going well for you. When things are going well Satan will try to deceive you into believing that you don't need God. You might be at a point in your life when things are going really well. You might be having a run of success with your family, your job, your finances, your friends, and during these times Satan will do whatever he can to puff you up and make you feel prideful by convincing you that you are having all of this success based on YOU and that you don't need God.

When things aren't going so well Satan will use his cunning and he will use the reverse ploy. He will deceive you into doubt and unbelief. His message during difficult times is that God has abandoned you. He will try to convince you that God can't be with you and that God can't possibly care for you because godly people should never suffer. Satan is a master at playing with our minds and influencing the way we think. He knows how to use our human emotions against us. We need to continually test our thoughts and the spirits.¹⁵⁸ Satan craves glory and he will employ whatever suffering and doubt he can to turn us away from God.

¹⁵³ Luke 22:32 but I prayed for you, that your faith wouldn't fail.

¹⁵⁴ James 1: 2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds,

¹⁵⁵ James 1:2 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you fall into various temptations, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 Let endurance have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

¹⁵⁶ James 1: 2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds,

¹⁵⁷ James 4:7 Be subject therefore to God. But resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Always remember, any feelings of inadequacy or doubt or hurt that you feel does not come from God. These feelings are coming from the one who wishes to destroy you. Be careful not to listen to anyone who assures you that when you put your trust in God that you won't suffer or have difficulties. This just isn't true. Remember, Satan's goal is to destroy you in order to bring you to hell with him. Satan already knows he is going there because he saw Jesus' victory on the cross, so he will use anything and everything in his arsenal to bring you with him.

Coveting Things and Lust.

Another of our greatest weaknesses, and one of Satan's greatest successes, is when Satan convinces us that we should have more. He will do whatever he can to convince you that others have so much, and you have so little. Satan will constantly try to make you feel unhappy with what you have. And because of our human weakness, if we're not careful we might actually believe in his lie. Having more "stuff" will never make you happy. Just ask all of the people who have won the lottery and their lives have been ruined. They have learned the hard way that money does not bring happiness.

If you listen to Satan you might be deceived into thinking that he's right. He will lead you to ask yourself: Why was I dealt such a poor hand? Why wasn't I born with more talent, better looks, a better job, and have more "things" like other people - as if having these things will make you happy. Hint: it won't. When we sin we attempt to fill our hearts with "stuff." But stuff isn't what we need - all we need is God.

9. What is the correct way to understand my suffering?

Because of the Lord's teachings you now have the ability to understand your suffering very differently:

- It will refine you and will make you stronger.¹⁵⁹
- It will equip you to comfort others.¹⁶⁰ Those who have suffered make the most effective comforters.
- It will allow you to experience God at a deeper level.¹⁶¹
- Your suffering can be used to mature your faith.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ 1 John 4:1 Beloved, don't believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit who confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, 3 and every spirit who doesn't confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God, and this is the spirit of the antichrist, of whom you have heard that it comes. Now it is in the world already.

¹⁵⁹ Isaiah 48:10 Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction. 11 For my own sake, for my own sake, will I do it;

¹⁶⁰ 2 Corinthians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; 4 who comforts us in all our affliction, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, through the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. 5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound to us, even so our comfort also abounds through Christ.

¹⁶¹ Job 42:5 I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you.

¹⁶² James 1:4 Let endurance have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

10. What are the major differences between punishment and discipline?

Punishment:

- A penalty or sanction given for any crime or offense.
- The act of punishing, or the state of being punished.
- Informal rough treatment.
- Any aversive stimulus administered to an organism as part of training.

Discipline:

- Training or conditions imposed for the improvement of physical powers, self-control, etc.
- Systematic training in obedience to regulations and authority.
- The state of improved behavior, etc., resulting from such training or conditions.
- A system of rules for behavior, methods of practice, etc.
- A branch of learning or instruction.

11. Does God punish us or discipline us?

He is not a punishing God. God never punishes you and me for the things we do.

Wouldn't God want to discipline His children, you and me? The answer is Yes,¹⁶³ and for this reason He might discipline us when we misbehave - when we "don't live according to His standards."^{164 165}

Because He has given us free will He simply allows us to suffer the consequences of our own decisions. We must learn that if we don't live according to His standards He can't be there to protect us. He lets us reap what we sow.^{166 167} But when we choose to live according to His standards we will reap a sure reward.¹⁶⁸

In both the Old and New Testaments God reveals Himself as One who disciplines His children. Discipline is part and parcel of knowing God, and God has revealed to us that His discipline is similar to the way we discipline our children. We should feel blessed when God disciplines us because it means He loves us.^{169 170} If He didn't love us He wouldn't discipline us. Think about this for a moment. If God didn't call you His child He wouldn't even care to discipline you. You wouldn't want that.

If you are going through some difficult times in your life it could be because God is disciplining you.¹⁷¹ Don't turn a deaf ear to His instruction.¹⁷² God is more than willing to discipline those He loves who are not living according to His standards - just like any good parent would do. A good parent will want to guide and direct his children. God also wants to guide and direct His children. He knows that loving His children means disciplining them.¹⁷³ God also knows that His discipline must be something that is felt and must not feel good, otherwise the discipline might be dismissed. It must get our attention and it must be something that we don't want to experience again.

Don't become discouraged when God disciplines you¹⁷⁴ but have hope in the Lord and He will renew your strength.¹⁷⁵ Don't draw back in your walk with Him. God's discipline is always perfect. It will never exceed what is needed. It will never be too harsh or too weak. His discipline is not intended to be a burden but is meant to lesson your load. It is meant to make you stronger and it will allow you to withstand the temptations that come your way.

¹⁶³ Deuteronomy 8:5 Thus you are to know in your heart that the LORD your God was disciplining you just as a man disciplines his son.

¹⁶⁴ Job 5:17 "Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects. Therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty.

¹⁶⁵ Hebrews 12:5 and you have forgotten the exhortation which reasons with you as with children, "My son, don't take lightly the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are reproved by him; 12:6 For whom the Lord loves, he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives." 7 It is for discipline that you endure. God deals with you as with children, for what son is there whom his father doesn't discipline? 8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have been made partakers, then are you illegitimate, and not children. 9 Furthermore, we had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live? 10 For they indeed, for a few days, punished us as seemed good to them; but he for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness. 11 All chastening seems for the present to be not joyous but grievous; yet afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been exercised thereby.

¹⁶⁶ Proverbs 22:8 He who sows wickedness reaps trouble, and the rod of his fury will be destroyed.

¹⁶⁷ Job 4:8 According to what I have seen, those who plow iniquity, and sow trouble, reap the same.

¹⁶⁸ Proverbs 11:18 Wicked people earn deceitful wages, but one who sows righteousness reaps a sure reward.

¹⁶⁹ 1 Peter 3:14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "Don't fear what they fear, neither be troubled."

¹⁷⁰ James 1:12 Blessed is the man who endures temptation, for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord promised to those who love him.

¹⁷¹ Hebrews 12:7 It is for discipline that you endure. God deals with you as with children, for what son is there whom his father doesn't discipline?

¹⁷² Proverbs 28:9 He who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination.

¹⁷³ Psalms 13:24 Whoever spares the rod hates their children, but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them.

¹⁷⁴ Galatians 6:9 Let us not be weary in doing good, for we will reap in due season, if we don't give up.

¹⁷⁵ Isaiah 40:31 Yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.

12. What should we do when our friends give us their opinions?

It is important that we not let opinions, or hearsay, or conjecture sway our decisions. Almost none of what we hear from others will be based on God's truth. What we must all understand is that Satan does not want us to believe that there is a divine standard by which we should live our life - because Satan's goal is to keep us ignorant of God and His powers. Remember, Satan loves it when we live in ignorance. Living in ignorance means we aren't getting any closer to God. Satan is working full time on everyone, including your friends, so don't listen to your friends who give you their opinions unless it is backed by scripture. Scripture is truth; opinions are not. God's standards are meant to save. Satan's standards are meant to keep you away from God's truth. If Satan can fill you with your friends' opinions so you don't make a decision - he will surely use that approach. God's standards are based on His truth so absolute right and wrong are unaffected by human opinion. We must get answers to life's most important questions out of His instruction manual. Everyone who hears His Word and puts them into practice is like a wise man who builds his house on the rock.¹⁷⁶

13. Does God's definition of sin ever change?

Sin isn't sin just because we are tempted, it is a sin when we give in to a temptation and then we act it out.¹⁷⁷ Jesus was also tempted, but He didn't sin.¹⁷⁸ He didn't elevate His desires over God's desires. Jesus' death on the cross represented a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice for every sin that we have ever committed, including those that we haven't committed yet.¹⁷⁹¹⁸⁰ But we must believe in Him to be saved; it's the only way.

Do we need to give up our sinning to be saved? No. But we need to acknowledge them for what they are. They are sins. Sins are a violation of God's standards. Be careful not to rationalize your sins and say that what you are doing isn't that bad, or that everyone else is doing it, or that God's standards are old and antiquated. God's standards never change. A sin is a sin. A sin a thousand years ago is a sin today.

Many people believe that God's standards should change to keep pace with the times. But God's moral standards never change. If something was sinful in the Old Testament it is also sinful in the New Testament. If it was sinful 2000 years ago it is sinful today. Unlike today's lawmakers God never changes His mind or alters His laws.¹⁸¹ God's standards stay firm and unaltered.¹⁸² They were established and will remain the same forever and ever.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁶ Matthew 7:24 Everyone therefore who hears these words of mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man, who built his house on a rock. 25 The rain came down, the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat on that house; and it didn't fall, for it was founded on the rock. 26 Everyone who hears these words of mine, and doesn't do them will be like a foolish man, who built his house on the sand. 27 The rain came down, the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat on that house; and it fell--and great was its fall.

¹⁷⁷ James 1:14 But each one is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. 15 Then the lust, when it has conceived, bears sin; and the sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death.

¹⁷⁸ Hebrews 4:15 For we don't have a high priest who can't be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but one who has been in all points tempted like we are, yet without sin.

¹⁷⁹ Hebrews 9:28 so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, without sin, to those who are eagerly waiting for him for salvation.

¹⁸⁰ Jeremiah 31:34 for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more.

¹⁸¹ Psalms 89:34 I will not violate my covenant or alter what my lips have uttered.

¹⁸² Luke 16:17 But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one tiny stroke of a pen in the law to fall.

¹⁸³ Psalms 111:7 The works of his hands are truth and justice. All his precepts are sure. 8 They are established forever and ever. They are done in truth and uprightness.

14. How can I possibly live up to God's standards?

Live by the Spirit and not by the flesh.¹⁸⁴ ¹⁸⁵ We need to listen to God's Spirit within us and heed what He says. It is only by the Spirit of God within us that we can overcome our sinful nature. We can never live up to God's standards all by ourselves. We can try but we will never be able to do it. We must understand that His commandments were created to make us aware that we are sinful.¹⁸⁶ God's commandments were meant to convict us and make us aware that we need a Savior. Without a Savior we will go to hell. We must accept the fact that we will always have sinful thoughts, do sinful things, and that we can only be saved by believing that Jesus came to earth to die for us.

Jesus wants us to know that obeying His commandments in the Old Testament is still of utmost importance because in the New Testament He teaches us "Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven."¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁴ Romans 8:4 that the ordinance of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

¹⁸⁵ Galations 5:16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you won't fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, that you may not do the things that you desire. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

¹⁸⁶ Romans 3:20 Because by the works of the law, no flesh will be justified in his sight. For through the law comes the knowledge of sin.

¹⁸⁷ Matthew 5:19 Whoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and teach others to do so, shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but whoever shall do and teach them shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.



Chapter 4: I was made - to know God's grand plan

(Please listen to our Chapter 4 [Part 1](#) audio file on our web site)

Study Questions

1. Who is in control of the earth in which we live?

When God put Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and told them not to eat from the tree of good and evil¹⁸⁸ and then Satan convinced Eve that it would be okay to eat the apple from that tree, this was Satan's first successful deception of the human race.¹⁸⁹ That is when God transferred the authority of the earth over to Satan,^{190 191} and Satan has been deceiving us ever since.

2. What does Satan absolutely LOVE?

Satan absolutely loves it when humans live in ignorance of God. Don't tell humans about the destruction that will be left in their wake when they sin: the suffering, the sorrow, the agony, the broken relationships, and despair. And surely don't tell humans that God's protection will be removed when they sin because God is holy and He can't help sinful people (i.e., God will allow us to reap what we sow). This is pretty much the perfect scenario for Satan: let Satan deceive humans, humans listen, humans get hurt, Satan tells humans that God has abandoned them, humans not smart enough to understand why they are suffering, humans not smart enough to connect the dots. Humans live in ignorance. DON'T LET THIS HAPPEN TO YOU!

¹⁸⁸ Genesis 2:15 Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. ¹⁶ The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; ¹⁷ but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

¹⁸⁹ Genesis 3:2 The woman said to the serpent, "Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat, 3 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" 4 The serpent said to the woman, "You won't surely die."

¹⁹⁰ 2 Corinthians 4:4 in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the Good News of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn on them.

¹⁹¹ Revelation 17:17 For God has put in their hearts to do what he has in mind, and to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God should be accomplished.

3. Who was in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve?

We have learned that God is Spirit, and Spirits are invisible. So, who was visible and walking and talking with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden shortly after Adam sinned?¹⁹² It might have been Jesus. It was probably not God the Father because of what Jesus told us.^{193 194}

Remember in Genesis where it says "Let us make mankind in our image."¹⁹⁵ The "our" in this verse refers to (1) God the Father, (2) God's Son, Jesus, and (3) God's Holy Spirit. So when God said "Let us make mankind in our image" - they were all present when mankind was created. This means that it could have been any one of them who was with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. But, since it has been primarily Jesus who has been God in bodily form while on earth, it could have been Jesus who was walking and talking with Adam and Eve in the Garden. Jesus has always been God's representative on earth - appearing for Him and as Him. It is clear in scripture that Jesus and God the Father are One.¹⁹⁶

4. When was Jesus' rescue plan launched?

Isn't it kind of ironic that Adam and (maybe) Jesus were together in the Garden of Eden when Adam started the downfall of the human race through his sin, and (maybe) Jesus was there at the exact same moment to save the human race through His plan. Same time, same place.

These two events had to happen at the same time in the Garden otherwise God made a mistake. But God never makes a mistake. This means God knew what would happen in the Garden, and He knew that He had to have a plan in place at the moment that Adam sinned to save us from our sins. This also means that it may have been Jesus, in the Garden, who knew at the very moment that Adam sinned that He would need to die for us. At the very second that there was sin, there was a solution. At the very moment that Adam sinned - Jesus presented Himself as our Savior.

God knew what He was doing.

Jesus wouldn't defeat Satan and sin until He died on the cross, but the game was in the bag. His rescue plan had been launched.¹⁹⁷ Jesus knew that He couldn't come to earth to be the sacrifice for our sins anytime soon - because He still needed to give us His ten commandments. And then, after He gave us His commandments, we would need hundreds of years to learn that we couldn't possibly keep His commandments. We needed to learn that we couldn't do it. The commandments needed to convict us¹⁹⁸ and make us aware that we were doomed. We had to learn that we couldn't live without sinning and that we all deserved to go to hell. We had to learn that we needed a Savior.

¹⁹² Genesis 3:8 They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?"

¹⁹³ John 1:18 No one has seen God at any time. The one and only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him.

¹⁹⁴ 1 Timothy 6:16 who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light; whom no man has seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and eternal power.

¹⁹⁵ Genesis 1:26 God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the sky, and over the livestock, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 God created man in his own image. In God's image he created him; male and female he created them.

¹⁹⁶ John 10:30 I and the Father are one.

¹⁹⁷ Romans 6:18 Being made free from sin, you became bondservants of righteousness.

¹⁹⁸ Romans 3:19 Now we know that whatever things the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may be brought under the judgment of God. 20 Because by the works of the law, no flesh will be justified in his sight. For through the law comes the knowledge of sin.

5. Does God “use” Satan for His Glory?

Satan does, in fact, serve God's purpose. Satan is cunning but he isn't wise. He can't figure out how to counter God's perfect plan. Satan's effort to destroy you and me actually produces the opposite effect. God knows that people will draw closer to Him when suffering comes into their lives. Our suffering, while inflicted by Satan, is allowed by God. Because of Satan's opposition to God we will be blessed and Satan's objective to destroy us will be in vain. Through Satan's efforts to destroy us God gains a more intimate relationship with us - which is exactly what God wants.

This shows the important role that Satan plays in God's grand plan. God uses Satan and sin to achieve His ultimate purpose. The creation of Satan and his opposition to man is an important element of God's plan. Satan's power is given to him by God. God's providence is what allows Satan to do what he does. Satan has power to affect us but only by how much God allows. The fact that Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden does not mean God is the author of sin, nor does it mean that He tempted Adam and Eve to sin. He didn't.¹⁹⁹ He simply uses Satan for His purpose.

God uses Satan to bring about His divine discipline. Satan is allowed to do only what God has planned for His glory and our good. Through Satan's opposition to God's instruction manual God's purposes are fulfilled. After we suffer from our sin and disobedience God restores us and makes us strong, firm, and steadfast.²⁰⁰ Our suffering is used to produce humility and a dependence on God.

All of this means that the harder Satan works to oppose the gospel, the more he actually promotes it. God has purposed Satan's existence and his opposition to fulfill God's grand plan.²⁰¹ In everything that Satan does he is actually serving God.

¹⁹⁹ James 1:13 for God can't be tempted by evil, and he himself tempts no one.

²⁰⁰ 1 Peter 5:10 But may the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a little while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. 11 To him be the glory and the power forever and ever.

²⁰¹ Acts 26:18 to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

6. Is God glorified by “allowing” sin in the world?

Think about it. The glory of God is actually declared by allowing sin in the world:

- Having sin in the world allows for God's mercy and His compassion.^{202 203}
- It allows God to show His love and His forgiveness of our sins.²⁰⁴
- It allows God to show His righteousness and His wrath to those who deny Him.²⁰⁵
- And, through Satan, it shows that God doesn't leave the guilty unpunished²⁰⁶ just like any good court system.

Wrath and mercy highlight God's glory and you can't have either without the fall of mankind.

God is actually glorified by condemning the guilty to hell. Our courts would not be legitimate if they didn't condemn a murderer to a long prison sentence. So our courts are glorified, they are made legitimate, by their accurate sentences of people who abuse the law. God's wrath is also justified, and God is glorified, when He provides for mans' forgiveness and man rejects it. This means that behind Satan, and all of Satan's unrighteous deeds, is a holy, righteous, and compassionate God who causes all things to work for the good of those who love Him who have been called according to his purpose.²⁰⁷

7. Can I know God's will?

Yes, you can know God's will. In fact, God wants you to know His will.²⁰⁸ Knowing God is why we were born. It's the nature of our existence. There is not a single one of us that just appeared on this earth without a plan and a purpose. God chose us before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight.²⁰⁹ In Him we were chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of His glory.²¹⁰

But to truly know God you must repent of your sins and believe that God sent His Son, Jesus, to die for your sins. When you commit and become a believer in Jesus you are marked in Him with a seal - and God's Holy Spirit will live within you.²¹¹ It is the Holy Spirit who will be your advocate who will help testify about God.²¹² The Holy Spirit will also teach you all things and remind you of everything that Jesus promised.²¹³

²⁰² Exodus 33:19 And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion."

²⁰³ Micah 7:18 Who is a God like you, who pardons iniquity, and passes over the disobedience of the remnant of his heritage? He doesn't retain his anger forever, because he delights in loving kindness.

²⁰⁴ Numbers 14:18 The LORD is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression;

²⁰⁵ Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

²⁰⁶ Exodus 34:6 Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; ⁷ who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations."

²⁰⁷ Romans 8:28 We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose.

²⁰⁸ Romans 12:2 Don't be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what is the good, well-pleasing, and perfect will of God.

²⁰⁹ Ephesians 1:4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and without blemish before him in love; ⁵ having predestined us for adoption as children through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his desire, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of his grace, by which he freely bestowed favor on us in the Beloved.

²¹⁰ Ephesians 1:11 in whom also we were assigned an inheritance, having been foreordained according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his will; ¹² to the end that we should be to the praise of his glory, we who had before hoped in Christ.

²¹¹ Ephesians 1:13 in whom you also, having heard the word of the truth, the Good News of your salvation,--in whom, having also believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.

²¹² John 15:26 When the Counselor has come, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will testify about me.

²¹³ John 14:26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and will remind you of all that I said to you.

8. Can I talk to God myself? Will He listen?

The very moment that Jesus died on the cross the huge and heavy curtain that separated people from the inner sanctuary in the Jewish temple was torn top to bottom. God ripped it. With Jesus' death on the cross God's plan was complete. And for everyone who believes that this was God's ultimate plan, Jesus' death on the cross removed the human barrier that used to exist between God and man. By ripping this huge curtain God was telling us "You are no longer on the outside. My Son, Jesus, has made a way for you to have direct access to me. Come on in."

With this curtain gone you no longer need to go through anyone to reach God. No people. No rituals. No barriers. No specific building. Nothing is in the way. You can talk to God right now, right this minute, wherever you are. Remember, your heart is the door through which God will enter - but He will never force His way in. He will wait until you invite Him in. He will knock (feel your heart, He may be knocking right now), and then He will wait for you to answer. Just ask Him in. He will come in if you invite Him in.

9. Can I be found "at fault" for not learning about God?

Whether you admit it or not everyone has been created with a desire to know God. We have all been made to discover who God is and to find satisfaction and joy in Him. This is the reason why we were born. He made us all so different, in vastly different cultures, and in different nations,²¹⁴ so we might search for Him and discover who He is. God's incredible creativity is clearly visible in everything that we see on earth, in the heavens above, and in the oceans below. Because of all that God has created, which we can see, we are without excuse in knowing who God is.²¹⁵ For the heavens declare the glory of God.²¹⁶

²¹⁴ Acts 17:26 He made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the surface of the earth, having determined appointed seasons, and the boundaries of their dwellings, 27 that they should seek the Lord, if perhaps they might reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. 28 'For in him we live, and move, and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also his offspring.'

²¹⁵ Romans 17:26 He made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the surface of the earth, having determined appointed seasons, and the boundaries of their dwellings, 27 that they should seek the Lord, if perhaps they might reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. 28 'For in him we live, and move, and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also his offspring.'

²¹⁶ Psalms 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God. The expanse shows his handiwork. 2 Day after day they pour forth speech, and night after night they display knowledge. 3 There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. 4 Their voice has gone out through all the earth, their words to the end of the world. In them he has set a tent for the sun.

(Please continue with our Chapter 4 Part 2 audio file on our web site)

10. Will I ever see God's grand design? What must I do?

Even though we can't see God's beautiful design He has given us many of His design notes. His notes, which are scattered throughout the Bible, give us a wonderful glimpse into what the top of the rug looks like. His notes say that He will wipe away every tear from our eyes and there will be no death, or mourning, or crying, or pain,²¹⁷ and righteousness dwells.²¹⁸ So, through His Word, we have been given a wonderful glimpse of heaven. We won't see His beautiful design until we join Him, but when we do see His side of the rug it is going to be an awesome sight.^{219 220 221} That is when we will finally understand what God has been up to all these years. This is when we will see how our life, including all of the trials and difficult times that we have been put through^{222 223 224 225} have been woven into His design on the top of the rug - with Jesus as the thread. God will allow us to be included in His beautiful design on the top of the rug through our faith in Jesus. Only Jesus. Jesus is the thread and the fabric of God's beautiful design.

11. Am I (and everyone) hardwired to know that there is a God? How?

Do you believe that God had a plan, or do you believe that this is all just a great story? What are you putting your faith in? Are you putting your faith in God and His Word? Or are you putting your faith in the things that you see and hear in the world? Or, maybe you are putting your faith in you? Maybe you - is all you need. Maybe things are going so well for you that you don't need anything, or anybody, because you have everything under control, and everything is in your control.

You might even believe that there is no God - so why would you need any faith? That seems to work pretty well until someone close to you dies, or you fall off a ladder and become paralyzed, or you get cancer and have two months to live, or someone walks into your school and shoots one of your children. When these things happen we are all wired to call out to God.²²⁶ It is the nature of our existence. Knowing there is a God is hardwired into our DNA.²²⁷

²¹⁷ Revelation 21:4 He will wipe away from them every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; neither will there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more. The first things have passed away.

²¹⁸ 2 Peter 3:13 But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

²¹⁹ Matthew 13:45 Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who is a merchant seeking fine pearls.

²²⁰ Matthew 25:1 Then the Kingdom of Heaven will be like ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom.

²²¹ Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.

²²² Deuteronomy 7:19 the great trials which your eyes saw and the signs and the wonders and the mighty hand and the outstretched arm by which the LORD your God brought you out. So shall the LORD your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid.

²²³ Luke 22:28 But you are those who have continued with me in my trials.

²²⁴ 1 Thessalonians 3:3 that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you know that we are appointed to this task.

²²⁵ 1 Peter 1:6 Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been put to grief in various trials.

²²⁶ Hebrews 10:16 "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds."

²²⁷ Jeremiah 24:7 I will give them a heart to know Me, for I am the LORD; and they will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart.

12. With God will I “believe it when we see it?”

Because we are human we tend to put our trust and faith in things that we can see, not in things that we can't see. It is so much harder to believe in things that we can't see. We have probably all said at one time or another “I'll believe it when I see it.” Well, unfortunately, this is not how God operates. In fact, with God, it is just the opposite. With God it is “You will see it when you believe it.”²²⁸ It's all about trust. When we have a close friend that we know really well he has probably earned our trust. This gives us faith that he will do what he says he will do. It's no different with God. To trust God we need to know Him really well, and to know Him really well we need to read and understand His instruction manual. His instruction manual says that He cares for those who trust Him.^{229 230 231}

13. What will happen when I put my trust in God?

When you put your trust in God the weight of the world will be lifted off your shoulders.²³² Having trust in God requires faith, and having faith in God is critical because without faith it is impossible to please Him. God will only reward those who earnestly seek Him.²³³ We need to study His Word to have confidence in Him and to hear Him speak to us. When you spend time reading His Word it will help strengthen your faith in Him. And when you believe in Him that is when He will start answering your prayers.²³⁴ At that point He will help you make your decisions based on what He is leading you to do. When we think about this level of trust we oftentimes say to ourselves “I can't do that, that's too difficult. How can I put my trust in something that I can't see?” This is a common feeling for a lot of people and it's a common roadblock to understanding who God is. But, wouldn't you know, God has a solution for you. When you accept Jesus into your heart God's Spirit, the Holy Spirit, takes up residence in your heart.²³⁵ And because the Holy Spirit knows you better than you know yourself He will give you all that you need, including understanding, patience, and kindness.²³⁶ The Holy Spirit will help you trust in and have stronger faith in God.²³⁷ The Holy Spirit will help catch you when you stumble,²³⁸ and the Holy Spirit will help you succeed where you would otherwise fail.²³⁹

²²⁸ Matthew 21:22 All things, whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.

²²⁹ Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding.

²³⁰ Nahum 1:7 The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knows those who take refuge in Him.

²³¹ Jeremiah 39:18 For I will certainly rescue you, and you will not fall by the sword; but you will have your own life as booty, because you have trusted in Me,” declares the LORD.

²³² Psalms 111:7 The works of his hands are truth and justice. All his precepts are sure.

²³³ Hebrews 11:6 Without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing to him, for he who comes to God must believe that he exists, and that he is a rewarder of those who seek him.

²³⁴ Psalms 17:6 I have called on you, for you will answer me, God. Turn your ear to me. Hear my prayer.

²³⁵ Acts 5:32 We are His witnesses of these things; and so also is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.

²³⁶ 2 Corinthians 6:6 in pureness, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in sincere love.

²³⁷ Romans 15:13 Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

²³⁸ 2 Tim 1:14 That good thing which was committed to you, guard through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.

²³⁹ Luke 1:37 For everything spoken by God is possible.

14. What is the secret to achieving true peace and joy?

The secret is trusting in God in everything that you do, in every major decision that you make,²⁴⁰ not trusting in your own understanding,²⁴¹ being still and listening for His voice,²⁴² not being afraid,²⁴³ not being anxious,²⁴⁴ valuing others above yourself,²⁴⁵ observing His commands,²⁴⁶ relying on God when you are in trouble,²⁴⁷ loving Him with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind,²⁴⁸ so the Holy Spirit can teach you all things,²⁴⁹ and give you the desires of your heart.²⁵⁰ If you do this God will fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him so you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit²⁵¹ and He will give you abundance in all things.²⁵² Are you ready?

²⁴⁰ Deuteronomy 17:11 and according to the judgment which they shall tell you, you shall do; you shall not turn aside from the sentence which they shall show you, to the right hand, nor to the left.

²⁴¹ Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding.

²⁴² Psalms 46:10 Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth.

²⁴³ Mark 5:36 But Jesus, when he heard the message spoken, immediately said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Don't be afraid, only believe."

²⁴⁴ Philippians 4:6 In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

²⁴⁵ Philippians 2:3 doing nothing through rivalry or through conceit, but in humility, each counting others better than himself; 4 each of you not just looking to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others.

²⁴⁶ Deuteronomy 8:6 Therefore, you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him.

²⁴⁷ Psalms 46:1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

²⁴⁸ Luke 10:27 He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."!

²⁴⁹ John 14:26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and will remind you of all that I said to you.

²⁵⁰ Psalms 37:4 Delight yourself in the LORD; and He will give you the desires of your heart.

²⁵¹ Romans 15:13 Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

²⁵² 2 Peter 1:2 Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord



Chapter 5: I was made – to choose

(Please listen to our Chapter 5 [Part 1](#) audio file on our web site)

Study Questions

1. When did God's plan start?

God's plan was put in place at the beginning of time and was kick-started in the Garden of Eden. The very moment that Adam sinned and started the downfall of the human race it was probably God's Son, Jesus, in the Garden who was there and knew that He would need to save us from our sins. If God didn't know that Adam would sin after giving him free will then God made a huge mistake, but God never makes a mistake. This means that God knew that Adam would sin, and God also knew that at the moment that Adam sinned He would need to save us from our sins. At the very moment that Adam sinned, Jesus (God in the flesh), knew that He would need to die for us. At the moment the human race was doomed - we had a Savior. It was the only way.

2. How many ways can I be saved from my sins?

There is no other way or by no other name by which one can be saved.^{253 254 255} Everyone who believes in Jesus and proclaims it will be set free from sin.²⁵⁶ This includes your past, present, and all future sins. It is by God's grace that you are saved²⁵⁷ through your faith alone. There is nothing else you can do to gain a ticket into

²⁵³ Acts 4:12 There is salvation in none other, for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, by which we must be saved!

²⁵⁴ John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through me. 7 If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on, you know him, and have seen him."

²⁵⁵ Isaiah 43:11 I, even I, am the LORD, and there is no savior besides Me.

²⁵⁶ Acts 13:38 Be it known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man is proclaimed to you remission of sins 39 and by him everyone who believes is justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.

²⁵⁷ Ephesians 2:4 But God, being rich in mercy, for his great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved.

heaven.²⁵⁸ There is no way to earn it, or buy it. You must simply declare your faith in Jesus.²⁵⁹ God makes this gift available to everyone - but to be saved you must verbally²⁶⁰ accept His gift. You must believe in God's plan, the plan that He foretold in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New Testament. God gives you righteousness and eternity in heaven with Him through your faith in Jesus.²⁶¹ That's it. Through Jesus your wounds will be healed.²⁶²

3. Is it smart to delay my decision?

Not making a decision - is a decision. Think about this for a moment. It might not get done if you delay your decision any longer. This is what Satan is hoping you will do. Satan is hoping that you will not accept Jesus' free gift - which means Satan still has a chance with you. Satan knows that if you accept Jesus as your Savior his opportunity to bring you to hell with him is over. Satan is already condemned but when you accept Jesus' free gift you will no longer be condemned. You will be saved. You will have opened the door of your heart and Jesus will have come in. He now wishes to share His glorious plan with you.

You are condemned until the moment that you accept Jesus as your Savior - so make your decision today.

4. What significant event happened just minutes before Jesus died?

As Jesus hung on the cross there were two other crosses next to His with criminals hanging on each.²⁶³ One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at Jesus "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" But the second criminal rebuked him "Don't you fear God?" he said, "Since you are under the same sentence? We are being punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then the second criminal said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom." Jesus replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with Me in paradise."²⁶⁴ Jesus, our Good Shepherd, came to save the lost. Just minutes before His death Jesus saved another of His lost sheep - the criminal who was hanging next to Him. He was a lost soul who heard and recognized God's voice. And he believed.

5. What happened the moment Jesus died?

Just before Jesus was about to die on the cross God the Father turned His eyes away from Jesus and the sins of the world were heaped on Him.²⁶⁵ At that very moment God had to disconnect His holiness from Jesus; this was the only time this would ever happen. This is because God the Father cannot be a part of sin, any sin. In complete agony Jesus cried out "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"²⁶⁶ This separation, and Jesus' proclamation as He suffered this unbelievably excruciating death, was so Jesus could bear the sins of the world.²⁶⁷ But only those who believe in Jesus' and His death on the cross for our sins will be saved. It is the perfect plan, executed to perfection. All we need to do is believe.

²⁵⁸ John 3:13 No one has ascended into heaven, but he who descended out of heaven, the Son of Man, who is in heaven. 14 As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

²⁵⁹ Ephesians 2:8 for by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, that no one would boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared before that we would walk in them.

²⁶⁰ Romans 10:9 that if you will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart, one believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes in him will not be disappointed." 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich to all who call on him. 13 For, "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved."

²⁶¹ Romans 3:22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all those who believe.

²⁶² 1 Peter 2:24 who his own self bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live to righteousness; by whose stripes you were healed. 25 For you were going astray like sheep; but now have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

²⁶³ Luke 23:32 There were also others, two criminals, led with him to be put to death.

²⁶⁴ Luke 23:39 One of the criminals who was hanged insulted him, saying, "If you are the Christ, save yourself and us!" 40 But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Don't you even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? 41 And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." 42 He said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when you come into your Kingdom." 43 Jesus said to him, "Assuredly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

²⁶⁵ 1 John 2:2 And he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.

²⁶⁶ Matthew 27:46 About the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" That is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

²⁶⁷ Isaiah 53:5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. ⁶ All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.

6. What happened three days after Jesus was crucified, and then for the next 40 days?

On the third day after Jesus was crucified He rose from the dead and showed Himself to His disciples and hundreds of other people.²⁶⁸ This was to prove who He was - God in the flesh - and to remind us of His plan.²⁶⁹ There are many historical documents from this time period that state that people saw Jesus after He was crucified and buried. Jesus then visited various people for the next 40 days²⁷⁰ before He rose to heaven where He is today, at the right hand of God.²⁷¹

7. What must I do to accept Jesus' free gift?

Would you like to accept Jesus' gift right now? You must say this prayer out loud²⁷² and you must repeat it while you are still alive. Don't wait. Remember, Satan is hoping you will delay this decision. Don't delay. Do it now and your decision will be complete. Simply say the following prayer out loud and believe that Jesus came to earth to die for your sins.

Dear God,

I don't understand everything, but I know I am a sinner.

Because I am a sinner, I deserve death and separation from you.

Thank you for sending Jesus to die in my place.

I trust in Jesus alone to forgive my sins and accept His gift of eternal life.

I pray that Jesus be my personal Savior and the Lord of my life.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

²⁶⁸ Acts 10:41 who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

²⁶⁹ Hosea 6:2 After two days he will revive us. On the third day he will raise us up, and we will live before him.

²⁷⁰ Acts 1:3 To these he also showed himself alive after he suffered, by many proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days, and speaking about God's Kingdom.

²⁷¹ Mark 16:19 So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.

²⁷² Romans 10:9 that if you will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

8. How can I align my decisions with God's will?

1 Prioritize

If you believe in Jesus what are your priorities as a believer? According to Jesus the greatest commandment is to love God, and to love others.²⁷³ This will be a very good start to your list. You will want to make decisions that honor God and then you will want to make decisions that honor and love your family and your neighbors - as yourself. That's right, you are to love your neighbors as yourself. God loves you so He will want to support you in all that you do.²⁷⁴ He will give you choices and He will reward you for the righteous decisions that you make.²⁷⁵ In many cases there won't be right or wrong decisions, only personal preferences. Both of these are within God's perfect plan and His will for your life,²⁷⁶ and both will lead to the fulfillment of God's purpose for your life²⁷⁷ as long as you follow Him.

2 Study the Bible

Your Word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.²⁷⁸ When making key decisions there is a very important question that you should always ask: What does God say about it? When facing important decisions you should search the Bible and see what God says about it. It also might help to ask others as other people might have a better understanding of what the Bible says than you do. You should search the Bible because this is where God's guidance is located. All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.²⁷⁹ This is exactly what we need to do when making important decisions, let God's Word direct your footsteps.²⁸⁰

3 Go ahead and ask God

If you want to know what God wants, ask Him!²⁸¹ He is right here with you and me. In other words, pray. And then expect Him to answer your prayer. But don't always expect His answer to come to you directly, or right away. Oftentimes it is through someone else, or through a totally unpredictable situation, where He answers your prayer. He might speak to you through a friend, or even someone you don't know. He is very good at that. God also has an incredible sense of humor - so you may receive your answer through the weirdest of situations or circumstances. You could be at a place you have never been to before (like a gas station), at a time that you could never have planned (you just had a flat tire), surrounded by people you have never met (a bunch of teens just stopped in to buy some candy) - and BANG, your answer is given to you. When you hear God's answer be sure to praise Him for His responsiveness and His love for you. And then laugh your head off at the way He answered your prayer. He just loves doing this to people who love Him. Also be sure to ask God for wisdom.²⁸² For wisdom will enter your heart and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.²⁸³ All godly wisdom starts with the fear of the Lord, and the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. Don't be a fool. Fools will despise wisdom and instruction from the Lord.²⁸⁴ God wants to guide you and help you make important decisions, and He promises to teach and instruct you through His Word.²⁸⁵ For God knows the plans that He has for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.²⁸⁶ Let Him guide you - through His Word.

²⁷³ Matthew 22:36 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law?":37 Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 A second likewise is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments."

²⁷⁴ John 16:27 for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me, and have believed that I came forth from God.

²⁷⁵ Jeremiah 32:19 great in counsel, and mighty in work; whose eyes are open on all the ways of the sons of men, to give everyone according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

²⁷⁶ Ecclesiastes 8:5 Whoever keeps the commandment shall not come to harm, and his wise heart will know the time and procedure.

²⁷⁷ Philippians 2:13 For it is God who works in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure.

²⁷⁸ Psalms 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light for my path.

²⁷⁹ 2 Tim 3:16 Every Scripture is God-breathed and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.

²⁸⁰ Psalms 119:133 Establish my footsteps in your word. Don't let any iniquity have dominion over me.

²⁸¹ James 1:5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach; and it will be given to him.

²⁸² Proverbs 2:6 For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.

²⁸³ Proverbs 2:10 For wisdom will enter into your heart. Knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.

²⁸⁴ Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

4 Quiet yourself – and listen

Many of us pray, but we don't listen. We view prayer as one-way communication. But God can't talk to us if we are continually talking. So stop and listen. Listening is probably the most important form of communication. Learning to recognize God's voice is one of the most important aspects of a believer's life. We will continue to struggle with our decisions if we don't learn to recognize God's voice. Remember the lambs that recognize their shepherd's voice and they follow only that voice? The lambs that don't recognize their shepherd's voice - well, they know not to follow the strange voice. We need to recognize our Shepherd's voice so we aren't led in the wrong direction. For God knows that those who know Him will recognize His voice.²⁸⁷

5 Seek Godly counsel

Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.²⁸⁸ For the really important decisions in your life it is wise to get counsel from other godly leaders in your life. A parent, a pastor, or even a friend who is well-versed in scripture can be of immense help. They can help you remove any doubts that you have. The very last thing you should do is isolate yourself and not seek counsel.²⁸⁹ Of course, the strongest counsel you can possibly receive is from Jesus.²⁹⁰ So don't be afraid to ask Him.

6 Discern when to act

What is the wisest choice - that is the question. Use your spirit-filled mind to think through the issues and then decide on the wisest course. Through the Holy Spirit you now have wisdom that will help guide and direct you. Ask God for guidance. So, how do we know we are doing things at the right time, in God's time? God knows when the time is right.²⁹¹ We must pray, and listen. We must be sensitive to how God may lead us. Doing things God's way will save us time, energy, and money, not to mention avoiding lots of problems.

7 Exercise your faith

We must remember that decision-making is a process that takes time. You may need to submit your will over and over to God throughout the decision-making process and then have faith and confidence that He will reveal His will to you. Commit to the LORD whatever you do and He will establish your plans for you.²⁹² It is highly unlikely that God will reveal His plan to you if He knows that you won't obey Him. It is essential that your will is completely submitted to His will. When your will is fully submitted to God you can have confidence that He will illuminate your path.²⁹³ Without faith it is impossible to please God.²⁹⁴ He asks that you have faith as small as a mustard seed and then nothing will be impossible for you.²⁹⁵

8 Learn from your mistakes

You will always make mistakes - and lots of them. But being a follower of Jesus does not exempt you from the responsibility of becoming a better decision-maker based on the mistakes that you have already made. Being a better decision-maker is not always something that you need to work on, or do. Sometimes you simply need to be quiet so God can impart His wisdom on you.²⁹⁶ When you do happen to make a mistake confess it to God and

²⁸⁵ Psalms 32:8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go. I will counsel you with my eye on you.

²⁸⁶ Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. ¹² Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. ¹³ You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

²⁸⁷ John 10:27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

²⁸⁸ Proverbs 15:22 Where there is no counsel, plans fail; but in a multitude of counselors they are established.

²⁸⁹ Proverbs 18:1 An unfriendly man pursues selfishness, and defies all sound judgment.

²⁹⁰ 1 Corinthians 11:1 Be imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ.

²⁹¹ Romans 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; 4 who comforts us in all our affliction, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, through the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

²⁹² Proverbs 16:3 Commit your works to the LORD And your plans will be established.

²⁹³ Psalms 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light for my path.

²⁹⁴ Hebrews 11:6 Without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing to him, for he who comes to God must believe that he exists, and that he is a rewarder of those who seek him.

²⁹⁵ Matthew 17:20 He said to them, "Because of your unbelief. For most certainly I tell you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will tell this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you."

ask Him for His forgiveness. Also, don't allow the enemy to condemn you.^{297 298} Be sure to ask God for wisdom. God wishes to impart His wisdom on you - but you need to ask for it.²⁹⁹ When you do make a decision, and if you are blessed by the result, be sure that God gets the credit and the glory.³⁰⁰ Also hope that others, someday, will look on your life and learn how you made wise choices that glorify God. Little by little you will gain wisdom from God's Word as you trust in Him.³⁰¹ You will also begin to see the results reflected in your decisions.

If you love God, you will be blessed.³⁰² Blessed are those who fear the Lord.³⁰³

(Please continue with our Chapter 5 Part 2 audio file on our web site)

9. If I believe in Jesus will He protect me?

Can God protect me? Absolutely! Will He protect me? Well, it depends on His will - and we may not know what is best for us. God doesn't promise us that He will protect us from all of the bad stuff that happens in the world. What He does promise is He will walk beside us during difficult times. He guarantees that He will never leave us or forsake us³⁰⁴ and He will give us strength and an inner peace when we face difficult times.

Even though God has the ability to protect us from physical harm, and deliver us from trouble, it might not be His will to do so. Sometimes He uses trials and difficult circumstances to purify us. Remember, we should consider it pure joy when we face trials of many kinds.³⁰⁵ God sometimes tests our faith in order to develop a higher level of faith by allowing us to grow through trials so we can persevere and grow to maturity.³⁰⁶ When this is the case, protecting us from trials would not be beneficial to us. When God allows suffering in our life, it is almost always an opportunity to strengthen our trust in Him.³⁰⁷

10. Why does God bless His people?

There is one over-arching reason why God blesses His people. It is so they can bring glory to His name.³⁰⁸ He also blesses and gifts certain people so they can serve and bless others. But for God to bless us we must be obedient to His Word. God repeatedly promises us that He will bless us abundantly³⁰⁹ so we will abound in all good works. For Him to fulfill that promise we must truly believe that He will. God's promises may seem impossible to you, but for God who has created the universe, the earth, all living creatures, as well as you and me - nothing is impossible.³¹⁰ God promises to give you the desires of your heart³¹¹ but you must ask Him for it. You do not receive because you do not ask.³¹²

²⁹⁶ Job 33:33 If not, listen to me. Hold your peace, and I will teach you wisdom.

²⁹⁷ 1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us the sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we haven't sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us

²⁹⁸ Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who don't walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death.

²⁹⁹ James 1:5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach; and it will be given to him. 6 But let him ask in faith, without any doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed.

³⁰⁰ Romans 16:27 to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ!

³⁰¹ Jeremiah 17:7 "Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD And whose trust is the LORD. ⁸For he will be like a tree planted by the water, that extends its roots by a stream and will not fear when the heat comes; but its leaves will be green, and it will not be anxious in a year of drought nor cease to yield fruit.

³⁰² Deuteronomy 11 ¹³ So if you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today—to love the LORD your God and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul- ¹⁴ then I will send rain on your land in its season, both autumn and spring rains, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and oil.

³⁰³ Psalms 112 ¹ Blessed are those who fear the LORD, who find great delight in his commands. ² Their children will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed.

³⁰⁴ Deuteronomy 31:8 The LORD is the one who goes ahead of you; He will be with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.

³⁰⁵ James 1:2 Count it all joy, my brother, when you fall into various temptations,

³⁰⁶ James 1:4 Let endurance have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

³⁰⁷ Psalms 62:8 Trust in him at all times, you people. Pour out your heart before him. God is a refuge for us.

³⁰⁸ Psalms 67:1 May God be merciful to us, bless us, and cause his face to shine on us. 2 That your way may be known on earth, and your salvation among all nations.

³⁰⁹ 2 Corinthians 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that you, always having all sufficiency in everything, may abound to every good work.

³¹⁰ Matthew 19:26 Looking at them, Jesus said, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

³¹¹ Psalms 37:4 Delight yourself in the LORD; and He will give you the desires of your heart.

³¹² James 4:2 You don't have, because you don't ask.

11. Does God hear and respond to every prayer?

There is no doubt that Jesus hears every prayer - whether the person believes in Jesus or not. God is omniscient, which means He hears and sees everything that happens on earth.³¹³ Is there any place on earth where you could possibly hide where God will not hear your prayer? The answer is No.³¹⁴ Everything you do, and think, is laid bare before the eyes of the One to whom you must give account someday.³¹⁵ Everything. So nobody should have any doubt that God hears all prayers.

Jesus not only hears the prayers from those who believe in Him, He answers them - but not always in the way that we want, or in the way that we ask. He tells believers to boldly approach His throne so He can help us in our time of need.³¹⁶ But, this doesn't mean that the answer to your prayer will always be a Yes. Sometimes it will be No. And sometimes - well, the answer may be something very different than what you expected. This is because Jesus knows what you need far better than you do. The nice thing about our prayers is Jesus knows our intentions. We don't need to use any fancy words. If our intentions aren't right with Him, He will see right through it. He knows whether answering a prayer will be good for everyone, or not. He knows whether satisfying a prayer will further His kingdom, or not. He knows whether satisfying a prayer will allow us to serve or bless others, or not. This means that not all of our prayers are consistent with His will so some of our prayers may go without an answer. They will be overruled.

12. Who does God bless?

In Matthew 5 it says ¹Now when Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ²and He began to teach them. He said:

³Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

⁵Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

⁶Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

⁷Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

⁸Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

⁹Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

¹⁰Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.

¹²Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

³¹³ Proverbs 5:21 For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the LORD, and He watches all his paths.

³¹⁴ Jeremiah 23:24 "Can a man hide himself in hiding places so I do not see him?" declares the LORD. "Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?" declares the LORD.

³¹⁵ Hebrews 4:13 but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

³¹⁶ Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore draw near with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace for help in time of need.

13. What are some reasons why God doesn't give His blessings?

It's possible that you are not receiving God's blessings because you are not committed to God and His teachings. In the eyes of the Lord you might be considered lukewarm.³¹⁷ When things are going well, you ignore Him. And then when something bad happens in your life you cry out to Him. You are cold, then warm, then cold, then warm, and since you don't trust in Him for every major decision in your life - how can He trust you? God needs your commitment. He needs to know where you stand and whether you trust in His standards and are willing to live by His standards. Having a lack of commitment to God and His standards is probably the biggest problem in our society today. Everybody seems to want everything and they will do whatever it takes get it, including lying, cheating, being dishonest, and even if it means getting ahead at the expense of others.

Many people seem to be living a life without having any real commitments, or even standards. Many people will say what they believe you want to hear with no moral thought as to what they are actually saying. They will say they believe in God, yet they don't live according to His standards. They will pick and choose God's standards that they like, and disobey the rest - as if these "other" standards don't mean anything. A person will get married and then shortly thereafter file for divorce. They will attend church and as they leave the church parking lot they will cut somebody off and shake their fist. This is a grievous and non-committed lifestyle that God abhors.³¹⁸ God needs your commitment. If you are not 100% for God and committed to His principles then you are against Him. As you can imagine if you are not living a committed lifestyle where God can trust you, you will not receive His blessings.

If you always do and say things that please the crowd, instead of doing what is right, God will know that He can't depend on you to make the right decision when He needs it the most. If He can't depend on you why would He risk blessing you with things that might go to waste? God might test your faith to see if you can be trusted.³¹⁹ Testing your faith is how God finds out whether He can depend on you through thick and thin, through troubles and difficulties, through pain and suffering, through failures and frustration, and so much more.

³¹⁷ Revelation 3:16 So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will vomit you out of my mouth. 17 Because you say, 'I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing;' and don't know that you are the wretched one, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.

³¹⁸ Malachi 2:16 "The man who hates and divorces his wife," says the Lord, the God of Israel, "does violence to the one he should protect," says the Lord Almighty.

³¹⁹ Hebrews 11:17 By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice.

14. When will I be blessed?

You will be blessed when you are at the end of your rope.³²⁰

You will be blessed when you keep peace between those who argue and corrupt.³²¹

You will be blessed for being persecuted while holding firm to your faith.³²²

You will be blessed for showing mercy to those who persecute you.³²³

You will be blessed for helping those in need.³²⁴

You will be blessed when you hear the word of God and obey it.³²⁵

You will be blessed when your mind and your heart is right with God.³²⁶

Ask God to help you align your mind and your heart with His mind and His heart. Admit your moral bankruptcy and ask God to forgive you for your sins. Ask for wisdom. Instead of relying on your own strength turn your life over to Jesus and rely on His strength. When you are weary you will find rest for your soul through God.³²⁷

³²⁰ Matthew 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

³²¹ Matthew 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.

³²² Matthew 5:10 Blessed are those who have been persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

³²³ Matthew 5:7 Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

³²⁴ Matthew 5:5 Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

³²⁵ Luke 11:28 But he said, "On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God, and keep it."

³²⁶ 1 Chronicles 28:9 And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the Lord searches every heart and understands every desire and every thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever.

³²⁷ Matthew 11:28 "Come to me, all you who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart; and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."



Chapter 6: I was made – for a mission

(Please listen to our Chapter 6 [Part 1](#) audio file on our web site)

Study Questions

1. When was “my mission” put in place?

God has had His plan in place for you before you were born.³²⁸ The life you have lived, and the problems that you have experienced, have not come about by accident. It is all part of God’s grand plan. Your birth and your future were all ordained. All the days of your life were written in God’s book before even one came to be³²⁹ including who your parents would be, when and where you would be born, where you would live, what you would look like, who your friends would be, and the different experiences - both good and bad - that you would live through. These were all planned by God for a very specific purpose. Even all of the bad experiences that you have lived through have been for a reason. All of your experiences have been for your spiritual growth.

³²⁸ Psalms 139:15 My frame wasn’t hidden from you, when I was made in secret, woven together in the depths of the earth.

³²⁹ Psalms 139:16 Your eyes saw my body. In your book they were all written, the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there were none of them.

2. Did God come to earth to save my body, my spirit, or both?

Our spirit is the reason why He came to earth. God didn't come to earth to die on the cross to save our earthly bodies. He came to earth to save our soul, which is our spirit. Our bodies are just temporary; our bodies are weak and will always be full of problems. Some of our weaknesses are by God's design.³³⁰ Our bodies will continue to fail us as they haven't been designed for eternity, but our spirit has been designed for eternity. It is our spirit that provides a guarantee of what is yet to come.³³¹

The longing in our heart to find out who we are and why we were born starts a new direction in our life. We were all made for a mission, but God leaves it up to each of us to find out what it is. God gives us His Holy Spirit to live within us³³² to help us find the answer to this important question. But for God's Holy Spirit to help us we must believe that God came to earth in the form of Jesus to die for our sins. This is the only way that God can help us.

3. Learning God's will for my life – will it be easy?

Understanding God's will for your life is not something that will be handed to you on a silver platter. It's going to take some work. But God wants you to know His will.³³³ He isn't hiding it from you. You must start by not conforming to the things of this world. Remember, Satan has control and dominion over the world in which we live - which means if you continue to listen to the messages "the world" sends your way you are basically agreeing to conform to Satan's schemes, his deceptions, his devices, and his destructive messages, which are many. If you continue to conform to his way and his messages you will be walking into his trap and you will be walking down his path, and we know where that path leads.³³⁴ It leads to darkness.

God wants everyone to find the purpose and mission that He has ordained for them. Unfortunately, not everyone will. Not everyone will find it, or even seek it. It is your own personal responsibility to discover God's will for your life. Nobody else can do this for you. To find it, you must seek it. How do you find something if you don't look for it? It is the seeking that requires work. The best way to do this is to read what He is telling you in His instruction manual - the Bible. This book is meant to give you some insight into what the Bible says, but the Bible will be 1000 times more thorough. The Bible is His full and accurate Word.

³³⁰ John 9:1 As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. 2 His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3 Jesus answered, "Neither did this man sin, nor his parents; but, that the works of God might be revealed in him."

³³¹ 2 Corinthians 1:22 who also sealed us, and gave us the down payment of the Spirit in our hearts.

³³² Romans 8:27 He who searches the hearts knows what is on the Spirit's mind, because he makes intercession for the saints according to God.

³³³ Romans 12:2 Do not conform 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.

³³⁴ Matthew 7:13 Enter in by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter in by it. 14 How narrow is the gate, and restricted is the way that leads to life! Few are those who find it.

4. What is the most important decision that anyone can make?

The decision is incredibly simple - it's simply to believe. Believe in Jesus. You must believe that God so loved the world that He sent His only Son, Jesus, to earth to save you from your sins, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.³³⁵ Can you say easy? But you must do this one thing. God is watching. He created you and He is watching for your commitment. He came to earth to die for you, and because of what He did for you - He needs to know that you believe in Him. He needs to know that you are committed. Until you are committed, and until He knows that you believe in Him, He can't help you.

His plan was perfect. It was a plan that was already in place when Adam sinned. God's plan means that we all have a Savior. But to be saved we must believe. It was, and is, the perfect plan, developed by a perfect God, executed to perfection. We just need to believe. Jesus is the fabric of God's grand plan^{336 337} and Jesus is the fabric of His beautiful design. Jesus is also the thread through which we can reach the top of the rug.

5. How can I learn God's will for my life?

It all starts with the Word of God since God's Word is His will. Don't be foolish and not try to understand God's will for your life.³³⁸ The chief purpose for our life is to live according to His will, and when you live according to His will there will be a supernatural peace and a supernatural joy that will come into your life. This is also when God's blessings can begin to flow into your life - when you live according to His standards and do what He has called you to do.^{339 340}

There isn't a special process that you must follow to discover God's will for your life. His plan is practical, not mystical. You must simply desire to live a life that is connected with His and live a life that aligns with His standards. This will start the process of spiritual discovery. Simply follow His Word and immerse your life in a desire for discovery. When you do this God will begin to reveal the answers that you seek. When you open your heart, pray and ask for answers and you will begin to see and understand revelations that He gives you. Simply ask Him and He will provide. It is God's Holy Spirit that has taken up residence in your heart that will give you a level of understanding and knowledge that you desire.³⁴¹

³³⁵ John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

³³⁶ Acts 2:23 this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.

³³⁷ 2 Corinthians 5:21 For him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

³³⁸ Ephesians 5:17 Therefore don't be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

³³⁹ Deuteronomy 28:2 All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey the LORD your God.

³⁴⁰ Psalms 128:2 For you will eat the labor of your hands. You will be happy, and it will be well with you.

³⁴¹ Job 32:8 But there is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty gives them understanding.

6. How do I recognize God's blessings?

Don't feel disheartened if you don't understand God's will for your life and answers to your prayers don't jump out at you the moment that you start your journey. The answers to your prayers will probably come to you over time - like taking a long stroll through the woods. The longer you walk, and the more alert you are, the more you will see. During your search be sure to walk slowly because God's treasures and His answers are behind every plant, under every rock, in every tree, and in every stream. Also be sure to watch the beautiful clouds that are rolling by as you walk.

God's treasures and His blessings come in many different forms. To recognize God's blessings you need to be on alert, and when you are, His blessings will speak to you.³⁴² Too many times we walk so fast that we miss seeing His blessings. This can happen if we let the world consume our lives. One of Satan's goals is to blind us with work, TV, computers, magazines, and other "stuff" so we don't see or experience God's blessings, or even experience God. Satan does not want us to experience God so Satan will do everything he can to keep us walking too fast so we don't experience God's will for our life. Slow down and resist Satan's "busy"-ness and he will flee from you.^{343 344} As you take your walk trust that the Lord will reveal more of His will to you. Be confident that He who began a good work in you will carry it to completion.³⁴⁵ For God's purpose is that His son Jesus will be glorified and that His Good News in the Bible will be communicated throughout the world.³⁴⁶

7. Are my natural abilities and my talents God's will for my life?

A mistake that many of us make is assuming that whatever we are "good" at - that this is God's will for my life. We assume that if we are really good at something it must mean that God wants us to use that to further His kingdom. This might be true, but we should not assume that this is the case. God has given each of us unique skills and abilities and talents, which is wonderful, but if we only focus on these things while we search for God's will for our life we might miss something extremely important. We need to lean on God. We need to lean on Him to sustain us in all areas of our life.^{347 348 349 350 351 352} God's will includes having a relationship with Him, connecting with Him, needing Him, following Him,³⁵³ and living a life according to His standards.

³⁴² Proverbs 6:22 When you walk, it will lead you. When you sleep, it will watch over you. When you awake, it will talk with you.

³⁴³ James 4:7 Be subject therefore to God. But resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

³⁴⁴ 1 Peter 5:9 Withstand him steadfast in your faith, knowing that your brothers who are in the world are undergoing the same sufferings.

³⁴⁵ Philippians 1:6 For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

³⁴⁶ Colossians 1:6 which has come to you; even as it is in all the world and is bearing fruit and growing, as it does in you also, since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth.

³⁴⁷ Psalms 41:3 The LORD will sustain him upon his sickbed; in his illness, You restore him to health.

³⁴⁸ Psalms 55:22 Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.

³⁴⁹ Psalms 147:6 The LORD supports the afflicted; He brings down the wicked to the ground.

³⁵⁰ Isaiah 50:4 The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples, that I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple.

³⁵¹ Hebrews 1:3 His Son is the radiance of his glory, the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself made purification for our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

³⁵² Isaiah 46:4 and even to old age I am he, and even to gray hairs will I carry you. I have made, and I will bear; yes, I will carry, and will deliver.

³⁵³ Luke 9:23 He said to all, "If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me."

8. How will I “short-circuit” learning God’s will for my life?

When we are really good at something, when we are so good that we don’t feel like we need any of God’s help, this is when we might short-circuit what God desires for us. God’s will for us is so much more than focusing on our talents and our natural abilities. God wants us to have faith in Him. God wants us to accomplish things that we could never accomplish without Him. When we accomplish something that we could never accomplish without Him (e.g., like writing this book and this study guide) it strengthens our faith in Him and we will overflow with thankfulness.³⁵⁴

God’s will for our life is so much more than our occupation and our talents and our natural abilities. Our goal must be to live a life that is pleasing to God and to allow the Holy Spirit within us to help guide our daily decisions. For the Lord says, He will bless those who follow Him.^{355 356} God wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of His truth.³⁵⁷ When you trust in Him and lean not on your own understanding He will make your path straight.³⁵⁸

9. What will happen if I live according to God’s will?

When you live according to God’s will and if you work to fulfill your purpose God will provide you with a supernatural peace and joy in your life.^{359 360 361} This is God’s gift to you, that you may be blessed, so you can bless others. His gift will include a confidence in everything that you do.³⁶² God will also help you make key decisions in your life, decisions that will be easier and clearer - which will give you additional peace.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” - Proverbs 3:5-6

But this doesn’t mean that you will never have hardships or difficulties in your life; you will have problems. As a believer in Jesus you can delight in your weakness, hardships, persecutions, and difficulties - for when you are weak you can be strong.³⁶³ As you persevere you will receive what He has promised you.³⁶⁴ For Jesus has won the war. The war is over.³⁶⁵ Jesus has overcome the world.³⁶⁶ The true joy in your life will be finding God’s will for your life. Keep God’s Word as your foundation and watch His plan unfold right before your very eyes. This is when you will start to receive some hints as to what the top of the rug looks like.

³⁵⁴ Colossians 2:7 rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, even as you were taught, abounding in it in thanksgiving.

³⁵⁵ Deuteronomy 28:1 Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the LORD your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth..

³⁵⁶ Psalms 128:2 For you will eat the labor of your hands. You will be happy, and it will be well with you.

³⁵⁷ 1 Timothy 2:3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; 4 who desires all people to be saved and come to full knowledge of the truth.

³⁵⁸ Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.

³⁵⁹ Isaiah 55:12 For you shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing; and all the trees of the fields shall clap their hands.

³⁶⁰ Romans 14:17 for the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

³⁶¹ Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness.

³⁶² Isaiah 32:17 The work of righteousness will be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and confidence forever.

³⁶³ 2 Corinthians 12:10 Therefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then am I strong.

³⁶⁴ Hebrews 10:36 For you need endurance so that, having done the will of God, you may receive the promise.

³⁶⁵ Jeremiah 1:19 They will fight against you, but they will not overcome you, for I am with you to deliver you,” declares the LORD.

³⁶⁶ John 16:33 I have told you these things, that in me you may have peace. In the world you have oppression; but cheer up! I have overcome the world.

10. The spiritual gifts the Lord gives me – are they for my benefit?

It is important to understand that whatever gift God has given to you, it is not meant for you. Your gift is meant to be given away. Your gift is meant to benefit others in your service to them. Your gift is not for your own pleasure. Another way of saying this is: your gift is for God's glory, not for your own glory. When you use your gift to serve others you are bringing about the unity of the body of Christ, and when the body of Christ is in unity you will help stimulate spiritual growth within the body's members.

11. What are some of the spiritual gifts that I might receive?

In alphabetical order (not a complete list...):

1. The gift of Administration - the gift of planning and directing
2. The gift of Art & Artistry - the gift of creating artistic expressions of things
3. The gift of Discernment - the gift of knowing what is right and wrong and knowing God's will
4. The gift of Evangelism - the gift that moves believers to reach nonbelievers so they may become active members of the Christian community
5. The gift of Encouragement /Exhortation - the gift that moves believers to reach out with love to people in conflict or facing a problem
6. The gift of Faith - the gift that gives believers the eyes to see the Spirit at work within them
7. The gift of Giving - the gift that enables a believer to recognize God's blessings and to respond by being generous with time and talent
8. The gift of Healing - the gift that allows a believer to use the healing power of the Lord
9. The gift of Hospitality - the gift that moves a believer to welcome and receive guests, especially those in need
10. The gift of Intercession - the gift that enables a believer to pray with the certainty that their prayer will be heard
11. The gift of Knowledge - the gift that drives a person to fully understand the Bible's teachings and the promises outlined in the Bible
12. The gift of Leadership - the gift that gives a believer the confidence to fully prepare for the future
13. The gift of Mercy - the gift that motivates a believer to feel deeply for those in need and then act to meet that need
14. The gift of Music - the gift that gives a believer the capability to inspire others through song and instruments
15. The gift of Prophecy - the gift that gives a believer the capability to speak forth the truth
16. The gift of Shepherding & Pastoring - the gift that gives a believer the ability to provide spiritual leadership and direction for individuals or groups
17. The gift of Service - the gift that enables a believer to serve others so God's work is fulfilled
18. The gift of Skilled Crafts - the gift that enables a believer to make, repair, and maintain things

19. The gift of Teaching - the gift that enables a believer to communicate an understanding of something so it becomes clear and understandable to others
20. The gift of Wisdom - the gift that allows a believer to determine the best solution for something
21. The gift of Writing - the gift that gives a believer the ability to express thoughts, ideas, and the truth through the written word

12. Do I get to choose my spiritual gift?

You don't get to choose which gift you get as God chooses it for you. The only choice that you get is to unwrap it and use it. The gift that you receive is a God-given assignment³⁶⁷ and a desire for you to perform a specific function within the body of Christ. Your gift is given to you along with a supernatural energy that will make your service to others effortless and joyful. You will use your gift to serve others and you will love doing it! Don't worry - you will be happy with the gift that you receive.³⁶⁸

(Please continue with our Chapter 6 Part 2 audio file on our web site)

13. Why should we pray?

God already knows what we need and want so why should we pray? Is it because we think God doesn't know what we need? Is it because we think God doesn't know we are hurting? Or maybe we think that He will give us a special favor or dispensation if we solemnly ask Him in prayer?

The answer is: true prayer is asking in faith. We must pray and ask that His will be done. God wants us to ask for things. When we ask God for things we are expressing our dependence on Him and we are acknowledging that He is in control. We are acknowledging that He knows what we need and that we need His involvement. We want His involvement. Prayer is faith in action. Prayer is knocking on His door and through faith in Him we know He will open the door and give us what we ask for.³⁶⁹ When we align with His will, and obey His commands, we will know He will bless us and that He will set us high above the nations on earth.³⁷⁰

But, just because God knows what we need, this surely doesn't mean that we should stop asking Him. We should pray because we wish to align with His will. We should pray because we wish to deepen our relationship with Him. God says that He will help transform us so we can know His will.³⁷¹ Let's repeat this very important point - through prayer and dependence on Him our minds will be transformed so we can know His will.

³⁶⁷ 1 Peter 4:10 As each has received a gift, employ it in serving one another, as good managers of the grace of God in its various forms.

³⁶⁸ 2 Corinthians 8:12 For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what you have, not according to what you don't have.

³⁶⁹ Matthew 7:7 "Ask, and it will be given you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened for you. 8 For everyone who asks receives. He who seeks finds. To him who knocks it will be opened.

³⁷⁰ Deuteronomy 28:1 "Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the LORD your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. ²All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey the LORD your God: ³Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country.

³⁷¹ Romans 12:1 Therefore I urge you, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service. 2 Don't be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what is the good, well-pleasing, and perfect will of God.

(Please continue with our Chapter 6 Part 3 audio file on our web site)

This audio file is a song – which is integral to the remaining sections of our book and this study guide. Please take time to listen to it.

14. Why it is so hard to tell others about our faith, or about Jesus?

Trying to describe Jesus to other people without fully understanding His plan, and everything He did to fulfill His plan, is like trying to describe someone by only reading their obituary. It can't be done. Is there anyone who can describe a person they never knew? To describe someone we need to know what they said, what they did, what was important to them, what they stood for, how they cared for others, what they believed in, and so much more.

The same is true for many of us when someone brings up the topic of Jesus in conversation, or the topic of faith. We get nervous. Our heart rate jumps. We want to change the subject. But it shouldn't be this way. We need to understand what God did for us and be comfortable talking about it.

(Please continue with our Chapter 6 Part 4 audio file on our web site)

15. Am I supposed to tell others about Jesus?

The answer is Yes, and here are a few reasons why:

1. Because the Lord told us to.^{372 373}
2. The Lord told us to always be ready to explain the hope that we have.³⁷⁴
3. The Lord told us to do unto others as we would have them do unto us.³⁷⁵
4. The Lord told us to tell others - whether they wish to listen, or not.³⁷⁶
5. If you are ashamed to talk about Him, He will be ashamed of you when His is glorified.³⁷⁷
6. Because telling others is one of the fruits of the Spirit.³⁷⁸
7. Because telling others is a wise thing to do.³⁷⁹
8. Because telling others will help them from going to Hell.³⁸⁰
9. Because telling others will please God.³⁸¹
10. Because telling others provides fellowship with God.³⁸²
11. Because telling others will make the angels rejoice.³⁸³
12. Because telling others will help provide more workers for the harvest of finding more un-saved souls.³⁸⁴

16. Can I make a difference in the world when I am so incredibly small?

Yes! Listen to the song. Every single one of us can reach someone, people that we know, and people that we don't see very often - maybe some of your neighbors, shut-ins, acquaintances, casual friends, and others. Together we can all reach everyone. All we need to believe is that we can be a spark, a spark that starts a flame, a flame that starts a fire, a fire that cannot be consumed. This fire can travel the world, to every person, if we believe.

³⁷² Matthew 28:19 Therefore go, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I commanded you. Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen

³⁷³ Acts 10:42 He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that this is he who is appointed by God as the Judge of the living and the dead. 43 All the prophets testify about him, that through his name everyone who believes in him will receive remission of sins.

³⁷⁴ 1 Peter 3:15 and always be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, with humility and fear.

³⁷⁵ Matthew 7:12 Therefore whatever you desire for men to do to you, you shall also do to them; for this is the law and the prophets.

³⁷⁶ Ezekiel 3:11 Go to the exiles, to the sons of your people, and speak to them and tell them, whether they listen or not, 'Thus says the Lord GOD.'

³⁷⁷ Luke 9:26 For whoever will be ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed, when he comes in his glory, and the glory of the Father, and of the holy angels.

³⁷⁸ Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness.

³⁷⁹ Proverbs 11:30 The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life. He who is wise wins souls.

³⁸⁰ Luke 12:5 But I will warn you whom you should fear. Fear him, who after he has killed, has power to cast into Hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.

³⁸¹ Luke 12:8 I tell you, everyone who confesses me before men, him will the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God.

³⁸² 1 John 1:3 that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us. Yes, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

³⁸³ Luke 15:10 Even so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner repenting.

³⁸⁴ Luke 10:2 Then he said to them, "The harvest is indeed plentiful, but the laborers are few. Pray therefore to the Lord of the harvest, that he may send out laborers into his harvest."

17. What are ways that I can be a spark?

See many examples in Chapter 6.

18. What is our mission while here on earth?

Our mission while on earth is summarized in The Lord's Prayer: (Matthew 6)

⁹"This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, ¹⁰your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven, ¹¹Give us this day our daily bread. ¹²And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. ¹³And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'"

Do you see in verse 10 where it says that our mission is to help bring God's kingdom to earth? Our eternal salvation is guaranteed the moment that we put our faith in Jesus, but the quality of our life while here on earth depends on carrying out God's plan after our salvation. It is through our obedience to His Word, and leaving our former way of life behind, that our eyes will be opened to our glorious inheritance.^{385 386} This will require that we continue to grow in our knowledge of Jesus³⁸⁷ which requires that we study the Bible so we will not be ashamed when we are provided with an opportunity to tell others.^{388 389} Our persistent learning of God's Word will enlarge our capacity for loving, forgiving, joy, and happiness, and it will also give us the ability to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ and that His love surpasses all knowledge.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁵ Ephesians 1:18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of his calling, and what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might.

³⁸⁶ Ephesians 4:22 that you put away, as concerning your former way of life, the old man, that grows corrupt after the lusts of deceit; 23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and put on the new man, who in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of truth.

³⁸⁷ 2 Peter 3:18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and forever.

³⁸⁸ 2 Timothy 2:15 Give diligence to present yourself approved by God, a workman who doesn't need to be ashamed, properly handling the Word of Truth.

³⁸⁹ 2 Timothy 3:16 Every Scripture is God-breathed and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

³⁹⁰ Ephesians 3:18 may be strengthened to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know Christ's love which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

19. How can I abide by His teachings?

Here are some of the areas where the Bible says we should abide by His teachings while letting the fruits of His (Holy) Spirit flow through us:

1. Trust in the Lord.³⁹¹
2. Live by the will of God.³⁹²
3. Seek His Kingdom in everything that you do.³⁹³
4. Give God thanks in all circumstances - both the good and the bad things that happen in your life.³⁹⁴
5. Honor God in all that you do - obey His standards.³⁹⁵
6. Serve and do good works according to His will.^{396 397 398}
7. Seek the good of others.³⁹⁹
8. Let your light shine before others (as you serve) so they may see your good works and glorify our Father in heaven.⁴⁰⁰
9. Silence the ignorant talk of non-believers through your good works.⁴⁰¹
10. Avoid sexual immorality.⁴⁰²
11. Teach, rebuke, correct and train others in righteousness.⁴⁰³
12. Pray in all righteousness, and believe that God will answer your prayers.⁴⁰⁴
13. Pray for His blessings and His forgiveness. Have confidence in approaching God.⁴⁰⁵
14. Don't let any unwholesome talk come from your mouth⁴⁰⁶ and do not take the Lord's name in vain.
15. Continue to do God's will even if you suffer for it.⁴⁰⁷
16. Be generous and give with a loving heart.⁴⁰⁸
17. Don't store up treasures on earth.⁴⁰⁹
18. Persevere.⁴¹⁰

³⁹¹ Isaiah 26:4 Trust in the LORD forever, for in GOD the LORD, we have an everlasting Rock.

³⁹² 1 Peter 4:2 that you no longer should live the rest of your time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

³⁹³ Matthew 6:33 But seek first God's Kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things will be given to you as well.

³⁹⁴ 1 Thessalonians 5:18 In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus toward you.

³⁹⁵ Ezra 10:11 Now therefore, make confession to the LORD God of your fathers and do His will.

³⁹⁶ Hebrews 2:4 God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders, by various works of power, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will?

³⁹⁷ Hebrews 13:21 make you complete in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever.

³⁹⁸ Ephesians 1:11 in whom also we were assigned an inheritance, having been foreordained according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his will.

³⁹⁹ 1 Corinthians 10:24 Let no one seek his own, but each one his neighbor's good.

⁴⁰⁰ Matthew 5:16 Even so, let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

⁴⁰¹ 1 Peter 2:15 For this is the will of God, that by well-doing you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

⁴⁰² 1 Thessalonians 4:3 For this is the will of God: your sanctification, that you abstain from sexual immorality.

⁴⁰³ 2 Timothy 3:16 Every Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.

⁴⁰⁴ John 9:31 We know that God doesn't listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshipper of God, and does his will, he listens to him.

⁴⁰⁵ 1 John 5:14 This is the boldness which we have toward him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he listens to us.

⁴⁰⁶ Ephesians 4:29 Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but such as is good for building up as the need may be, that it may give grace to those who hear.

⁴⁰⁷ 1 Peter 4:19 Therefore let them also who suffer according to the will of God in doing good entrust their souls to him, as to a faithful Creator.

⁴⁰⁸ Deuteronomy 15:10 You shall generously give to him, and your heart shall not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all your undertakings.

⁴⁰⁹ Matthew 6:19 "Don't lay up treasures for yourselves on the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal; 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consume, and where thieves don't break through and steal; 21 for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

⁴¹⁰ Hebrews 10:36 For you need endurance so that, having done the will of God, you may receive the promise.

20. What will happen when I decide to follow Jesus?

By putting your hope in Jesus He will give you a new heart. He will set you free. He will give you hope and peace. He will give you a new life. When you abide in Him He will give you the desires of your heart⁴¹¹ and He will give you the kind of good works that God prepared in advance for you to do.⁴¹²

But there is still some work that you must do. You must learn what God's will is for your life and to do that you must study God's Word. Don't waste another minute wondering what could have been. It still can be. You can continue to make unwise decisions regarding how you spend your time, potentially wasting the impact that your life could have had, or you can start making wise decisions right now.

When you dedicate some time to this you will have the type of life that will serve the Lord and bless you at the same time. Start now. But you will need to be patient while you wait. God must trust you before His blessings will flow. And you must trust God that He will show you more of His plan when He is ready. God isn't going to show you everything all at once, but God does have a plan for you and it might take some time to find out what that is. Someday you will get to see the top of the rug and it is going to be exquisite. Your life will shine within His glorious design.

⁴¹¹ Psalms 37:4 Delight yourself in the LORD; and He will give you the desires of your heart.

⁴¹² Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared before that we would walk in them.

Bible References

Many different Bible translations were considered for inclusion in this book. Unfortunately, most of the translations, including the NIV, NKJV, NASV, RSV, NRSV, NAB, and several others, are copyrighted and require royalty payments to reference their verses in mass (like in this book; we have approximately 700 verses within our footnotes in this book). For us to blanket the world with our book, and to keep our eBook free and our paperback cost as low as possible, we could not incur the cost of these royalty payments. Many of these translations are very good - but they become too expensive when trying to blanket the world with hundreds of thousands and possibly millions of book. Therefore, we had to make the difficult decision to use a royalty-free version of the Bible in our footnote references. The translation that we chose is a free and updated version of the American Standard Version (1901) called the World English Bible. The ASV was, and is, considered to be a very reliable and honest translation of the Bible. New American Standard Bible (NASB) verses are also referenced in this book and the NASB has a liberal use clause which allows us to reference up to 500 verses without written permission and without needing to pay royalty payments. If you have any questions about any of the verses/references that we used within this book we recommend that you cross-reference it with the Bible translation that you prefer to see what your translation says. We are not for, or against, any translation, we simply want to get this message out to the entire world - without paying royalties - so everyone in the world can learn about Jesus and understand God's will for their life.

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Romans 12:2

*Then you will be able to test and approve
what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

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