

SECRET CHURCH™

KNOW HIS WORD. KNOW HIS PERSECUTED.

For many believers around the world, following
Christ is not simply unpopular or discouraged.
It's dangerous.

KNOW HIS WORD.
KNOW HIS PERSECUTED.

Each year's Secret Church gathering consists
of over four hours of intense Bible study, as
well as a concentrated time of prayer for our
persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ
around the world.

We hope you'll not only believe these truths, but
also share them with others. The goal of Secret
Church is to serve the church in making disciples
of all nations, all for the glory of God.

secretchurch.org

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Why Is This Called Secret Church?

The idea behind Secret Church comes from time David Platt spent teaching and ministering among underground Asian house churches. Due to hostility from the government, from the surrounding community, and even from their own family, many of our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world are forced to gather in secret, sometimes at the risk of their lives.

The plight of our persecuted brothers and sisters also explains why prayer for the persecuted church is a major part of every Secret Church gathering. We remember those who cannot meet openly, asking God to sustain their faith, to change the hearts and the actions of their persecutors, and to use their witness for the spread of the gospel. We also pray for the unreached, those who have little or no access to the gospel.

Why So Much Teaching for One Night?

We realize that each Secret Church study contains too much biblical teaching—over four hours worth!—to digest in one sitting. That's one reason we make it available in shorter segments at radical.net. However, this deluge of teaching is meant to remind us of the hunger for God's Word that exists among many underground churches around the world.

With few opportunities to gather and little access to biblical teaching, our persecuted brothers and sisters may meet for eight to twelve hours at a time simply to sing, pray, and study God's Word. This God-centered focus is a helpful corrective to the desire for entertainment that characterizes many church gatherings in the U.S.

What's the Goal of This Study?

We hope your faith will be strengthened as you encounter teaching from God's Word in this study. However, the truths you hear are not meant to stop with you. You are encouraged to teach them to others as you meet one-on-one or as you gather in small groups and churches. Secret Church is intended to be a resource for making disciples both locally and globally.

We urge you to consider the role God may have for you and your church as you take the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ to those in your own communities and to unreached peoples among the nations. For more Secret Church resources, go to radical.net.

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CULTS AND COUNTERFEIT GOSPELS

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

(Galatians 1:6–9)

Common Myths

- Cults and counterfeit gospels are very small.
 - Many are very large.
- Cults and counterfeit gospels are normally isolated.
 - Many are extremely influential.
- Cults and counterfeit gospels are clearly immoral.
 - Many are quite moral.
- Cults and counterfeit gospels are far from me.
 - Cults and counterfeit gospels are right around me.
- Cults and counterfeit gospels are merely a matter of personal preference.
 - Cults and counterfeit gospels are ultimately a matter of eternal truth.

Clear Purposes

- We want to _____ **believe** _____ the gospel in our lives.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.
(John 3:16–18)

- We want to _____ **guard** _____ the gospel in our churches.

Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you. (2 Timothy 1:13–14)

- We want to _____ **spread** _____ the gospel in the world.

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."
(Matthew 28:18–20)

THE ONE TRUE GOSPEL OF THE ONE TRUE GOD

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

(Ephesians 2:1–10)

The gospel is the good news that the only true God, the just and gracious Creator of the universe, has looked upon hopelessly sinful men and women and has sent His Son, God in the flesh, to bear His wrath against sin through His substitutionary death on the cross and to show His power over sin and death through His resurrection from the grave so that everyone who turns from their sin and themselves and trusts in Jesus alone as Savior and Lord will be reconciled to God forever.

THE ONE TRUE GOSPEL

Gospel Thread #1: The Character of God

- God is the holy, just, and gracious Creator of all things.

| *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.* (Genesis 1:1)

◦ God is _____ holy _____.

- God is perfectly unique, completely separate, and absolutely pure.

| *I am the LORD, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King.*
| (Isaiah 43:15)

- God is just.

- God justifies the innocent and condemns the guilty.

| *He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous*
| *are both alike an abomination to the LORD.* (Proverbs 17:15)

- God is gracious.

- God shows the guilty free and unmerited favor.

| *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all*
| *people . . .* (Titus 2:11)

Gospel Thread #2: The Sinfulness of Man

- We are each created by God, but we are all corrupted by sin.

| *Then 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 heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (Genesis 1:26–28)*

| *So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. (Genesis 3:6–7)*

| *Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—for sin*

indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. (Romans 5:12–14)

- We have _____ rebelled _____ against God.

All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one. (Romans 3:12)

- We have all turned away from God to ourselves.

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (Romans 8:5–8)

- Manifested in self-indulgence.
- Manifested in self-righteousness.
- What we thought would lead to freedom has led each of us into _____ slavery _____.

Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin." (John 8:34)

- We are _____ separated _____ from God.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God . . . (Romans 3:23)

- The effects of our sin are varied . . .
 - Guilt.

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. (Genesis 3:6)

- Shame.

Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. (Genesis 3:7)

- Fear.

And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." (Genesis 3:10)

- What we think is a relatively minor issue is actually an infinitely major problem.

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

- We are dead without God.

And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses . . . (Colossians 2:13)

- What we thought would lead to life has led each of us to death.
 - Eventual physical death.
 - Eternal spiritual death.
- We are completely unable to save ourselves.

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. (Ephesians 2:1-2)

Gospel Thread #3: The Sufficiency of Christ

- Jesus alone is able to remove our sin and restore us to God.

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. (1 Timothy 2:5)

- o Because of who He is.
 - His humanity: See His humble character.

But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Mark 10:43–45)

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:5–8)

- His deity: Hear His extravagant claims.

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst." (John 6:35)

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)

"One of the most extraordinary things Jesus did in his teaching (and he did it so unobtrusively that many people read the Gospels without even noticing it) was to set himself apart from everybody else. For example, by claiming to be the good shepherd who went out into the desert to seek his lost sheep, he was implying that the world was lost, that he wasn't, and that he could seek and save it. In other words, he put himself in a moral category in which he was alone. Everybody else was in darkness; he was the light of the world. Everybody else was hungry; he was the bread of life. Everybody else was thirsty; he could quench their thirst. Everybody else was sinful; he could forgive their sins. Indeed, on two separate occasions he did so, and both times observers were scandalized. They asked, 'Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?' (Mark 2:5–7; Luke 7:48–49).' If Jesus claimed authority to forgive the penitent, he also claimed authority to judge the impenitent. Several of his parables implied that he expected to return at the end of history. On that day, he said, he would sit on his glorious throne. All nations would stand

before him, and he would separate them from one another as a shepherd separates his sheep from his goats. In other words, he would settle their eternal destiny. Thus he made himself the central figure on the day of judgment.” – John Stott

- Because of what He has done.
 - Jesus lived the life we could not live.

You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. (1 John 3:5)

- He was fully tempted by sin.
- He fully triumphed over sin.

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15)

- As perfect man, He alone is able to substitute for human sin.
- As perfect God, He alone is able to satisfy divine judgment.
- Jesus died the death we deserve to die.

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. (1 Peter 2:24)

- The essence of sin: Man substitutes himself for God.
 - Man asserts himself against God and puts himself where only God deserves to be.
- The essence of salvation: God substitutes Himself for man.
 - God sacrifices Himself for man and puts Himself where only man deserves to be.

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

- At the cross, God expresses His judgment upon sin, endures His judgment against sin, and enables salvation for sinners.

- Jesus conquered the enemy we cannot conquer.

... and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. (Revelation 1:18)

- He is Lord over life and death.

Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes. (John 20:1-10)

- He is Lord over sin and Satan.

And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. (Colossians 2:13-15)

- He is Lord over you and me.

Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified. (Acts 2:36)

Gospel Thread #4: The Necessity of Faith

- We can be restored to God only through faith in Jesus.

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God. (Ephesians 2:8)

- We can be restored to God . . .

- We can be acquitted before God the Judge (He will cancel our guilt).

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1)

- We can be adopted by God the Father (He will remove our shame).

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. (Romans 8:14–17)

- We can be assured by God the King (He will overcome our fear).

For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38–39)

- Only through faith in Jesus.

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8–9)

- Jesus is the basis of salvation.
- Faith is the means of salvation.

- Works are the evidence of salvation.
- We turn from our sin and ourselves.

The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel. (Mark 1:15)

- We confess our sinfulness.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

- We die to our selfishness.

And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it." (Luke 9:23-24)

- We trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord.

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

- We believe in Jesus as the Savior who died for us.
- We submit to Jesus as the Lord who rules over us.

- An initial moment of faith in time leads to inevitable growth in faith over time.

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:18)

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. (Philippians 2:12-13)

Gospel Thread #5: The Urgency of Eternity

- Our eternal _____ destiny _____ hinges on our response to Jesus.

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. (Matthew 10:28)

- _____ Hell _____ is a dreadful reality for those who turn from Jesus.
 - A place of continual rebellion, final separation, and eternal duration.

. . . when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might. (2 Thessalonians 1:7b-9)

- _____ Heaven _____ is a glorious reality for those who trust in Jesus.
 - A place of full reconciliation, complete resurrection, and ultimate reunion.

But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ . . . (Philippians 3:20)

- Will you turn from Jesus, or will you trust in Jesus?

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

- Will you _____ turn _____ from _____ Jesus?
 - Live without Christ now.
 - Die without Christ forever.

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea

gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:11–15)

- Will you trust in Jesus?
 - Die with Christ now.
 - Live with Christ forever.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:1–4)

THE ONE TRUE GOD

The Trinity in Three Truths¹

- Truth #1: God is three persons.
 - Scripture refers to God with plural pronouns.

Then 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 heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:26–27)

Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech. (Genesis 11:7)

And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" (Isaiah 6:8a)

○ The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are _____ persons _____.

▪ Is the Holy Spirit a person or a power?

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. (John 16:13–14)

▪ The Spirit teaches.

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. (John 14:26)

▪ The Spirit bears witness.

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God . . . (Romans 8:16)

▪ The Spirit intercedes.

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. (Romans 8:26–27)

▪ The Spirit searches.

. . . these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. (1 Corinthians 2:10)

▪ The Spirit knows.

For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. (1 Corinthians 2:11)

- The Spirit gives gifts.

| *All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apports to each one individually as he wills. (1 Corinthians 12:11)*

- The Spirit speaks.

| *And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and join this chariot." (Acts 8:29)*

- The Spirit is grieved.

| *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Ephesians 4:30)*

- The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct persons.

| *And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:16–17)*

| *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit . . . (Matthew 28:19)*

| *There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. (Ephesians 4:4–7)*

| *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you. (1 Peter 1:1–2)*

- The Son is distinguished from the Father.

| *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. (John 1:1–2)*

- The Spirit is distinguished from the Son.

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. (John 14:26)

- The Father is distinguished from the Spirit.

And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. (Romans 8:27)

- Truth #2: Each person is fully God.

- God the Father is fully God.

. . . yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist . . . (1 Corinthians 8:6a)

Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? (Matthew 6:26)

But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? (Matthew 6:30)

- God the Son is fully God.

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5–11)

He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After

making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high . . . (Hebrews 1:3)

. . . waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ . . . (Titus 2:13)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. (John 1:1–4)

Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." (John 8:58)

Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28)

o God the Spirit is fully God.

But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God." (Acts 5:3–4)

- The Spirit is _____ omnipresent _____.

Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! (Psalm 139:7–8)

- The Spirit is omniscient.

. . . these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. (1 Corinthians 2:10–11)

- Truth #3: There is _____ one _____ God.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. (Deuteronomy 6:4–5)

I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. (Isaiah 45:5–6)

Three Additional Notes Regarding the Trinity

- The Trinity is a _____ mystery _____, not a _____ contradiction _____.
 - God's threeness and oneness are _____ different _____ (God is three in a way that is different from His being one).
 - A contradiction: "God is one and not one."
 - A mystery: "God is one in three."
- The Trinity is _____ eternal _____.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. (Genesis 1:1–2)

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. (Colossians 1:15–16)

- The Father has always been and always will be God.
 - The Son has always been and always will be God.
 - The Spirit has always been and always will be God.
- The three persons of the Trinity are . . .
 - Equal in terms of God's essential attributes.
 - All-powerful.

| *For nothing will be impossible with God. (Luke 1:37)*

▪ All-knowing.

| *O Lord, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it. (Psalm 139:1-6)*

▪ Loving.

| *Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. (1 John 4:8)*

▪ Just.

| *The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he. (Deuteronomy 32:4)*

◦ Revealed to us distinctly in . . .

▪ The work of creation:

- God the Father speaks.

| *By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host. (Psalm 33:6)*

- God the Son implements.

| *All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. (John 1:3)*

- God the Spirit brings to completion.

| *The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. (Genesis 1:2)*

- The work of salvation:
 - God the Father sends His Son for our salvation.

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

And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. (1 John 4:14)

- God the Son becomes incarnate for our salvation.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5–11)

- God the Spirit applies to us the blessings of salvation.

And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" (Galatians 4:6)

In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:13–14)

Three Practical Conclusions from the Trinity

- Our God is _____ worthy _____.

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" (Isaiah 6:1–3)

- It is appropriate to worship the Father.
- It is appropriate to worship the Son.
- It is appropriate to worship the Spirit.

- Our mind is _____ finite _____.

Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"—these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ. (1 Corinthians 2:6–16)

- The Trinity is divinely _____ revealed _____, not humanly constructed.
- The Trinity is utterly _____ unique _____, so any analogy is insufficient.
- Can we know the doctrine of the Trinity exhaustively? ___ No ___.
- Can we know the doctrine of the Trinity truly? ___ Yes ___!

- Our salvation is secure.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:3–14)

- We are not saved by a creature; we are saved by the Creator.
- The One who saves us completely is completely God.

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. (Romans 11:33–36)

IDENTIFYING CULTS AND COUNTERFEIT GOSPELS

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves . . .
(Matthew 7:15)

. . . so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.
(Ephesians 4:14)

For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.
(2 John 7)

A Historical Look at Heresies

- A heresy is a _____ deviation _____ from the church's historical teaching on foundational biblical doctrines.

But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets . . . (Acts 24:14)

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. (2 Peter 2:1)

- Heretical teaching presents “ _____ another _____ God” or “another gospel.”

But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you

received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough. (2 Corinthians 11:3–4)

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds. (2 Corinthians 11:13–15)

• Trinitarian Heresies:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. (Deuteronomy 6:4–5)

- Modalism: Denies the first foundational truth of the Trinity.
 - Instead of three distinct persons, God has three distinct modes.
 - God wears three different masks.
 - Problems . . .
 - Denies the relationships within the Trinity.
 - Ignores the separation of persons in Scripture.
 - Undercuts the doctrine of the atonement.
- Arianism: Denies the second foundational truth of the Trinity.
 - Denies the full deity of the Son and the Holy Spirit.
 - Claims the Son is inferior in essence to the Father.
 - Subordinationism teaches that the Son is eternal (not created) and divine, but still not equal to the Father in being or attributes.
 - Adoptionism teaches that Jesus lived as an ordinary man until His baptism, but then God “adopted” Jesus as His “Son” and conferred on Him supernatural powers.
 - Contemporary Arianism . . .
 - A core distinction between Christianity and Islam.
 - A core distinction between Christianity and cults.
- Polytheism: Denies the third foundational truth of the Trinity.

- The worship of more than one god.

Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, you survivors of the nations! They have no knowledge who carry about their wooden idols, and keep on praying to a god that cannot save. Declare and present your case; let them take counsel together! Who told this long ago? Who declared it of old? Was it not I, the Lord? And there is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides me. Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. (Isaiah 45:20–22)

And the rest of it he makes into a god, his idol, and falls down to it and worships it. He prays to it and says, "Deliver me, for you are my god!" They know not, nor do they discern, for he has shut their eyes, so that they cannot see, and their hearts, so that they cannot understand. (Isaiah 44:17–18)

What profit is an idol when its maker has shaped it, a metal image, a teacher of lies? For its maker trusts in his own creation when he makes speechless idols! Woe to him who says to a wooden thing, Awake; to a silent stone, Arise! Can this teach? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in it. But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him. (Habakkuk 2:18–20)

- Christological Heresies:

Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. (1 John 2:18–23)

- Arianism and Ebionitism: Jesus is not fully God.
- Apollinarianism and Docetism: Jesus is not fully man.
- Nestorianism: Jesus' humanity and deity are two distinct persons.

“Therefore, following the holy fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man, consisting also of a reasonable soul and body; of one substance with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood; like us in all respects, apart from sin; as regards his Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but yet as regards his manhood begotten, for us men and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin, the God-bearer; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence, not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ; even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of him, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the creed of the fathers has handed down to us.”

– Council of Chalcedonian Creed, 451 A.D.

“I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

Who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.

And I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.”

– Nicene Creed, 381 A.D.

A Contemporary Look at Cults and Counterfeit Gospels

Definitions . . .

- Cult:

- Groups which claim to be in harmony with Christianity but _____ deny _____ foundational Christian doctrines.

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

(1 John 4:1-3)

- Generally follow the instruction of _____ one _____ individual who dictates false teachings.

For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.

(Matthew 24:24)

- Not to be confused with the occult.
 - Attempts to gain supernatural knowledge or power _____ apart _____ from the God of the Bible.

If a person turns to mediums and necromancers, whoring after them, I will set my face against that person and will cut him off from among his people. (Leviticus 20:6)

When you come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD. And because of these abominations the LORD your God is driving them out before you. You shall be blameless before the LORD your God, for these nations, which you are about to dispossess, listen to

fortune-tellers and to diviners. But as for you, the LORD your God has not allowed you to do this. (Deuteronomy 18:9–14)

Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons . . . (1 Timothy 4:1)

- Includes fortune-telling, witchcraft, tarot cards, crystal balls, horoscopes, ouija boards, etc.

- Counterfeit Gospel:

- A fraudulent imitation of the gospel that _____ deceives _____.

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. (Galatians 1:6–9)

Questions . . .

- Shouldn't we just focus on the one true gospel and _____ ignore _____ false teaching?

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. (Acts 20:28–31)

He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. (Titus 1:9)

- Is it unloving to _____ name _____ false teachers?

But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some. (2 Timothy 2:16–18)

For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. (Titus 1:10–11)

- Is it uncaring to _____ criticize _____ other beliefs?

Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. (1 Timothy 4:1–3)

But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality. So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth. (Revelation 2:14–16)

But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works. (Revelation 2:20–23)

Examples . . .

- Cults and counterfeit gospels we will NOT cover directly . . .
 - Oneness Pentecostalism (United Pentecostal Church)
 - New Age Movement
 - International Church of Christ
 - Unitarian Universalist Association
 - Christian Science
 - Unity School of Christianity
 - The Way International
 - Church of Scientology International

- Cults and counterfeit gospels we WILL cover directly . . .
 - Mormonism
 - Jehovah's Witnesses
 - Catholicism
 - Prosperity Gospel
 - Theological Liberalism

MORMONISM

Who Are Mormons?²

- Known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (____ LDS ____).
 - Members of the New Testament church were _____ saints _____.

Now as Peter went here and there among them all, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda. (Acts 9:32)

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God . . . (Ephesians 2:19)

- “_____ Total _____” apostasy overcame the church following the apostles.
 - Founded in 1830, the Mormon church claims to be the “_____ restored _____” church.
- Based on the teachings of _____ Joseph _____ Smith _____, the first President and Prophet of the LDS.
 - Born in rural Vermont in 1805, then moved with family to New York.
 - Most of family became Presbyterians.
 - Personally leaned toward Methodism.
 - Bothered by variations of Christianity.
 - First vision at _____ 14 _____ of two “personages.”
 - God the Father pointed to Jesus and said, “This is my Son. Hear Him!”
 - Smith asked, “Which sect should I join?”
 - “None. They are all _____ wrong _____.”
 - Another vision of the angel “Moroni” who told him of golden plates written in hieroglyphics.
 - Smith translated the writings with two reading crystals (Urim and Thummim).
 - Later became the Book of _____ Mormon _____, containing

the story of lost Israelites who migrated to America in the 6th Century BC and were killed in battle in AD 428.

- Another vision from John the Baptist made Smith a priest.
- In 1830, Smith founded the “Church of Christ,” later known as “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.”
- Smith continued to receive revelations telling him to move from New York to Ohio to Missouri and eventually to Illinois, where the founder and his followers built the town of Nauvoo.
 - Tried to live a utopian vision of society.
 - Instituted polygyny (early Mormon leaders believed Jesus had many wives).
 - Smith and his brother were arrested in 1844.
 - Later, a mob stormed the jail and killed them both.
 - Mormons consider Smith a martyr.
 - Others say Smith died in a violent shoot-out.
- Schism followed Smith’s death.
 - A small group of Josephites became the Reorganized Church with headquarters in Missouri.
 - Most followed Brigham Young as their first President and Prophet, who took followers to Utah in 1847 and built Salt Lake City.
- Today, over 16 million members in 30,000 congregations worldwide.
 - Over 9 million members in North America.
 - Over 70,000 missionaries around the world.
- Mormons in the United States . . .
 - Commitment among Mormons:
 - 67 % are highly involved in their congregations (compare with 43% among evangelical Protestants).
 - 91% believe the Bible is the Word of God.
 - 85% pray daily.
 - 84% say religion is very important in their lives.
 - 77 % read Scripture regularly.

- From 2007–2014, the number of Mormons in the U.S. remained roughly the same.
 - In the same time period, the number of people who identify as Christian dropped by 8 %.
- Claims by Mormons:
 - 97% say Mormonism is a Christian religion.
 - 94% believe that the President of the LDS church is a prophet of God.
 - 91% believe that the Book of Mormon was written by ancient prophets.
 - 95% believe that families can be bound together eternally in temple ceremonies.
 - 94% believe that God the Father and Jesus Christ are separate, physical beings.³

What Do Mormons Believe?⁴

• Exclusive Claims . . .

“The gospel of Jesus Christ was lost from the earth through the apostasy that took place following the earthly ministry of Christ’s Apostles. That apostasy made necessary the Restoration of the gospel. Through visions, the ministering of angels, and revelations to men on the earth, God restored the gospel. The Restoration started with the Prophet Joseph Smith (JS—H 1; D&C 128:20–21) and has continued to the present through the work of the Lord’s living prophets.” – LDS.org

• General Categories . . .

- Traditional Mormons: Believe what the LDS has always taught.
- Progressive Mormons: Follow some of the diverse voices within Mormonism.
- The majority of Mormons (including many Mormon missionaries and Mormon church leaders): Not well versed in the specifics of Mormon theology.

- About God . . .

- God the Father was once a man and has now _____ progressed _____ to godhood.

“As man now is, God once was; as God now is, man may become.”
– Lorenzo Snow, Fifth Mormon President

- The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three distinct _____ gods _____.
 - God the Father is the _____ physical _____ father of all spirit-children, which includes all people, as well as Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

“There are three separate persons in the Godhead: God, the Eternal Father; His Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost. We believe in each of Them (A of F 1:1). From latter-day revelation we learn that the Father and the Son have tangible bodies of flesh and bone and that the Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit, without flesh and bone (D&C 130:22–23). These three persons are one in perfect unity and harmony of purpose and doctrine (John 17:21–23; 2 Ne. 31:21; 3 Ne. 11:27, 36).” – LDS.org

- _____ Thousands _____ of other gods exist.

“Latter-day Saints see all people as children of God in a full and complete sense; they consider every person divine in origin, nature, and potential. Each has an eternal core and is ‘a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents.’ Each possesses seeds of divinity and must choose whether to live in harmony or tension with that divinity. Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, all people may ‘progress toward perfection and ultimately realize their divine destiny.’ Just as a child can develop the attributes of his or her parents over time, the divine nature that humans inherit can be developed to become like their Heavenly Father’s.” – LDS.org

- Prior to creation, many inhabited _____ worlds _____ and planets existed, each of which had gods.

“There never was a time when there were not Gods and worlds, and men were not passing through the same ordeals that we are now passing through. That course has been from all eternity, and it is and will be to all eternity.” – Brigham Young

- A _____ council _____ of gods created our world out of eternal physical matter.

| “God never made something out of nothing.” – Joseph Smith

- About Scripture and Authority . . .

- Four _____ Authoritative _____ Works:

- The Book of Mormon: _____ Another _____ Testament of Jesus Christ
 - Record of God’s dealings with the inhabitants of ancient America from 2000 BC to 400 AD.
 - Many similarities to the King James Version of the Bible.
- The Doctrine and _____ Covenants _____
 - Collection of “revelations and inspired declarations” for the establishment and regulation of the Church of Jesus Christ in the last days (1830-1978 AD).
- The _____ Pearl _____ of Great Price
 - Selection of revelations, translations, and writings of Joseph Smith.
- The King James Version of the Bible
 - Not _____ inerrant _____.

| “We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.” – Articles of Faith 1:8 (Pearl of Great Price)

- Not _____ sufficient _____.

| “Thou fool, that shall say: A Bible, we have got a Bible, and we need no more Bible.” – 2 Nephi 29:6 (Book of Mormon)

- Footnoted to interpret meaning in alignment with LDS teachings.
- Ongoing revelations and new interpretations . . .
 - Can _____ supersede _____ previous revelation from God.
 - Can only be brought forward by the Mormon _____ President _____.

- About People and Sin . . .

- Men and women today are _____spirit_____ sons and daughters of God.
- Prior to creation, our spirits were children of heavenly parents.
- We left our heavenly home, took on human bodies, and are now being tested in order to _____progress_____ to godhood.
 - In our eternal nature, we are basically _____good_____.
 - In our earthly nature, we are prone to _____error_____.
- Jesus lived a sinless life so that we (his spirit brothers and sisters) could become _____gods_____ like him (and God the Father).

- About Jesus . . .

- Sounds familiar:

“[Jesus] was born to Mary at Bethlehem, lived a sinless life, and made a perfect atonement for the sins of all mankind by the shedding of His blood and giving His life on the cross (Matt. 2:1; 1 Ne. 11:13–33; 3 Ne. 27:13–16; D&C 76:40–42). He rose from the dead, thus assuring the eventual resurrection of all mankind. Through Jesus’ Atonement and Resurrection, those who repent of their sins and obey God’s commandments can live eternally with Jesus and the Father (2 Ne. 9:10–12; 21–22; D&C 76:50–53, 62).” – LDS.org

- Strangely unfamiliar:

- Jesus is the firstborn _____spirit_____ -child of the heavenly Father and a heavenly Mother.
- Jesus is a _____secondary_____ god under God the Father.
 - Did not possess deity in Himself.
 - Instead, _____progressed_____ to deity in the spirit world.

- About Salvation . . .

- Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead.

“We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.”
– Article 3, LDS.org

- Not to endure the wrath due our sin.
- But to enable us to return to our original state (as spiritual children of God).
- Conditions for salvation:
 - Grace and effort.

“Grace cannot suffice without total effort on the part of the recipient. Hence the explanation, ‘It is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do’ (2 Ne. 25:23).” – Book of Mormon Student Manual

- Faith.
- Repentance.
- Baptism (includes baptism for the dead).

“Because all on the earth do not have the opportunity to accept the gospel during mortality, the Lord has authorized baptisms performed by proxy for the dead. Therefore, those who accept the gospel in the spirit world may qualify for entrance into God’s kingdom.” – “Baptism, Baptize,” LDS.org

- Moral Endurance (not consuming tobacco, alcohol, illegal narcotics, coffee, tea).
- Ordinances:
 - Baptism.
 - Confirmation.
 - Ordination to the Priesthood (men).
 - The Temple Endowment.
 - The Marriage Sealing.

- About Judgment and Eternity . . .
 - Everyone receives salvation (resurrected, immortal life in a heavenly kingdom).
 - Once the body is reunited with the spirit, three potential destinations await:
 - Celestial Glory.
 - Highest Level: Married Mormons who have kept the celestial laws and commandments and participated in Mormon rituals.

- Lower Level: Single Mormons who have lived worthy lives as well as good people (including Christians) who didn't have a chance on earth to hear about and accept Mormonism.
 - NOTE: These people cannot become gods.
- Terrestrial Glory.
 - Unworthy Mormons and good people who knew about Mormonism on earth but rejected it until after death.
- Testial Glory.
 - Wicked people who reject Mormonism even after death.
 - Similar to the Christian understanding of Hell, but not eternal.

How Do We Share the Gospel with Mormons?

- Demonstrate the love of Christ.

Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison—that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person. (Colossians 4:2–6)

- Our goal is not to win an argument with contempt.
- Our goal is to care for a friend with compassion.

And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." (Matthew 9:35–38)

- Imitate the life of Christ.

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. (Ephesians 5:1–2)

◦ In your family.

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. (Ephesians 5:22–33)

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:1–4)

◦ In the _____ church _____.

By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. (John 13:35)

• Explain the _____ gospel _____ of Christ.

... but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect. . . . (1 Peter 3:15)

- Respectfully.
- Clearly.
 - Be clear about who God is and who we are.
 - God is the just and gracious Creator of the universe.
 - He is holy.

I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. (Isaiah 45:5–6)

- He is perfect.

For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed . . . (Malachi 3:6)

Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, but you are the same, and your years have no end. (Psalm 102:25–27)

- He is spirit.

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

- He is eternal.

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. (Psalm 90:2)

- We are creatures who are totally dependent upon Him.

I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine. "If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine." (Psalm 50:11–12)

- We are not morally neutral.

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. (Ephesians 2:1–3)

- We are all ultimately guilty.

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned . . . (Romans 5:12)

- Be clear about who Jesus is and what Jesus has done.

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus . . . (1 Timothy 2:5)

- He is fully God and fully man . . . eternal in nature and equal with God.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. (John 1:1–3)

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

I and the Father are one. (John 10:30)

- He died on the cross to pay the price for our sins.

. . . for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed

over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:23–26)

o Graciously.

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God . . . (Ephesians 2:8)

- We are saved by His grace, not by our _____ works_____.

What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin." (Romans 4:1–8)

- We are saved through faith, not through our _____ effort_____.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith." (Romans 1:16–17)

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

o Humbly.

Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest? All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD. But this is the one to whom I will look:

he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.”
(Isaiah 66:1–2)

- Our goal is not equality with God.

There is none like you, O LORD; you are great, and your name is great in might. (Jeremiah 10:6)

- Our goal is reconciliation with God.

Thus says the LORD: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.” (Jeremiah 9:23–24)

- Urgently.

Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit”—yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. (James 4:13-14)

- Everyone will be resurrected, but not to salvation.

Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment. (John 5:25–29)

- There are no second chances after death.

And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment . . . (Hebrews 9:27)

- Believe in the _____ power _____ of Christ.

And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)

- Trust His _____ Word _____ completely.

And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. (1 Corinthians 2:1–5)

- It is inspired and inerrant.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness . . . (2 Timothy 3:16)

- It is supreme and sufficient.

Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. (Jude 3)

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. (Revelation 22:18–19)

- Pray to Him _____ continually _____.

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. (Romans 10:1)

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

Who Are Jehovah's Witnesses?

- Followers of God who believe that “ _____ Jehovah _____ ” is God's one true name.
- Begun by Charles Taze Russell in 1872.
 - Growing up in the church, he had great difficulty with the doctrines of the _____ Trinity _____ and _____ Hell _____.
 - At 18, organized a Bible class in Pittsburgh during the Bible Student Movement of the 1870s and began teaching his view of these doctrines.
 - In 1879, he began co-publishing his teachings in *The Herald of the Morning* magazine.
 - In 1884, he controlled the publishing and renamed the magazine *The _____ Watchtower _____ Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom* and founded Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society (now known as the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society).
 - Circulation of first edition of the *The Watchtower* magazine was 6,000 copies per month.
 - Today, the publishing complex in Brooklyn (their current headquarters) produces 100,000 books and 800,000 copies of its magazines per _____ day _____.
 - Claim to have a circulation of 42 million copies of each issue of the *The Watchtower*, making its circulation larger than any other magazine in the world.
 - Second is *Awake!*, with a circulation of 41 million copies for each issue.
 - Russell claimed the Bible could _____ only _____ be understood according to his interpretations.
- After Russell's death in 1916, Joseph Franklin Rutherford became President of the Watch Tower Society.

- In 1931, Rutherford changed the name of the organization to “The Jehovah’s Witnesses.”

- Believe they are the only “_____ pure _____” religion, interpreting the Bible as the early Christians did before it was corrupted in the 3rd and 4th centuries.

- Are known for their ministry . . .
 - Through door-to-door visits.
 - Through distribution of _____ literature _____.

- Refer to their place of worship as a “_____ Kingdom _____ Hall.”

- Unique perspectives . . .
 - Do not celebrate Christmas or Easter (since Jesus’ death is what saves).
 - Do not celebrate _____ birthdays _____ (because such celebrations have pagan roots).
 - Do not accept blood transfusions (because they believe the Bible prohibits ingesting blood).
 - Clergy are _____ unpaid _____, and tithing is not practiced.
 - Believe that Jesus is the king of God’s kingdom and that he began ruling in _____ 1914 _____.

“Revelation 12:6, 14 indicates that three and a half times equal ‘1,260 days.’ ‘Seven times’ would therefore last twice as long, or 2,520 days. But the Gentile nations did not stop ‘trampling’ on God’s rulership a mere 2,520 days after Jerusalem’s fall. Evidently, then, this prophecy covers a much longer period of time. On the basis of Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6, which speak of ‘a day for a year,’ the ‘seven times’ would cover 2,520 years. The 2,520 years began in October 607 B.C.E., when Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians and the Davidic king was taken off his throne. The period ended in October 1914. At that time, ‘the appointed times of the nations’ ended, and Jesus Christ was installed as God’s heavenly King (Psalm 2:1-6; Daniel 7:13, 14). Just as Jesus predicted, his ‘presence’ as heavenly King has been marked by dramatic

world developments—war, famine, earthquakes, pestilences (Matthew 24:3-8; Luke 21:11). Such developments bear powerful testimony to the fact that 1914 indeed marked the birth of God's heavenly Kingdom and the beginning of 'the last days' of this present wicked system of things."
 – JW.org

- Believe that only 144,000 people will be resurrected to live with Jehovah in heaven and rule with Jesus in his kingdom.
 - Believe that God will raise billions from the dead, and many who are now living may still be saved.
- Today, over 8 million members worldwide.
 - This includes over 1.2 million in the United States.
 - This only includes those who actively preach or spread their faith.

What Do Jehovah's Witnesses Believe?⁵

"As Jehovah's Witnesses, we strive to adhere to the form of Christianity that Jesus taught and that his apostles practiced." – JW.org

- About God . . .
 - God's one true name is Jehovah.

"We worship the one true and Almighty God, the Creator, whose name is Jehovah (Psalm 83:18; Revelation 4:11)." – JW.org

- The Trinity is unbiblical (the word is not in the Bible).
 - There is one God.
 - Jesus was created as a lesser god.
 - The Holy Spirit is a force, not a divine person.

- About Scripture and Authority . . .

"We recognize the Bible as God's inspired message to humans (John 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:16)." – JW.org

- Use the “ New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures” (published in 1961 by the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society).

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, **and the Word was a god.**” – John 1:1, New World Translation

- About Man . . .

- Man has no immaterial soul .
- The soul is simply the life-force within a person, which ceases to exist at death.

“The soul, then, is the entire creature, not something inside that survives the death of the body.” – JW.org

- About Jesus . . .

“We follow the teachings and example of Jesus Christ and honor him as our Savior and as the Son of God. (Matthew 20:28; Acts 5:31) Thus, we are Christians. (Acts 11:26) However, we have learned from the Bible that Jesus is not Almighty God and that there is no Scriptural basis for the Trinity doctrine.—John 14:28.” – JW.org

- Created as the archangel Michael before the world existed.
- A man and lesser god.

“The first human that God created, Adam, is called a “son of God” (Luke 3:38). Similarly, the Bible teaches that Jesus was created by God. So Jesus is also called a ‘Son of God’—John 1:49.” – JW.org

- He died on a simple stake.
- His resurrection was spiritual , not physical.
- His second coming occurred spiritually and invisibly in 1914.

- About Salvation . . .

- Ransom through Jesus’ death.

“How did Jehovah provide the ransom? He sent one of his perfect spirit sons to the earth. But Jehovah did not send just any spirit creature. He sent the one most precious to him, his only-begotten Son.” – The Ransom, God's Greatest Gift

o Requirements for eternal life:

- Faith in Jesus.
- Identification with Jehovah's Witnesses.

“To benefit from [Jesus'] sacrifice, people must not only exercise faith in Jesus but also change their course of life and get baptized.”
– JW.org

- Obedience to Jehovah's Witnesses teachings.

• About Judgment and Eternity . . .

- o Hell is not a place of eternal suffering but the common grave for all people.
- o The wicked are annihilated, not punished forever .

“People who die pass out of existence. (Psalm 146:4; Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10) They do not suffer in a fiery hell of torment. God will bring billions back from death by means of a resurrection. (Acts 24:15) However, those who refuse to learn God's ways after being raised to life will be destroyed forever with no hope of a resurrection.—Revelation 20:14, 15.” – JW.org

o Two Peoples of God . . .

- The Anointed Class (144,000) will live in heaven and rule with Christ.

“Jehovah God, Jesus Christ, and the faithful angels reside in the spirit realm. (Psalm 103:19–21; Acts 7:55) A relatively small number of people—144,000—will be resurrected to life in heaven to rule with Jesus in the Kingdom.—Daniel 7:27; 2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 5:9, 10; 14:1, 3.” – JW.org

- The “other sheep” (all other believers) will live forever on a paradise earth.

“God created the earth to be mankind’s eternal home. (Psalm 104:5; 115:16; Ecclesiastes 1:4) God will bless obedient people with perfect health and everlasting life in an earthly paradise.—Psalm 37:11, 34.” – JW.org

How Do We Share the Gospel with Jehovah’s Witnesses?

- Pray in the _____ Spirit _____.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak. (Ephesians 6:12–20)

- Discuss _____ Scripture _____ . . .

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. (Luke 24:27)

- Mutually.

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)

▪ On God . . .

*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.
(Genesis 1:1)*

When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless . . ." (Genesis 17:1)

O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. (Psalm 8:1)

Now this man used to go up year by year from his city to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts at Shiloh, where the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests of the LORD. (1 Samuel 1:3)

▪ On salvation . . .

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God . . . (Ephesians 2:8)

What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin." Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. (Romans 4:1-9)

. . . he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit . . . (Titus 3:5)

▪ On eternity . . .

- The state of unbelievers.

The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 13:41–42)

Then he will say to those on his left, "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matthew 25:41)

And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. (Matthew 25:46)

The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he called out, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame." (Luke 16:22–24)

And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name. (Revelation 14:11)

- **The state of believers.**

But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him" . . . (1 Corinthians 2:9)

So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. (2 Corinthians 5:6–8)

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. (Philippians 1:21–23)

◦ In _____ context _____.

After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree. Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel: 12,000 from the tribe of Judah were sealed, 12,000 from the tribe of Reuben, 12,000 from the tribe of Gad, 12,000 from the tribe of Asher, 12,000 from the tribe of Naphtali, 12,000 from the tribe of Manasseh, 12,000 from the tribe of Simeon, 12,000 from the tribe of Levi, 12,000 from the tribe of Issachar, 12,000 from the tribe of Zebulun, 12,000 from the tribe of Joseph, 12,000 from the tribe of Benjamin were sealed. (Revelation 7:1-8)

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen." (Revelation 7:9-12)

• Focus on God as Jehovah.

God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations." (Exodus 3:15)

The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation." (Exodus 34:6-7)

- Focus on Jesus as God.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)

versus

“In the beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god.” – John 1:1, New World Translation

All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. (John 1:3)

versus

“All things came into existence through him, and apart from him not even one thing came into existence.” – John 1:3, New World Translation

- Let’s think about everything that exists . . .⁶

EVERYTHING THAT EXISTS	

- Let’s think about anything that exists that never came into being . . .

EVERYTHING THAT EXISTS	
All things that <i>never</i> came into being	

- What goes in that box?
- God alone is eternal and uncreated.

EVERYTHING THAT EXISTS	
<p>All things that <i>never</i> came into being</p> <p>GOD</p>	

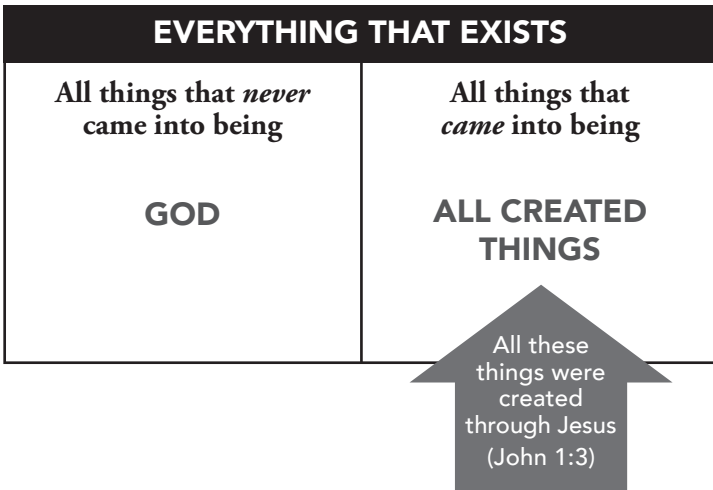
- Let's think about anything that comes into being . . .

EVERYTHING THAT EXISTS	
<p>All things that <i>never</i> came into being</p> <p>GOD</p>	<p>All things that <i>came</i> into being</p>

- All created things . . .

EVERYTHING THAT EXISTS	
<p>All things that <i>never</i> came into being</p> <p>GOD</p>	<p>All things that <i>came</i> into being</p> <p>ALL CREATED THINGS</p>

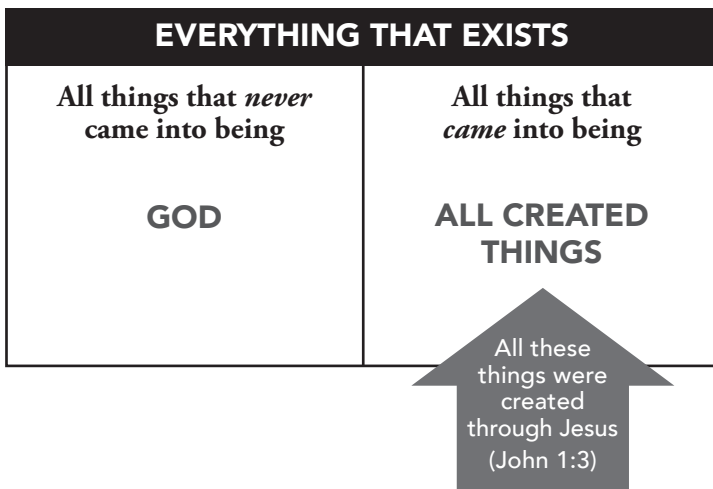
- According to John 1:3, all created things came into being through Jesus, right?



- So everything that exists falls into one of these two categories.
 - Nothing can be in both categories.
 - Everything is either in one or the other.
- Here's a coin to represent Jesus.



- Place the coin in the box where Jesus belongs.



- Jehovah's Witnesses will want to put Jesus in the box on the right, but John 1:3 won't allow that.

All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. (John 1:3)

versus

"All things came into existence through him, and apart from him not even one thing came into existence." – John 1:3, New World Translation

- If Jesus caused all created things to come into existence, then He must have existed before all created things came into existence.
 - Therefore, the Word could not have been created.
- In other words . . .
 - If Jesus created everything that has come into being, and Jesus also came into being (as Jehovah's Witnesses contend), then that would mean Jesus created Himself.
 - He would have to exist as Creator before He existed as a created thing, which is impossible.
 - Therefore, Jesus can't be placed in the square labeled "All things that came into being."
- If Jesus can't be placed on the right side with created things, then He must go on the left with uncreated things, identifying Jesus as the uncreated Creator.
 - Therefore, Jesus is God.

| *I and the Father are one. (John 10:30)*

- Feel free to give them literature.
- Be sure to show them love.

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." So he told them this parable: "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his

friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance." (Luke 15:1-7)

CATHOLICISM

Who Are Catholics?

- General definition . . .
 - The faith, practice, and system of government of the Roman Catholic Church, of which the **pope** (or the bishop of Rome) is the head.
 - Claims to originate with Christianity and to carry on a line of successive popes, beginning with Saint Peter, who govern the church with **authority** .

- Global population . . .
 - From 1910 to 2010, the global Catholic population grew from 291 million to nearly 1.1 **billion** .
 - Have steadily comprised approximately **half** of the global Christian population and approximately 16% of the entire global population.

- Geographic migration . . .
 - 1910: 65% of Catholics lived in Europe, and 24% lived in Latin America.
 - 2010: 24% of Catholics in Europe, and 39% in Latin America and the Caribbean.
 - 1910: Approximately 1 million Catholics (less than 1% of the global Catholic population) lived in sub-Saharan Africa.
 - 2010: Approximately **171** million Catholics (about 16% of the global Catholic population) lived in sub-Saharan Africa.
 - 1910: Approximately 15 million (5%) in North America.
 - 2010: Approximately **89** million (8%) in North America.

What Does Catholicism Teach?

- Major Similarities:

- On the Trinity . . .

- God is one.
- God has revealed Himself as three persons.

“We do not confess three Gods, but one God in three persons, the ‘consubstantial Trinity.’ The divine persons do not share the one divinity among themselves but each of them is God whole and entire: ‘The Father is that which the Son is, the Son that which the Father is, the Father and the Son that which the Holy Spirit is, i.e. by nature one God.’” – Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), 253

- Catholicism does not consider Mary as part of the Trinity.

- On Jesus . . .

- Jesus is the second person of the Trinity.
- Jesus is fully divine and fully human.

“The title ‘Son of God’ signifies the unique and eternal relationship of Jesus Christ to God his Father: he is the only Son of the Father (cf. Jn 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18); he is God himself (cf. Jn 1:1). To be a Christian, one must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (cf. Acts 8:37; 1 Jn 2:23).” – CCC, 454

- Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died on a cross, was buried, and was resurrected from the dead.

- Other . . .

- Sinfulness of humanity.
- Necessity of salvation.
- Numerous social issues.

- Miscellaneous Differences:

- On Scripture and Authority . . .

- Catholicism: Three Sources of Authority.
 - The Bible.

“The Church ‘forcefully and specifically exhorts all the Christian faithful . . . to learn the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ,

by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures. Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.” – CCC, 133

- Tradition.

“As a result the Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, ‘does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence.’” – CCC, 82

- Magisterium – The teaching ministry of the Church and the authority of the Pope (CCC, 85, 87, 95).

“‘The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ.’ This means that the task of interpretation has been entrusted to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome.” – CCC, 85

“The Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered.” – CCC, 882

“If, then, any shall say that the Roman Pontiff has the office merely of inspection or direction, and not full and supreme power of jurisdiction over the universal Church, not only in things which belong to faith and morals, but also in those which relate to the discipline and government of the Church spread throughout the world; or assert that he possesses merely the principal part, and not all the fullness of this supreme power; or that power which he enjoys is not ordinary and immediate, both over each and all the churches, and over each and all the pastors and the faithful: let him be anathema. This is the teaching of Catholic truth, from which no one can deviate without loss of faith and salvation.” – Vatican I

“It is clear therefore that, in the supremely wise arrangement of God, sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of

them cannot stand without the others. Working together, each in its own way, under the action of the one Holy Spirit, they all contribute effectively to the salvation of souls.” – CCC, 95

- Evangelical Protestantism: Scripture Alone (*Sola Scriptura*).

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16–17)

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. (Revelation 22:18–19)

○ On Mary . . .

- Catholicism: Mary is the “Holy Mother of God.”

“We believe that the Holy Mother of God, the new Eve, Mother of the Church, continues in heaven to exercise her maternal role on behalf of the members of Christ.” – CCC, 975

- Preserved from original sin and pure from all sin in her life.

“From among the descendants of Eve, God chose the Virgin Mary to be the mother of his Son. ‘Full of grace,’ Mary is ‘the most excellent fruit of redemption’ (SC 103): from the first instant of her conception, she was totally preserved from the stain of original sin and she remained pure from all personal sin throughout her life.” – CCC, 508

- Devotion to Mary and saints is intrinsic to worship.

“‘The Church’s devotion to the Blessed Virgin is intrinsic to Christian worship.’ The Church rightly honors ‘the Blessed Virgin with special devotion. From the most ancient times the Blessed Virgin has been honored with the title of “Mother of

God," to whose protection the faithful fly in all their dangers and needs. . . . This very special devotion . . . differs essentially from the adoration which is given to the incarnate Word and equally to the Father and the Holy Spirit, and greatly fosters this adoration.' The liturgical feasts dedicated to the Mother of God and Marian prayer, such as the rosary, an 'epitome of the whole Gospel,' express this devotion to the Virgin Mary."
– CCC, 971

"The witnesses who have preceded us into the kingdom, especially those whom the Church recognizes as saints, share in the living tradition of prayer by the example of their lives, the transmission of their writings, and their prayer today. They contemplate God, praise him and constantly care for those whom they have left on earth. When they entered into the joy of their Master, they were 'put in charge of many things.' Their intercession is their most exalted service to God's plan. We can and should ask them to intercede for us and for the whole world." – CCC, 2683

- **Evangelical Protestantism:** Mary is honored as a godly woman who bore the Son of God incarnate.

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. . . . And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. (Luke 1:26–31)

○ On Sin . . .

- **Catholicism:** Two types of sin.
 - **Mortal:** destroys the saving grace of God.
 - **Venial:** does not destroy the saving grace of God.

"Mortal sin destroys charity in the heart of man by a grave violation of God's law; it turns man away from God, who is his ultimate end and his beatitude, by preferring an inferior good

to him. Venial sin allows charity to subsist, even though it offends and wounds it." – CCC, 1855

- Evangelical Protestantism: No dual concept of sins.

... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God . . .
(Romans 3:23)

○ On the Sacraments . . .

- Catholicism: Grace is infused in the very act of the sacraments.

- Baptism.
- Confirmation.
- Eucharist.
- Confession.
- Anointing of Sick.
- Holy Orders.
- Matrimony.

- Evangelical Protestantism: Grace is offered as the sacraments are taken in faith in connection with the gospel.

- Baptism.
- The Lord's Supper.

○ On Baptism . . .

- Catholicism: Baptism is the act through which the new birth occurs in the life of an infant.

"Born with a fallen human nature and tainted by original sin, children also have need of the new birth in Baptism to be freed from the power of darkness and brought into the realm of the freedom of the children of God, to which all men are called. The sheer gratuitousness of the grace of salvation is particularly manifest in infant Baptism. The Church and the parents would deny a child the priceless grace of becoming a child of God were they not to confer Baptism shortly after birth." – CCC, 1250

- All sins are forgiven, including original sin and personal sins, as well as punishment for sin.

"By Baptism all sins are forgiven, original sin and all personal sins, as well as all punishment for sin. In those who have been

reborn nothing remains that would impede their entry into the Kingdom of God, neither Adam's sin, nor personal sin, nor the consequences of sin, the gravest of which is separation from God." – CCC, 1263

- Completed at confirmation.

"It must be explained to the faithful that the reception of the sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace. For 'by the sacrament of Confirmation, [the baptized] are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit. Hence they are, as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed.'" – CCC, 1285

- Evangelical Protestantism: Baptism represents the new birth that has occurred in the life of a believer.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit . . .
(Matthew 28:19)

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:1–4)

- On the Eucharist . . .

- Catholicism: Transubstantiation.

"Because Christ our Redeemer said that it was truly his body that he was offering under the species of bread, it has always been the conviction of the Church of God, and this holy Council now declares again, that by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood. This change the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly called transubstantiation." – CCC, 1376

- Evangelical Protestantism: Fellowship, thanksgiving, _____ remembrance _____, and proclamation.

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

○ On Confession . . .

- Catholicism: _____ Reconciles _____ one with God.

"The whole power of the sacrament of Penance consists in restoring us to God's grace and joining us with him in an intimate friendship.' Reconciliation with God is thus the purpose and effect of this sacrament. For those who receive the sacrament of Penance with contrite heart and religious disposition, reconciliation 'is usually followed by peace and serenity of conscience with strong spiritual consolation.' Indeed the sacrament of Reconciliation with God brings about a true 'spiritual resurrection,' restoration of the dignity and blessings of the life of the children of God, of which the most precious is friendship with God." – CCC, 1468

- A sinner confesses mortal sins to a priest.
- A priest imposes acts of penance and offers _____ forgiveness _____ of sins.

"Since Christ entrusted to his apostles the ministry of reconciliation, bishops who are their successors, and priests, the bishops' collaborators, continue to exercise this ministry. Indeed bishops and priests, by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders, have the power to forgive all sins 'in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.'" – CCC, 1461

- Evangelical Protestantism: Priesthood of the believer.

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to

the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:15–16)

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (1 Peter 2:9)

- The Massive Difference: Justification.

- How can I, a sinner, be reconciled to God, who is holy?
 - Evangelical Protestantism: Sinners are justified by God solely through faith in Christ.
 - Catholicism: Sinners are justified by God through faith in Christ and through their own works.
- Faith and works both lead to justification.

“If anyone says that by faith alone the sinner is justified, so as to mean that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification and that it is not in any way necessary, that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will; let him be anathema.” – Council of Trent, Session 6, Canon 9

“If anyone says that the faith which justifies is nothing else but trust in the Divine mercy, which pardons sins because of Christ, or that it is trust alone by which we are justified, let him be anathema.” – Council of Trent, Session 6, Canon 12

“The grace of the Holy Spirit has the power to justify us, that is, to cleanse us from our sins and to communicate to us the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ and through baptism.” – CCC (1987)

“If anyone says that the righteousness received is not preserved and also not increased before God by good works, but that those works are merely the fruits and signs of justification obtained, but not a cause of its increase, let him be anathema.” – Council of Trent, Session 6, Canon 2

- Grace is “infused” into you supernaturally through work.
 - Begins at baptism.
 - Carries on into other sacraments of the church—you attend mass, participate in the Eucharist, and so on.

“... through the observance of the commandments of God and the church, faith cooperating with good works,’ believers ‘increase in that justice received through the grace of Christ and are further justified . . .” – Council of Trent, Session 6, Chapter 10

- Future justification is possible but not guaranteed.

“If one considers his own weakness and his defective disposition, he may well be fearful and anxious as to the state of grace, as nobody knows with the certainty of faith, which permits of no error, that he has achieved the grace of God.” – Council of Trent, Session 6, Chapter 9

“If anyone says that the guilt is remitted to every penitent sinner after the grace of justification has been received, and that the debt of eternal punishment is so blotted out that there remains no debt of temporal punishment to be discharged either in this world or in the next in Purgatory, before the entrance to the kingdom of heaven can be opened; let him be anathema.” – Council of Trent, Session 6, Canon 30

How Do We Share the Gospel with Catholics?

- Proclaim justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone with passion.

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:21–26)

We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified. But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of

sin? Certainly not! For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor. For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose. (Galatians 2:15–21)

- Justification is the gracious act of God by which He declares a sinner righteous solely through faith in Jesus.
- Justification is the _____gracious_____ act of God . . .

If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?
(Psalm 130:3)

Hear my prayer, O LORD; give ear to my pleas for mercy! In your faithfulness answer me, in your righteousness! Enter not into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you. (Psalm 143:1–2)

- God _____gives_____ faith.

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God . . . (Ephesians 2:8)

- God _____grants_____ justification.

And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. (Romans 8:30)

That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all . . . (Romans 4:16)

- Justification is the gracious act of God by which He _____declares_____ . . .

And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Corinthians 6:11)

- A legal declaration.

Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent and righteous, for I will not acquit the wicked. (Exodus 23:7)

. . . for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned. (Matthew 12:37)

For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. (Romans 2:13)

For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. (Romans 3:20)

- An eternal declaration.

But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise." (Luke 23:40–43)

And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:30–39)

- Justification is the gracious act of God by which He declares a sinner . . .

“Here is a problem which needs God to solve it.” – Martin Luther

- The sinfulness of man.
- The righteousness of God.
- The demands of the law.

For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them . . . (Romans 2:14–15)

Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law. (Romans 3:31)

So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure. For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. (Romans 7:12–16)

- The result:
 - We are condemned by our immorality (actions that break God’s law).

They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God’s decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them. (Romans 1:29–32)

For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. (James 2:10)

- We are condemned by our morality (attempts to keep God’s law).

We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. (Isaiah 64:6)

For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. (Romans 3:20)

“Even our tears of repentance need to be washed in the blood of the Lamb.” – Puritan Pastor

- Justification is the gracious act of God by which He declares a sinner righteous . . .

For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. (Romans 5:19)

- God declares that we are forgiven of sin.

And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. (Colossians 2:13–14)

- Propitiation: We are free from all guilt.

. . . whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:25–26)

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 2:1–2)

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1)

- o God declares that we are clothed in holiness.

And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption . . . (1 Corinthians 1:30)

- Imputation: We are credited with His righteousness.

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith . . . (Philippians 3:8-9)

- o Justification is the gracious act of God by which He declares a sinner righteous solely through faith in Jesus.

. . . yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified. (Galatians 2:16)

- Christ is the basis of our justification.

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:21-26)

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. (Romans 5:6–9)

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:1)

• Dangerous _____ legalism _____ . . .

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. (Galatians 1:6–9)

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith—just as Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”? (Galatians 3:1–6)

- Working in our own _____ power _____.
- Working according to our own _____ laws _____.
- Working to _____ earn _____ God’s favor.
- Working to _____ steal _____ God’s glory.

For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. I testify again to every man

who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love. (Galatians 5:1–6)

• Divine love . . .

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

- Jesus is passionate about you.
- Jesus has paid a price for you.
- God's pleasure in you is not based upon your performance for Him.
- God's pleasure in you is based upon Christ's performance for you.

"The law is divine and holy. Let the law have its glory, but yet no law, be it never so divine and holy, ought to teach me that I am justified, and shall live through it. I grant it may teach me that I ought to love God and my neighbor; also to live in love, soberness, patience, etc., but it ought not to show me how I should be delivered from sin, the devil, death, and hell. Here I must take counsel of the gospel. I must hearken to the gospel, which teaches me, not what I ought to do but what Jesus Christ the Son of God hath done for me: that He suffered and died to deliver me from sin and death. The gospel will me to receive this, and to believe it. And this is the truth of the gospel. Most necessary it is, therefore, that we should know this article [of justification] well, teach it unto others, and beat it into their heads continually." – Martin Luther

- Works are the evidence of our justification.

You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. (James 2:24)

We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.
(Galatians 2:15–16)

But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. (James 2:18–24)

- Justification is the gracious act of God by which He declares a sinner righteous solely through faith in Jesus.

“If anyone says that by faith alone the sinner is justified, so as to mean that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification . . . let him be anathema.” – Council of Trent, Session 6, Canon 9

Justification by faith alone is “the doctrine upon which the church stands or falls.” – Martin Luther

Justification by faith alone is “the hinge upon which everything turns.” – John Calvin

“How are you righteous before God?

Only by true faith in Jesus Christ. In spite of the fact that my conscience accuses me that I have grievously sinned against all the commandments of God, and have not kept any one of them, and that I am still ever prone to all that is evil, nevertheless, God, without any merit of my own, out of pure grace, grants me the benefits of the perfect [sacrifice] of Christ, imputing to me his righteousness and holiness as if I had never committed a single sin or had ever been sinful, having fulfilled myself all the obedience which Christ has carried out for me, if only I accept such favor with a trusting heart.”

– Heidelberg Catechism

- Point out the major differences with respect.
 - A false gospel: Faith and works both lead to justification.
 - The true gospel: Faith alone leads to justification.

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God . . . (Ephesians 2:8)

- A false gospel: You progress in justification as grace is infused into you by works.
 - The true gospel: You rejoice in justification as the righteousness of Christ is imputed to you by God.

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

- A false gospel: You should be anxious about future justification.
 - The true gospel: You can be assured of future justification.

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life. (1 John 5:13)

In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:13–14)

- Live by this gospel.

We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified. But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor. For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify

the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose. (Galatians 2:15–21)

For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.” Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.” (Galatians 3:10–11)

- Die for this gospel.

See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (Galatians 6:11–14)

THE PROSPERITY GOSPEL

What Is the Prosperity Gospel?

“Jesus, however, came to redeem us from Satan’s power and dominion over us. . . . We are to reign as kings in life. That means that we have dominion over our lives. We are to dominate, not to be dominated. Circumstances are not to dominate you. Poverty is not to rule and reign over you. You are to rule and reign over poverty. Disease and sickness are not to rule and reign over you. You are to rule and reign over sickness. We are to reign as kings in life by Christ Jesus, in whom we have our redemption.” – Kenneth Hagin

- A theology which asserts that God’s aim is to make believers _____ **healthy** _____ and _____ **wealthy** _____ in this life.
 - We enjoy excesses.
 - We live like “King’s kids.”
- Global Christianity today is . . .
 - Explicitly characterized by the prosperity gospel.
 - Approximately _____ **half** _____ of self-proclaimed Christians in the United States believe that God gives material wealth to those who have enough faith.
 - 96% of self-proclaimed Christians in Nigeria.
 - 82% of self-proclaimed Christians in India.
 - 71% of self-proclaimed Christians in Guatemala.⁷
 - Subtly _____ **infused** _____ by the prosperity gospel.

What Does the Prosperity Gospel Teach?⁸

- A Distorted View of _____ **God** _____.
 - The Father, Son, and Spirit are not distinct persons but rather manifestations of God.

“There is one God, Creator of all things, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in three manifestations: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” – T.D. Jakes

- A Distorted View of Man.

- Man has spiritual power to manipulate the physical realm.

“Maybe Alzheimer’s disease runs in your family genes, but don’t succumb to it. Instead, say every day, ‘My mind is alert. I have clarity of thought. I have a good memory. Every cell in my body is increasing and getting healthier.’ If you’ll rise up in your authority, you can be the one to put a stop to the negative things in your family line . . . Start boldly declaring, ‘God is restoring health unto me. I am getting better every day in every way.’” – Joel Osteen

- The world revolves around man’s wants.

“You don’t have a god in you, you are one.” – Kenneth Copeland

- Others exist to serve you.

“I’ve come to expect to be treated differently. I’ve learned to expect people to want to help me. My attitude is this: I’m a child of the Most High God. My Father created the whole universe. He has crowned me with favor; therefore, I can expect preferential treatment. I can expect people to go out of their way to want to help me.” – Joel Osteen

- A Distorted Focus on Health and Wealth.

- Promises of financial success through faith.

“God is not magnified when you are broke, busted, or disgusted.”
– Paula White

- Promises of physical health through faith.

“I believe that it is the plan of God our Father that no believer should ever be sick. . . . It is not—I state boldly—it is not the will of God my

Father that we should suffer with cancer and other dread diseases which bring pain and anguish. No! It is God's will that we be healed."

– Kenneth Hagin

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

(1 Peter 2:24)

- A Distorted Understanding of _____ Salvation _____.
 - Does Jesus save us from sin and damnation in eternity?
 - Or does Jesus save us from _____ sickness _____ and _____ poverty _____ on earth?

- Distorted Interpretations of Scripture.
 - The prosperity gospel rips texts from _____ contexts _____ in the Bible.

Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul. (3 John 2)

- Does prayer _____ guarantee _____ good health?

Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life."

(Mark 10:29-30)

- Have those who claimed the benefits paid the _____ price _____?

Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases . . .

(Psalm 103:2-3)

- Is this general praise or a guaranteed _____ promise _____?

As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we consider those

blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful. But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation. Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit. (James 5:10-18)

- Does faith guarantee prosperity?
 - Faith is patient in suffering.
 - Like a farmer . . . waiting for the harvest.
 - Like a prophet . . . speaking the truth.
 - Like Job . . . hoping in God's purpose.
 - Faith is prayerful in sorrow.
 - Pray when you are hurting.
 - Pray when you are happy.
 - Pray with the elders.
 - Pray with the church.
 - Confess your sins to each other.
 - Sin directly causes some sickness.
 - Sin indirectly causes all sickness.
 - Intercede on behalf of each other.
 - The secret to power and effectiveness in prayer . . .
 - Make your wants God's wants.
 - Ask for whatever you want.
- The prosperity gospel ignores clear counter-examples in the Bible.
 - The life and teachings of Jesus.

As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have

holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." And Jesus said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." Yet another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home." Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:57–62)

So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:33)

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:5–8)

- Not the “health and wealth gospel.”
- More like the “_____homeless_____ and wounded gospel.”
- God may accomplish higher purposes in our _____death_____ than in our life.

And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him." (John 12:23–26)

- The life and teachings of _____Paul_____.

But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you. (2 Corinthians 4:7–12)

Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. (2 Corinthians 11:23–28)

- Not the “prosperity gospel.”
- More like the “_____adversity_____ gospel.”
- God may accomplish higher purposes in our _____sickness_____ than in our health.

So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12:7–10)

Erastus remained at Corinth, and I left Trophimus, who was ill, at Miletus. (2 Timothy 4:20)

. . . and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also. I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need, for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men, for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me. (Philippians 2:24–30)

No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments. (1 Timothy 5:23)

"When Paul was taken in chains from his filthy Roman dungeon and beheaded at the order of the opulent madman Nero, two representatives of humanity faced off, one of the best and one of the worst. One lived for prosperity on earth, the other didn't. One now lives in prosperity in heaven, the other doesn't. We remember both men for what they truly were, which is why we name our sons Paul and our dogs Nero." – Randy Alcorn

Why Is the Prosperity Gospel So Dangerous?

- It perverts our understanding of wealth in this world.

Two things I ask of you; deny them not to me before I die: Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, "Who is the LORD?" or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God. (Proverbs 30:7-9)

- Is wealth always a sign of God's approval?
- Is poverty always a sign of God's disapproval?

- It disregards the purpose of wealth.
 - Does God give us more so that we can get more?

For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. (2 Corinthians 8:13-14)

- Or does God give us more so that we can give more?

The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. As it is written, "He has distributed

freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. (2 Corinthians 9:6-12)

- It minimizes the dangers of wealth.
 - Wealth is not just a blessing from the King; it is also a barrier to the kingdom.

And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" (Mark 10:23)

- It feeds the desire to be rich while Scripture warns us against the desire to be rich.

But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. (1 Timothy 6:9-10)

- It ignores the clear shift in Scripture from the Old Testament to the New Testament.
 - Regarding the commands of God . . .
 - Old Testament: Abundance of promises of material reward for spiritual obedience.

When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly." (Genesis 17:1-2)

- New Testament: Lack of promises of material reward for spiritual obedience.

“The New Testament carried forward the major principles of the Old Testament and intertestamental Judaism with one conspicuous omission: never was material wealth promised as a guaranteed reward for either spiritual obedience or simple hard work. Material reward for piety never reappears in Jesus’ teaching, and is explicitly contradicted throughout.” – Craig Blomberg

o Regarding the place of worship . . .

- Old Testament: Temple as building .

Now when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, she came to test him with hard questions. She came to Jerusalem with a very great retinue, with camels bearing spices and very much gold and precious stones. And when she came to Solomon, she told him all that was on her mind. And Solomon answered all her questions; there was nothing hidden from the king that he could not explain to her. And when the queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, the food of his table, the seating of his officials, and the attendance of his servants, their clothing, his cupbearers, and his burnt offerings that he offered at the house of the Lord, there was no more breath in her. And she said to the king, “The report was true that I heard in my own land of your words and of your wisdom, but I did not believe the reports until I came and my own eyes had seen it. And behold, the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity surpass the report that I heard. Happy are your men! Happy are your servants, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom! Blessed be the Lord your God, who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel! Because the Lord loved Israel forever, he has made you king, that you may execute justice and righteousness.” (1 Kings 10:1–9)

- New Testament: Temple as body .

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? (1 Corinthians 6:19)

o Regarding the purpose of blessing . . .

- Old Testament: That the nations might come and see God’s glory.

Likewise, when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a far country for your name’s sake (for they shall hear of your

great name and your mighty hand, and of your outstretched arm), when he comes and prays toward this house, hear in heaven your dwelling place and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and that they may know that this house that I have built is called by your name. (1 Kings 8:41–43)

- New Testament: That God's people might go and tell of God's glory.

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18–20)

- It commends selfish luxury over selfless generosity.
 - It explicitly encourages people to indulge in pleasures.

And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. (Mark 4:18–19)

- It implicitly leads people to ignore the poor.

Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do. (Galatians 2:10)

- It appeals to the desires of the flesh instead of calling people to deny the flesh.

And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it." (Luke 9:23–24)

So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:33)

- It encourages people to waste their lives on things that do not last.

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:19–21)

- It exalts God's gifts (things we receive from God) above God's glory (the treasure we have in God).

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst." (John 6:35)

- It abuses God by making Him a means to an end.
 - Instead of trusting God for our needs, we use God for our wants.

I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:10–13)

And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:19)

- Instead of God-centered intercession, prayer becomes man-centered coercion.

You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. (James 4:3)

- It subtly infuses all of Christianity.

- Evident in how little we give.
- Evident in how much we own.

- It overlooks the design of suffering.
 - Christians may suffer despite their righteousness.

There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil. (Job 1:1)

- Christians may suffer because of their righteousness.

If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: "A servant is not greater than his master." If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. (John 15:18–20)

Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted . . . (2 Timothy 3:12)

- It fails to acknowledge the necessity of suffering.

It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household. (Matthew 10:25)

. . . strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. (Acts 14:22)

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. (Romans 8:16–18)

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. (1 Peter 4:12–14)

How Should We Respond to the Prosperity Gospel?

- Proclaim the gospel as the answer to people's _____greatest_____ need.

And getting into a boat he crossed over and came to his own city. And behold, some people brought to him a paralytic, lying on a bed. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven." And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming." But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he then said to the paralytic—"Rise, pick up your bed and go home." And he rose and went home. When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men. (Matthew 9:1–8)

- Jesus has authority over sin.
- Jesus' authority penetrates to the root of all suffering, which is sin . . .
 - Specifically in your life.
 - Or generally in the world.
- Our ultimate need is never physical; our ultimate need is always spiritual.
- The good news of the kingdom . . .
 - Not that Jesus will heal you of all your sicknesses.
 - But that Jesus will forgive you of all your sins.
- Forgiveness is God's greatest gift because it meets our greatest need.

. . . for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God . . .
(Romans 3:23)

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

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

- Show the gospel in the way you use your _____ possessions _____.

We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints—and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also. I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich. (2 Corinthians 8:1–9)

The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. As it is written, “He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.” He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift! (2 Corinthians 9:6–15)

- We give out of an abundance of _____ grace _____.
 - We give willingly.

- We give _____ generously.
 - God gives enough for us.
 - God gives excess for others.
- We give cheerfully.
 - We are not forced by God to give.
 - We are _____ freed _____ by God to give.
- We give as a demonstration of the _____ gospel _____.
 - We sacrifice our rights for others.
 - We spend our resources on others.
- We give to promote _____ thanksgiving _____ to God.
 - Giving unites the people of God.
 - Giving exalts the goodness of God.

If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain. But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. (1 Timothy 6:3–10)

- The path to great gain . . .
 - Be _____ content _____ with having necessities.
 - Be _____ cautious _____ with acquiring excess.
 - You will take none of it with you.
 - It will take contentment from you.
 - You will _____ miss _____ God's purpose for you.
- The path to total ruin . . .
 - _____ Love _____ of money.
 - Desire for riches.
 - A life of _____ self-destruction _____.
 - A life of self-mutilation.

o The plan for rich people . . .

As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life. (1 Timothy 6:17–19)

- Flee self-confidence.
- Flee self-_____centeredness_____.
- Focus on God.
 - He gives good things for your enjoyment.
 - Use good things for _____others'_____ enjoyment.
 - Invest good things in your and others' eternity.

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. (Matthew 6:19–24)

o Plainly put . . .

- Live _____simply_____.
- Give _____sacrificially_____.

- Worship God as the _____end_____, not a means to an end.

O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands. My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and

my mouth will praise you with joyful lips, when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night; for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy. My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me. (Psalm 63:1–8)

- We are designed to seek God as a consuming addiction in our lives, not a convenient _____ addition _____ to our lives.
- We are created to find ultimate satisfaction in God, over and above His _____ gifts _____.

One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple. (Psalm 27:4)

- _____ Trust _____ God in the middle of suffering.

Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, and there came a messenger to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you." While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you." While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "The Chaldeans formed three groups and made a raid on the camels and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you." While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, and behold, a great wind came across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead, and I alone have escaped to tell you." Then Job arose and tore his robe and his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong. (Job 1:13–22)

- God uses suffering to _____ refine _____ our faith.

For God speaks in one way, and in two, though man does not perceive it. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men,

while they slumber on their beds, then he opens the ears of men and terrifies them with warnings, that he may turn man aside from his deed and conceal pride from a man; he keeps back his soul from the pit, his life from perishing by the sword. (Job 33:14–18)

Behold, God does all these things, twice, three times, with a man, to bring back [a man's] soul from the pit, that he may be lighted with the light of life. (Job 33:30)

- God uses suffering to reveal His glory.

Behold, in this you are not right. I will answer you, for God is greater than man. Why do you contend against him, saying, "He will answer none of man's words"? (Job 33:12–13)

- God reveals His glory in creation.

Behold, God is exalted in his power; who is a teacher like him? Who has prescribed for him his way, or who can say, "You have done wrong"? Remember to extol his work, of which men have sung. All mankind has looked on it; man beholds it from afar. Behold, God is great, and we know him not; the number of his years is unsearchable. For he draws up the drops of water; they distill his mist in rain, which the skies pour down and drop on mankind abundantly. Can anyone understand the spreading of the clouds, the thunderings of his pavilion? Behold, he scatters his lightning about him and covers the roots of the sea. For by these he judges peoples; he gives food in abundance. He covers his hands with the lightning and commands it to strike the mark. Its crashing declares his presence; the cattle also declare that he rises. (Job 36:22–33)

- God reveals His glory through His Word.

In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men, while they slumber on their beds, then he opens the ears of men and terrifies them with warnings, that he may turn man aside from his deed and conceal pride from a man . . . (Job 33:15–16)

- God reveals His glory in our pain .

Man is also rebuked with pain on his bed and with continual strife in his bones, so that his life loathes bread, and his appetite the choicest

food. His flesh is so wasted away that it cannot be seen, and his bones that were not seen stick out. His soul draws near the pit, and his life to those who bring death. If there be for him an angel, a mediator, one of the thousand, to declare to man what is right for him, and he is merciful to him, and says, "Deliver him from going down into the pit; I have found a ransom; let his flesh become fresh with youth; let him return to the days of his youthful vigor"; then man prays to God, and he accepts him; he sees his face with a shout of joy, and he restores to man his righteousness. (Job 33:19-26)

"God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

– C.S. Lewis

- God reveals His power and His justice.

Therefore, hear me, you men of understanding: far be it from God that he should do wickedness, and from the Almighty that he should do wrong. For according to the work of a man he will repay him, and according to his ways he will make it befall him. Of a truth, God will not do wickedly, and the Almighty will not pervert justice. (Job 34:10-12)

- God reveals His goodness and His mercy.

He delivers the afflicted by their affliction and opens their ear by adversity. He also allured you out of distress into a broad place where there was no cramping, and what was set on your table was full of fatness. (Job 36:15-16)

- God uses suffering to teach us to rely on Him.

Who gave him charge over the earth, and who laid on him the whole world? If he should set his heart to it and gather to himself his spirit and his breath, all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust. (Job 34:13-15)

- God uses suffering to bring us to repent of and renounce all sin in our lives.

But you are full of the judgment on the wicked; judgment and justice seize you. Beware lest wrath entice you into scoffing, and let not the

greatness of the ransom turn you aside. Will your cry for help avail to keep you from distress, or all the force of your strength? Do not long for the night, when peoples vanish in their place. Take care; do not turn to iniquity, for this you have chosen rather than affliction. (Job 36:17–21)

- God uses suffering to lead us—and others—to the reward that is found in Him alone.

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

I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:10–13)

THEOLOGICAL LIBERALISM

"A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross."

– Richard Niebuhr

What Is Theological Liberalism?

- What we are NOT talking about . . .
 - Liberal views on the size of government, tax policies, or other similar _____ political _____ issues.
 - Every Christian who disagrees with you about _____ something _____ in the Bible.
 - People who reject _____ Christianity _____ altogether.
- What we ARE talking about . . .
 - People who call themselves Christians yet _____ deny _____ Scripture and orthodox Christian teaching on the primary doctrines of Christianity.
 - Oftentimes in an attempt to . . .
 - _____ Adapt _____ to a changing culture.
 - _____ Appeal _____ to an increasingly non-Christian culture.
 - Oftentimes with language that . . .
 - Appears to be _____ biblical _____.
 - Though it undercuts Scripture.
 - Claims to be _____ new _____ and contemporary.
 - Though it rehashes old heresies.

What Beliefs Characterize Theological Liberalism?

- Theological liberalism rejects the _____ final _____ authority of God's Word.
 - Interprets Scripture according to modern _____ experiences _____.
 - Interprets Scripture according to popular _____ reasoning _____.

- Interprets Scripture according to contemporary science.
- Theological liberalism rejects God's supernatural and miraculous work in history.
 - The crossing of the Red Sea is a metaphor for gaining freedom from oppressive political systems.
 - The resurrection of Christ is merely a symbol of hope in the midst of difficult circumstances.
- Theological liberalism rejects the seriousness of individual sin before a holy God.
 - Decries injustice while downplaying evangelism.
 - Emphasizes general "spirituality" over ongoing sanctification.
- Theological liberalism rejects the Bible's teaching on the person and work of Christ.
 - Jesus is a good moral teacher, but not the divine Son of God.
 - The cross is an example of God's love, but not a propitiation for God's wrath.
- Theological liberalism rejects the Bible's teaching on judgment and eternity.
 - Downplays or totally denies Hell.
 - De-emphasizes the holiness and wrath of God.
- Theological liberalism rejects certain teachings in Scripture when they become unpopular or ridiculed.
 - Particularly prone to discount or redefine biblical ethics.
 - Especially prevalent in views on contemporary sexuality.
- Theological liberalism rejects consistent teachings from the church throughout history.

- Claims to have progressed in knowledge and understanding.
- Implies at least ignorance (if not foolishness) in Christians who have come before us.

How Should We Respond to Theological Liberalism?

- Recognize theological liberalism for what it is: a non-Christian religion.

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ. (Galatians 1:6–10)

“Despite the liberal use of traditional phraseology modern liberalism not only is a different religion from Christianity but belongs in a totally different class of religions.”

– J. Gresham Machen

- The root of theological liberalism is unbelief.

“Liberal Christianity can only supply an ineffectual echo to the massive chorus of agreed and admitted unbelief. Don’t be deceived by the fact that this echo so often ‘hits the headlines.’ That is because attacks on Christian doctrine which would pass unnoticed if they were launched (as they are daily launched) by anyone else, become News when the attacker is a clergyman; just as a very commonplace protest against make-up would be News if it came from a film star. By the way, did you ever meet, or hear of, anyone who was converted from scepticism to a ‘liberal’ or ‘demythologised’ Christianity? I think that when unbelievers come in at all, they come in a good deal further.” – C.S. Lewis

- The answer to theological liberalism is regeneration.

Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." (John 3:3–8)

- Reject theological liberalism when you read it in a book or hear it in the church.

This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme. (1 Timothy 1:18–20)

"I'm delighted that liberal theologians do their best to do what Pio Nono said shouldn't be done—try to accommodate Christianity to modern science, modern culture, and democratic society. If I were a fundamentalist Christian, I'd be appalled by the wishy-washiness of [the liberal] version of the Christian faith. But since I am a non-believer who is frightened of the barbarity of many fundamentalist Christians (e.g. their homophobia), I welcome theological liberalism. Maybe liberal theologians will eventually produce a version of Christianity so wishy-washy that nobody will be interested in being a Christian anymore. If so, something will have been lost, but probably more will have been gained." – Richard Rorty, American Philosopher

- Trust the Word of God over human wisdom, experience, and reason.

Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments. (Psalm 119:6)

- We are prone to suppress truth.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.
(Romans 1:18–23)

- We are limited in our understanding.

Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. (Ephesians 4:17–19)

- God is infinitely wise, absolutely truthful, and perfectly faithful.

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!
(Romans 11:33)

For the word of the Lord is upright, and all his work is done in faithfulness. (Psalm 33:4)

- Teach the Word of God with honest compassion and humble boldness.

And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.
(2 Timothy 2:24–26)

- Believe God's supernatural and miraculous works in history.

Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually! Remember the wondrous works that he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he uttered . . . (Psalm 105:4–5)

By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. (Hebrews 11:3)

- Revere God's holiness.

Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire. (Hebrews 12:28–29)

But the LORD of hosts is exalted in justice, and the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness. (Isaiah 5:16)

- Recognize our sinfulness.

. . . for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God . . . (Romans 3:23)

For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. (2 Corinthians 4:5)

- Refuse to minimize the person and work of Christ.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. (Colossians 1:15–20)

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

. . . whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:25–26)

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit . . . (1 Peter 3:18)

- Realize that Heaven and Hell are at stake in what we believe and teach.

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. (Matthew 10:28)

. . . who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. (Philippians 3:21)

- Respect the beliefs of Christians who have gone before us.

So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter. (2 Thessalonians 2:15)

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 3:14–15)

- Risk opposition, ridicule, and persecution in the culture around you for the sake of Christ in you.

Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:11–12)

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (Romans 1:16)

CONCLUSION

This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.

(1 Corinthians 4:1–2)

Three Exhortations

- Let's _____ believe _____ the gospel in our lives.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. (John 3:16–18)

- We have been saved by His staggering _____ grace _____ for His supreme _____ glory _____!

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:8–10)

For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens. (Psalm 96:4–5)

- Let's _____ guard _____ the gospel in our churches.

Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me,

in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.
(2 Timothy 1:13–14)

See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. (Colossians 2:8)

- Gospel doctrine is worth the defense of our lives!

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures . . . (1 Corinthians 15:3–4)

When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:54–58)

- Let's spread the gospel in the world.

And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.
(Matthew 24:14)

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."
(Matthew 28:18–20)

- The need is urgent and the time is now!

Do you not say, "There are yet four months, then comes the harvest"? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering

fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, "One sows and another reaps." I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor. (John 4:35–38)

What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. (James 4:14b)

His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master." (Matthew 25:21)

NOTES

1. For these three truths on the Trinity, see Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 231–239.
2. Sources used for this historical information on Mormons include the following: Kevin DeYoung, “Mormonism 101,” thegospelcoalition.org; Joe Carter, “9 Things You Should Know about Mormonism,” thegospelcoalition.org; Justin Taylor, “The 8 Beliefs You Should Know About Mormons When They Knock at the Door” (taken from the *ESV Study Bible*), accessed at thegospelcoalition.org; Andrew Jackson, *Mormonism Explained*.
3. Statistics on Mormons worldwide taken from LDS.org; statistics on Mormons in the U.S. taken from Pew Forum’s study on the topic in 2014 (pewforum.org).
4. Sources used for this section on Mormon beliefs include the following: Kevin DeYoung, “Mormonism 101,” thegospelcoalition.org; Joe Carter, “9 Things You Should Know about Mormonism,” thegospelcoalition.org; Justin Taylor, “The 8 Beliefs You Should Know About Mormons When They Knock at the Door” (taken from the *ESV Study Bible*), accessed at thegospelcoalition.org; Andrew Jackson, *Mormonism Explained*.
5. Some of the teachings of Jehovah’s Witnesses in this section are taken from Justin Taylor, “The 11 Beliefs You Should Know about Jehovah’s Witnesses When They Knock at the Door” (taken from the *ESV Study Bible*), accessed at thegospelcoalition.org.
6. This illustration is original to Greg Koukl and is cited in Justin Taylor, “How to Use the Back of a Napkin to Prove to a Jehovah’s Witness That Jesus Is God,” thegospelcoalition.org.
7. Stats cited in David W. Jones and Russell S. Woodbridge, *Health, Wealth, & Happiness: Has the Prosperity Gospel Overshadowed the Gospel of Christ?*, 16.
8. Some of the characteristics of the Prosperity Gospel listed below are taken from David W. Jones and Russell S. Woodbridge, *Health, Wealth, & Happiness: Has the Prosperity Gospel Overshadowed the Gospel of Christ?*

In addition to the sources cited above, some of the resources from the Recommended Reading page were among those used to produce this Secret Church 18 Study Guide.

RECOMMENDED READING

To learn more about the topics covered in Secret Church 18, we hope you'll find the resources listed below helpful. Note, however, that neither David Platt nor Radical endorses everything contained in these resources. As always, we urge you to examine these resources and the topics covered in this study in light of the truths of God's Word.

The Gospel, Evangelism, and Missions . . .

- Greg Gilbert, *What is the Gospel?*
- Mark Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism*
- John Piper, *Let the Nations be Glad*

Cults and Counterfeit Gospels

- Walter Martin, ed. Ravi Zacharias, *The Kingdom of the Cults*
- Trevin Wax, *Counterfeit Gospels: Rediscovering the Good News in a World of False Hope*

Mormonism

- Corey Miller, Lynn Wilder, Vince Eccles, and Latayne Scott, *Leaving Mormonism: Why Four Scholars Changed their Minds*
- Andrew Jackson, *Mormonism Explained: What Latter-Day Saints Teach and Practice*

Catholicism

- Chris Castaldo, *Talking with Catholics About the Gospel*
- Gregg Allison and Christopher A. Castaldo, *The Unfinished Reformation: What Unites and Divides Catholics and Protestants after 500 Years*

Jehovah's Witnesses

- David Reed, *Answering Jehovah's Witnesses Subject by Subject* and *Answering Jehovah's Witnesses Verse by Verse*
- Ron Rhodes, *Conversations with Jehovah's Witnesses: A Friendly Approach to Sharing the Truth About God and the Bible*

The Prosperity Gospel

- David W. Jones and Russell S. Woodbridge, *Health, Wealth, & Happiness*
- Michael Otieno Maura, Ken Mbugua, Conrad Mbewe, Wayne Grudem, and John Piper, *Prosperity? Seeking the True Gospel*

Theological Liberalism

- J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism*
- David Wells, *No Place For Truth: Or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?*

FOR MALAYSIA

Malaysia is a country full of complexity. With a diverse population of Malaysians from Malay, Chinese, Indian, and indigenous ethnicities, Malaysia is a multicultural hub of Southeast Asia. Although the country might appear to be a society where many religions exist harmoniously, Malaysia's reputation as a liberal and tolerant Islamic country is steadily declining.

In recent years, the country has seen subtle changes in political, religious, and legal climates, leading to an increasing feeling of unease among Christians and other minorities. There is growing pressure from segments of the Muslim majority to enact stricter Islamic laws. Abductions and increased pressure on Christians have also been causes for alarm among Malaysia's churches.

Evangelical Christians make up about 4 percent of the population of over 31 million. While other religions besides Islam are legal in Malaysia, the church faces many obstacles and regulations, especially in terms of how they relate to non-Christians. Churches face the difficulty of trying to be salt and light while at the same time feeling the pressure of the government's regulations.

For example, in most Malaysian states, it is illegal to share the gospel with Muslims (who make up roughly 60 percent of the population). Christians who attempt to evangelize Muslims can be punished by the government.

For ethnic Malays, being a Malay and being a Muslim go hand in hand. Muslims are not legally allowed to change their religion, and those who do leave Islam often face persecution from the government and from their families. Many are completely cut off from their parents, spouses, or children and become socially isolated. Some are even sent to re-education camps where former Muslims are pressured to return to Islam.

Adding to this persecution, Muslim-background believers (MBBs) are often isolated from Christian community. Trust between MBBs is fragile in Malaysia, as many do not want to risk being reported to the authorities.

Some churches also struggle to welcome MBBs into their congregations due to a fear of the government.

Unfortunately, tensions between races and religions have increased in Malaysia. Minorities are often marginalized, especially non-Muslims. Malaysian society is routinely segmented by ethnic groups or religious affiliations, resulting in a culture where ethnic Malays are isolated from the message of the gospel both legally and socially.

The challenges for the church in Malaysia are multifaceted. Our Malaysian brothers and sisters need God's power and wisdom as they seek to shine the light of Christ while facing ever-increasing pressure to remain silent. Join with us as we pray for Malaysia.

How To Pray For Malaysia

- Persecution awaits Muslims, especially ethnic Malays, who decide to leave Islam and follow Jesus.
 - **Pray** for new believers to have support from other Christians who can disciple them and stand by them in persecution.
 - **Pray** for Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) to remain strong in their faith in the midst of efforts to get them to renounce Christ.
 - **Pray** for Muslims to see the faith of MBBs and want to follow Jesus.
- Christians face punishment for sharing the gospel with Muslims.
 - **Pray** for the church in Malaysia to have boldness in reaching Muslims for Christ despite the risks.
 - **Pray** for the church to navigate the many restrictions and regulations placed upon them and to continue to minister effectively.
 - **Pray** for church leaders to know how to wisely lead their congregations to follow Christ and reach out to the lost around them.
- MBBs are often isolated from Christian community.
 - **Pray** for churches to know how to wisely welcome and disciple MBBs to help them grow in their relationship with Christ as part of the body.

- **Pray** for MBBs to have courage and trust to meet other MBBs so that they can support one another.
- **Pray** for MBBs to become disciples and to lead the way in getting the gospel to other Muslims.
- At least four Christians were abducted in 2017, and their whereabouts are still unknown.
 - **Pray** for these believers to stay strong in their faith and to lean on Christ during this time of persecution.
 - **Pray** for the families. Some have been in the spotlight since the disappearances. Pray for them as they are questioned and have the opportunity to speak publicly about their faith.
 - **Pray** for others associated with these believers who have been questioned and watched by government authorities. Ask that they will remain strong and have support from other believers.
- Many people in Malaysia are under spiritual attack.
 - **Pray** for Muslims who are seeking Jesus. The enemy is using demonic oppression, strange physical ailments, and more to deter them from following Christ.
 - **Pray** for MBBs who, in addition to facing persecution from family and the government, are under great spiritual attack. Ask that their faith would remain strong in the face of such darkness.
 - **Pray** that Christians and non-Christians alike would see Christ's supremacy as the gospel is proclaimed.

The information above was gathered from Operation World, Open Doors International, peoplegroups.org, and Joshua Project.

ABOUT DAVID PLATT

David Platt is the President of the IMB (International Mission Board) and a teaching pastor at McLean Bible Church in Washington, D.C.

Radical is the resource ministry founded by David Platt. Radical serves churches in accomplishing the mission of Christ. Visit **radical.net** to find out more about resources from Radical.

Books authored by David Platt include: *Radical*, *Radical Together*, *Follow Me*, and *Counter Culture*. He has also contributed to the following volumes in the Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary series: *Exalting Jesus in Matthew*, *Exalting Jesus in James*, *Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, and *Exalting Jesus in Galatians*.

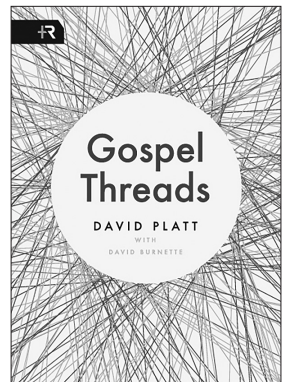
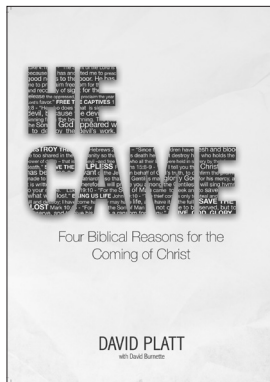
David received his Master of Divinity (M.Div.), Master of Theology (Th.M.), and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

ABOUT RADICAL

As the resource ministry of David Platt, Radical exists to serve the church in accomplishing the mission of Christ.

Radical serves local churches through free online resources (**radical.net**), through translated sermons, and through hosting Secret Church (**secretchurch.org**).

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