



NCS Staff Reference Material

8/14/2017

NORTHUMBERLAND CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

PSALM 71:14-18, 8

(Psalm sev - en - ty - one:) 14)But as for me, I will al - ways have hope;
5 I will praise you more and more. 15)My mouth will tell of your
8 right - eous - ness, of your sal - va - tion all day long, though I know not its mea - sure.
11 16)I will come and pro - claim your might - y acts, O Sov - ereign LORD;
15 I will pro - claim your right - eous - ness, yours a - lone.
19 17)Since my youth, O God, you have taught me, and to this day I de -
22 clare your mar - ve - lous deeds. 18)E - ven when I am old and gray, do
25 not for - sake me, O God, till I de - clare your pow - er to the next gen - er -
29 a - tion, your might to all who are to come. 8)My - mouth is filled with your
32 praise, de - clar - ing your splen - dor all day long.

Tune adapted from ST. GERTRUDE by Arthur S. Sullivan, 1871; this arrangement © 2004 John Rees

Psalm 71

OUR MISSION

Pass it on to the next generation – v.18

OUR METHOD

tell, proclaim, declare....
enthusiasm, excitement!
all day long – v. 8,15,24

OUR MESSAGE

God! – “it’s all about You!”
might, power, marvelous deeds, splendor,
sovereignty, righteousness, salvation

OUR MEANS

determination – I will....
cultivation of the heart –
 hope, praise more and more – v.14
humble boldness –
 though I know not its measure – v.15
confidence in God – v.5
reliance on God’s power - v.7
reliance on God’s presence –
 v.18 (don’t forsake me!)

OUR MOTIVE

God’s glory/their good – v.16,19,22-24

NORTHUMBERLAND CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

NCS MISSION STATEMENT

***Northumberland Christian School
was founded in 1972
to provide a God-centered education
that stimulates in the student
a passion for excellence
in learning, service, and worship.***

NCS DISTINCTIVES

NCS is committed to...

- **a God-centered approach to education.** We embrace a Biblical world and life view and seek to teach students to think about all of life based on the truth which God has revealed.
- **discipleship as an essential part of the Christian life.** We teach Jesus Christ as Lord and seek to lift the vision of each student to bow to His authority in every aspect of life.
- **worship as central to all of life.** We teach students that the most important thing in life is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. Music is used extensively in worship and to fix God's Word in our hearts and minds.
- **a broad education that embraces ideas and truths as well as skills.** We offer courses in history, science, literature, languages, and the arts in order to develop students of character who think deeply about life.
- **pursuing excellence in acquiring skills for continued learning and service in God's world.** We challenge students to develop math, science, language and computer skills that equip them to be used by God in the world in which they live.

We seek to stimulate students to develop their God-given abilities to the fullest for the glory of God.

How we praise God for His faithfulness to NCS for over 40 years! How we praise God for the teachers He has used for these years to maintain a God-centered focus that has never changed, but rather has been sharpened and strengthened throughout the years. The sense of family has also grown through the years as “one generation commends His works to another and tells of His mighty acts.” What a blessing it is to have so many children of NCS alumni attending NCS, because their parents have a desire to pass on the God-centered focus they learned as students! What a joy to have many alumni serving as teachers or in other staff and support positions! What an encouragement to have new families joining the NCS “family” year by year, some who already share our vision, and others who come to embrace it more and more!

1, As NCS teachers we are passionate about the priority of God-centered teaching. We have chosen that priority in raising our own children, and we love to teach in a place where we are entirely free to relate all learning to the Word of God. When the students sit down, and when they rise up, as they play and as they work, we encourage them to see the hand of God everywhere.

2. We are passionate about discipleship. We understand that Christianity is not simply about asking Jesus to be your “personal Savior.” We embrace Christ’s call to make disciples. We continually call students to a living relationship with Christ as their Prophet, Priest, and King. We all are called to trust Him as our Teacher, Savior, and Lord. We understand from Deuteronomy 6 that the goal of parents is to encourage children to love God with all their heart and soul and strength. One of the means God uses to draw children to Himself is surrounding them with others who love God and who talk about Him freely and pervasively. We seek to lift the vision of the children to the blessing of serving God in every activity of life. We can teach and demonstrate the fact that God has called us to a life in relationship with Him.

3, We are passionate about the worship of God. We seek to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice to God, which is our spiritual worship. We embrace the commands of God heartily to sing His praise, and we seek to encourage others to do the same. We are committed to the people of God, and we know that our own personal walk with God has a profound effect upon our students. If God is to establish the work of our hands, we need God to satisfy us in the morning with His unfailing love (Psalm 90).

4. We love to learn, and we seek to stimulate students to think deeply about life and about God. By God’s grace we can help them to see how crucial an understanding of God is to every area of thought and discussion.

5. We challenge students to develop their skills to pursue excellence in all that they do – to work at whatever they do with all their might, seeking to please God, not man. In their classes we encourage students to learn all that they can in that class, and we seek to stir up a passion for God even in relationship to that subject. We work in fellowship with other teachers who share our vision for personal growth in our walk with God, as well as in our knowledge of every aspect of His creation.

As we consider these things, we certainly see how far short we fall in all of these areas, but we praise God for giving us hearts that desire these things.

I have often been encouraged by this prayer:

"The Teacher" by Leslie Hill (applies to parents too)

Lord, who am I to teach the way
to little children day by day,
So prone myself to go astray?
I teach them knowledge, but I know
How faint they flicker and how low
The candles of my knowledge glow.
I teach them power to will and do,
But only now to learn anew
My own great weakness through and through.
I teach them love for all mankind
And all God's creatures, but I find
My love comes lagging far behind.
Lord, if their guide I still must be,
O, let the little children see
Their teacher leaning hard on THEE.

God calls us to be people of prayer, and (especially as teachers) we need to pray often that God will open our eyes to see more of His glory in the things we have already read or taught. I have so often been encouraged by this quote from Sinclair Ferguson on Philippians 3:1:

"Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you."

We can sense here that Paul feels a little self-conscious about repeating teaching he has earlier given. Perhaps he was conscious of the ease with which we tend to say, 'I have heard that before; I do not need to hear it again.' Not only the ancient Athenians, but sadly some contemporary Christians, always want to hear something new and different. (Acts 17:21). Their presence can place a subtle pressure on a teacher or preacher to produce novelty. Paul resisted that pressure; he realized the frailty of our understanding, the brevity of our memories.

Elsewhere Paul was constantly appealing to his readers "Do you not know? Do you not remember what you were taught? (e.g. Rom.6:3,16) *We are rarely as mature as we think; we are never beyond needing the truth of Scripture explained to us again. The freshness lies not in novelty, but in the power of the Spirit helping us to see how much more wonderful and potent is the truth we already knew. Then we realize how comparatively superficial our knowledge has been.*

Also fitting is the prayer of Keith and Kristin Getty:

Speak, O Lord, as we come to you to receive the food of your holy word.....

The remainder of the content in this “NCS Staff Reference Material” consists of things which I have shared with staff at various times in the past. I include it in the spirit of Sinclair Ferguson’s comments above. The quotes are rich, deep, and encouraging, and periodic review and meditation can lift your vision and speak to your heart. I hope to add other material in the future, and just keep this material somewhere that you can easily access, perhaps as a link on our website. I would also be glad to print out any or all of it for those who prefer hard copies.

This material is available on the school website under About -> Forms
<http://www.norrychristian.net/About/Forms.asp>

It currently has about 120 pages of material. If you would like a hard copy of the reference material, I have a few copies printed out in folders and am glad to print out more if needed.

Also check out the school website videos marked “Christian Education”

[http://www.norrychristian.net/News/Videos.asp?strFile=NCS Celebrates Christian Education 2010.flv&strFolder=../Videos/Christian Education/](http://www.norrychristian.net/News/Videos.asp?strFile=NCS%20Celebrates%20Christian%20Education%202010.flv&strFolder=../Videos/Christian%20Education/)

[http://www.norrychristian.net/News/Videos.asp?strFile=NCS 30th Anniversary Video Presentaton.flv&strFolder=../Videos/Christian Education/30th Anniversary Celebration/](http://www.norrychristian.net/News/Videos.asp?strFile=NCS%2030th%20Anniversary%20Video%20Presentaton.flv&strFolder=../Videos/Christian%20Education/30th%20Anniversary%20Celebration/)

[http://www.norrychristian.net/News/Videos.asp?strFile=Extended Classroom Examples From 2001-2002.flv&strFolder=../Videos/Christian Education/30th Anniversary Celebration/](http://www.norrychristian.net/News/Videos.asp?strFile=Extended%20Classroom%20Examples%20From%202001-2002.flv&strFolder=../Videos/Christian%20Education/30th%20Anniversary%20Celebration/)

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PSALM 78

Below is the change in the wording of our Standards of Conduct in 2007, which was motivated in part by a study of the word TESTIMONY in Psalm 78.

Former NCS Handbook re: Standards of Conduct -

God's desire for each of us is that we seek to please Him above everyone else, and that we seek to grow in our knowledge of Him. He has graciously given us commands to obey, and the Christian is someone who has come to realize that God's laws are for our good; a mark of the true Christian is a desire to obey God's commands (1 John 2:4). Unbelievers will not submit to God (Romans 8:7); but true Christians have learned that it is for their good to submit to God, to the authorities He has placed over them, and to the circumstances He brings into their lives (Psalms 1:1-2; Hebrews 13:17; Philippians 2:14; 4:11-13).

The following standards and responsibilities have been established for the good of the student body and the school. Students must be kind to everyone and show proper respect for people and property. We pray that students' attitudes and actions will reflect a heart that wants to honor God in every situation.

Revision in 2007: [what is the difference?]

God is an awesome God who has made us in His own image. His people are those who have come to know Him, love Him, and serve Him. Our service flows from our knowledge of Him and our love for Him. We want to reflect His glory in all the things we do. We seek to keep His commands, because His commands are a reflection of Who He is, and we want to be more and more like Him. His commandments are for our good, because we were made to reflect Him, and it is growing in His image that will bring our deepest joy.

The Bible continually links obedience to God with love for God. A mark of a true Christian is that he loves God and keeps His commandments. Unbelievers resent authority and want to be their own boss, because they do not trust and love God. Our desire for students is not only that they would obey the authority that God has placed over them, but that they would delight to do so, because they have come to delight in God and trust in Him. We pray for students to develop a passion for excellence in learning, worship, and service.

The following standards and responsibilities have been established for the good of the student body and the school. Students should seek to reflect the glory of God by being kind to everyone and showing proper respect for people and property. We pray that students' attitudes and actions will flow from a heart that wants to honor God in every situation.

Psalms 78:1-8 (ESV)

- 1 Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth!
- 2 I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old,
- 3 things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us.
- 4 We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.

5 He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children;

6 that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children,

7 so that they should set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments;

8 and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God.

GOD'S TESTIMONY – v.5

God has done something amazing – He has SPOKEN! He has REVEALED HIMSELF to man, so that we might KNOW HIM and FIND OUR JOY IN HIS GLORY. (We were made to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.)

This is the foundation of Christian education. If God has not spoken, then my opinion is just as worthless as everyone else's. The only basis for TRUTH and for KNOWLEDGE is a God who has SPOKEN - A God who has REVEALED Himself.

We serve a God who SPEAKS! – Genesis 1 – and God SAID.... [recall Trinity – It is the very NATURE of God to reveal Himself, to communicate, to speak]

God reveals Himself through creation – which declares the glory of God and day by day it pours forth speech and displays knowledge. (Psalm 19:1-6).

God reveals Himself through His written (and spoken) Word – Above all else, His Word TESTIFIES about GOD!

God's ultimate revelation came by His sending His Son into this world. His Son is the WORD – the One who MAKES GOD KNOWN (John 1:1,18; 17:6,26) (Isaiah 40:5)

Psalm 78:5 gives us the statement that provides the foundation for the psalm:

He established a testimony In Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children.

NIV says, "He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel..." It seems to me that two things are lost by changing the word TESTIMONY to STATUTES – the connection to the TESTIMONY in Exodus, and the different emphasis in the word 'testimony' than the word 'statutes'.

Notice the use of the word TESTIMONY in Exodus. Webster had it exactly right: "1a – the tablets inscribed with the Mosaic law or the ark containing them"

The word TESTIMONY – Heb. - eduth – Greek – marturia – witness - occurs in Exodus 16:34; 25:16,21; 26:33-34; 27:21; 30:6,26,36; 31:7,18; 32:15; 34:29; 39:35; 40:3; 40:20 – Moses carries the "Tablets of the Testimony", he places "the Testimony" in the ark, which is also called "the ark of the Testimony" and sometimes the ark is called "the Testimony".

Why is this important? Why is the connection with Psalm 78:5 important? Isn't "statutes" the same thing as the Ten "Commandments"? I think the missing element is HOW THE TEN COMMANDMENTS BEGIN AND WHAT THEY REVEAL ABOUT GOD.

Never forget that the Ten Commandments DO NOT start with "You shall not..." They start with "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery."

The tables of the testimony do not begin with a testimony about what God requires of us; they begin with a testimony about the person of God (aseity, immutability, eternity), the grace of God, and the power of God at work on behalf of His people!

The implications of this are huge for how you train and educate children! Our focus is NOT on behavior modification – teaching them to obey commands (so life will be more comfortable for us – [which it will!]) – but the constant focus must be on WHO IS GOD and WHAT IS MY RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM!

This is not in any way an attempt to lessen the importance of teaching our children to OBEY GOD'S COMMANDS – but the CONTEXT will make all the difference!

Also, even after we get to "You shall not...", we must never lose sight of the fact that the commandments themselves are TESTIFYING TO THE CHARACTER OF GOD! Praise God we serve a God of TRUTH, a God of FAITHFULNESS, a God of LOVE and HONOR and RESPECT, a God of RELATIONSHIP, a God of TENDER CARE, a God who is WORTHY of worship, etc.

This is why it seems to me that the NIV lost an important element by deleting the word TESTIMONY from the Psalms and replacing it with STATUTES. It is not that God has not given us STATUTES – He HAS – and THAT is an important concept as well!

You can see the differences in Psalm 119:

AV, ESV – TESTIMONIES – Heb. Eduth, Gk. Marturia – witness; NIV – statutes

Psalm 119:14,31,36,88,99,111,129,144 (also Psalm 19:7)

AV, ESV – STATUTES – Heb. Choq – decreed limit; NIV – decrees

Psalm 119:5,8,12,23,26,33,48,54,64,68,71,80,83,112,117,118,124,135,145,155,171

There are obviously MANY references to God's statutes (NIV decrees) and his commandments. He IS a God who makes decrees and demands. But He is MORE than that.

Note three examples (contrast NIV):

Psalm 119:88 ESV – In your steadfast love give me life, that I may keep the testimonies of your mouth.

Psalm 119:111 ESV – Your testimonies are my heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart.

Psalm 119:129 ESV – Your testimonies are wonderful; therefore my soul keeps them.

Notice also that this Testimony (spoken by God, written by God, on stone – to symbolize its permanence) IS INTENDED TO BE PASSED ON TO THE NEXT GENERATION. God will not reveal Himself again the way He did on Mount Sinai. He expects one generation to pass the testimony on to the next. Likewise, God sent His Son as His last Word (Heb.1:1) – He will not

do that again. He has again given us WRITTEN revelation – so that it is FIXED and PERMANENT and UNCHANGEABLE – but it must be PASSED ON TO THE NEXT GENERATION.

ASAPH’S RESOLVE – v.1-4

Asaph resolves to TELL THE COMING GENERATION the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might and the wonders that he has done.

Notice that Asaph focuses on the deeds and wonders of God, not first on the commandments. We too need to constantly point our children to WHO GOD IS and WHAT HE HAS DONE. That is TIED to what He commands, because His commands flow from WHO HE IS.

Recall David in Psalm 145:4-7 – One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts. They will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty, and I will meditate on your wonderful works. They will tell of the power of your awesome works, and I will proclaim your great deeds. They will celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness.

What does he mean in v.2 by parables and hidden things? The psalm sounds like a review of history. But perhaps the reference to parables and hidden things is because Asaph desires the people to APPLY what they read to their own lives. Don't they too have the same tendency as Israel to stray from the Lord, and isn't God the same God today who disciplines His people in grace and is patient and forgiving?

OUR GOAL – v.6-8

That our children would KNOW – and well enough to pass it on to THEIR children!

That our children would put their TRUST in God

That our children would OBEY His commands

sounds like our mission statement – to stimulate in our students a passion for learning [knowing], worship [trust, hope, love], and service [obedience]

Our first job is to pass on KNOWLEDGE – knowledge of God that comes not only from His WORD but from His WORLD and from His WORKS. We need to pass on the TESTIMONY of God. It is absolutely foundational. A love for God which is not based on knowledge may be emotional, but it is shallow and superficial and will not last.

Imparting knowledge is indeed the main thing we are called to do, but it makes all the difference to teach the truth with the goal that our children will come to LOVE God and DELIGHT in Him and TRUST in Him and put their HOPE in Him. Our goal is to see changed hearts – something only God can do – but He can use the means of the knowledge we impart from a heart that loves God, delights in God, trusts God, and hopes in God.

Deuteronomy 6 - #1 – Love the Lord your God.... #2 teach your children

Psalm 90 - #1 Satisfy US in the morning with Your unfailing love... #2 Establish the work of our hands

John 17:26 – I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known IN ORDER THAT the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.

In a message on Colossians 3:21 – Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged – John Piper says “The goal of a good father is to rear children who are not discouraged. The word implies losing heart, being listless, spiritless, disinterested, moody, sullen, with a kind of blank resignation toward life. Don’t be the kind of father who rears that kind of person. Instead develop a style of fatherhood that produces the opposite of discouragement.”

Piper goes on to expound the opposite of being discouraged as being hopeful, happy, and confident and courageous – that is, hopeful in God, happy in God, and confident in God. “A good father will ponder: How can I be like my own heavenly Father? How can I banish self-reliance from the heart of my children and fill them with confidence and courage and zeal and boldness that are rooted in the grace and power of God and not in themselves? How can I be the kind of father whose children do not lose heart or become spiritless or listless or sullen or discouraged, but are filled with hope in God and happiness in God and confidence in God and courage to attempt great things for the glory of God?”

The first answer he gives to that question is “BE happy and hopeful and confident in God. Fathers, what you ARE in relation to God is far more important than any particular parenting technique you try to employ. Will your children hope in God if you hope in money? Will your children be happy in God if they see that fishing is a happier experience for you than worship? Will your children be confident in God if your whole demeanor communicates the desire to be seen as a self-confident?... That is the first thing fathers can do to provoke their children to long-term discouragement and hopelessness – they can fail to BE hopeful, happy, and confident in God.”

In a different sermon, Piper says “Parents who don’t see discipline as part of some great vision of what their children might become for God will wind up using discipline to increase their own private comfort. And children will see that and eventually become angry.”

Lastly, our goal IS indeed that children OBEY the Lord. We desire that so that GOD will be glorified and that they will find their delight in Him. It IS the path of blessing.

John Piper: *God Is The Gospel*

Piper,22 – Gospel doctrine matters because the good news is so full and rich and wonderful that it must be opened like a treasure chest, and all its treasures brought out for the enjoyment of the world. Doctrine is the description of these treasures. Doctrine describes their true value and why they are so valuable. Doctrine guards the diamonds of the gospel from being discarded as mere crystals. Doctrine protects the treasures of the gospel from the pirates who don't like the diamonds but who make their living trading them for other stones. Doctrine polishes the old gems buried at the bottom of the chest. It puts the jewels of gospel truth in order on the scarlet tapestry of history so each is seen in its most beautiful place.

And all the while, doctrine does this with its head bowed in wonder that it should be allowed to touch the things of God. It whispers praise and thanks as it deals with the diamonds of the King. Its fingers tremble at the cost of what it handles. Prayers ascend for help, lest any stone be minimized or misplaced. And on its knees gospel doctrine knows it serves the herald. The gospel is not mainly about being explained. Explanation is necessary, but it is not primary. A love letter must be intelligible, but grammar and logic are not the point. Love is the point. The gospel is good news. Doctrine serves that. It serves the one whose feet are bruised (and beautiful!) from walking to the unreached places with news: "Come, listen to the news of God! Listen to what God has done! Listen! Understand! Bow! Believe!"

(Piper) WOULD YOU BE HAPPY IN HEAVEN IF CHRIST WERE NOT THERE?

(Piper,15) *If you could have heaven, with no sickness, and with all the friends you ever had on earth, and all the food you ever liked, and all the leisure activities you ever enjoyed, and all the natural beauties you ever saw, all the physical pleasures you ever tasted, and no human conflict or any natural disasters, could you be satisfied with heaven, if Christ was not there?*

Do we preach and teach and lead in such a way that people are prepared to hear that question and answer with a resounding NO? How do we understand the gospel and the love of God? Have we shifted with the world from God's love as the gift of Himself to God's love as the gift of a mirror in which we like what we see? Have we presented the gospel in such a way that the gift of the glory of God in the face of Christ is marginal rather than central and ultimate?

p.45 – If God is not treasured as the ultimate gift of the gospel, none of his gifts will be gospel, good news. And if God is treasured as the supremely valuable gift of the gospel, then all the other lesser gifts will be enjoyed as well. Justification is not an end in itself. Neither is forgiveness of sins or the imputation of righteousness. Neither is escape from hell or entrance into heaven or freedom from disease or liberation from bondage or eternal life or justice or mercy or the beauties of a pain-free world. None of these facts of the gospel-diamond is the chief good or highest goal of the gospel. Only one thing is: seeing and savoring God himself, being changed into the images of his Son so that more and more we delight in and display God's infinite beauty and worth.

p.47 - PEOPLE WHO WOULD BE HAPPY IN HEAVEN IF CHRIST WERE NOT THERE, WILL NOT BE THERE. The gospel is not a way to get people to heaven; it is a way to get people to God. It's a way of overcoming every obstacle to everlasting joy in God. If we don't want God above all things, we have not been converted by the gospel..... Isaiah 40:9 – Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, 'Behold your God!'.... The ultimate good made possible by the death and resurrection of Christ, and offered in the gospel, is "Behold your God!"

Why do we believe that worship is so central to the Christian life? Why is the mission of our school to stimulate in students a passion for WORSHIP and learning and service? Because Christ died to BRING US TO GOD (I Peter 3:18). Worship must be CENTRAL to our life!

"I sing, for I cannot be silent! His love is the theme of my song!"

O the deep, deep love of Jesus! 'Tis a heaven of heavens to me; and it lifts me up to glory, FOR IT LIFTS ME UP TO THEE!

Psalm 42:1 – As the deer pants for the water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirst for God, the living God.

Psalm 84 – How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God... Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you. Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage.... Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere....

Psalm 145 – I will exalt **you**, my God, the King. I will praise **your** Name for ever and ever. Every day I will praise **you**, and extol **your** name for ever and ever. Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom. One generation will commend **your** works to another; they will tell of **your** mighty acts... they will celebrate **your** abundant goodness and joyfully sing of **your** righteousness.

Notice all the CONTENT in the Psalm – the DOCTRINE – but all focused on WORSHIP! LOVE! CELEBRATION!

p.90-91 – The gospel is central not only in conversion but also in the ongoing transformation of believers. Understanding the decisive purpose of the gospel as the revelation of the glory of Christ is the biblical key to Christian holiness.... (II Cor. 3:18-4:6).... The pathway to Christ-likeness is "beholding the glory of the Lord." Beholding is becoming.... This is the way the Holy Spirit does his ongoing change in us. He does not change us directly; he changes us by enabling us to see the glory of Christ. This is crucial to understand. It shows how Christ-exalting the Holy Spirit is. He will not do his sanctifying work by the use of his direct divine power. He will only do it by making the glory of Christ the immediate cause of it. This is the way he works in evangelism, and this is the way he works in sanctification..... The Spirit was sent to glorify the Son of God (John 16:14), and he will not save anyone apart from drawing their attention to the glory of the Son in the gospel. So it is with sanctification. We are transformed into

Christ's image – that's what sanctification is – by steadfast seeing and savoring of the glory of Christ.

p.92 – We absorb what we admire. The dynamics of personal transformation in II Corinthians 3:18 assume that we are changed into what we admire and fix our attention on.

p.93 – We are changed by degrees. The transformation that comes from beholding the glory of Christ in the gospel happens incrementally. “Beholding the glory of the Lord, we are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.” Speaking of our transformation in terms of “glory” shows that Christian glorification begins at conversion, not at death or resurrection. In fact, in Paul's mind sanctification is the first phase of glorification. (This is probably why in the golden chain of Romans 8:30 the term *sanctification* is missing: “And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.” When Paul jumps directly from justification to glorification he is not passing over sanctification, because in his mind that process is synonymous with the first phase of glorification and begins at conversion.

p.100-101 – I Timothy 1:11 – the glory of the happy God!.... An essential part of what makes the gospel of the death and resurrection of Christ *good* news is that the God it reveals is infinitely joyful. No one would want to spend eternity with an unhappy God.... Matt. 25:23 – enter into the joy of your master – John 15:11; 17:13....

The happiness of God is first and foremost a happiness in his Son. Thus when we share in the happiness of God, we share in the very pleasure that the Father has in the Son. Ultimately this is what makes the gospel good news. It opens the way for us to see and savor the glory of Christ. And when we reach that ultimate goal we will find ourselves savoring the Son with the very happiness that the Father has in the Son. This is why Jesus made the Father known to us. At the end of his great prayer in John 17:26 he said to his Father, “I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.” The love God has for the Son will be in us. That is, the love for the Son that will be in us will be the Father's love for the Son. We will not merely love the Son with our paltry ability to love. But our love for the Son will be infused with the divine love between the Father and the Son. Therefore, we should realize from John 17:26 that Jesus made God known so that God's pleasure in his Son might be in us and become our pleasure in Christ. Imagine being able to enjoy what is infinitely enjoyable with unbounded energy and passion forever....

p.106 – Jonathan Edwards: God glorifies Himself toward the creatures.... in two ways. 1. By appearing to.... their understanding. 2. In communicating Himself to their hearts, and in their rejoicing and delighting in, and enjoying, the manifestations which He makes of Himself.... *God is glorified not only by His glory's being seen, but by its being rejoiced in.* When those that see it delight in it, God is more glorified than if they only see it. His glory is then received by the whole soul, both by the understanding and by the heart. God made the world that He might communicate, and the creature receive, His glory; and that it might be received both by the

mind and heart. He that testifies his idea of God's glory does not glorify God so much as he that testifies also his approbation of it and his delight in it.

p.107 – To bring people to the sorrow of repentance and contrition, you must bring them first to see the glory of God as their treasure and their delight..... The sorrow of true contrition is sorrow for not having God as our all-satisfying treasure. But to be sorrowful over not savoring God, we must see God as our treasure, our sweetness. To grieve over not delighting in God, he must have become a delight to us..... Edwards: There is repentance of sin: though it be a deep sorrow for sin that God requires as necessary to salvation, yet the very nature of it necessarily implies delight. *Repentance of sin is a sorrow arising from the sight of God's excellency and mercy*, but the apprehension of excellency or mercy must necessarily and unavoidably beget pleasure in the mind of the beholder. 'Tis impossible that anyone should see anything that appears to him excellent and not behold it with pleasure, and it's impossible to be affected with the mercy and love of God, and his willingness to be merciful to us and love us, and not be affected with pleasure at the thoughts of it.; but this is the very affection that begets true repentance. How much soever of a paradox it may seem, it is true that repentance is a sweet sorrow, so that the more of this sorrow, the more pleasure. Piper: If people are not awakened to the preciousness of God and the beauty of his glory in the face of Christ, the sorrow of their contrition will not be owing to their failure to cherish God and prize his glory. It will be owing to the fear of hell, or the foolishness of their former behavior, or the waste of their lives. But none of these grounds for contrition, by themselves, is an honor to God.

p.145 - Jonathan Edwards said, "God himself is the great good which they are brought to the possession and enjoyment of by redemption. He is the highest good, and the sum of all that good which Christ purchased... The redeemed will indeed enjoy other things... but that which they shall enjoy in the angels, or each other, or in anything else whatsoever, that will yield them delight and happiness, will be what will be seen of God in them.

p.160 – Becoming and beholding are a means to the end of delighting in and displaying the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

LOOKING AWAY FROM SELF – CREATION! – The heavens declare the glory of God!

Passion for service? – not so much a focus on service projects, but on SERVING GOD IN THE PLACE WHERE HE HAS PUT YOU – how? Reaching out to the students who are around you! Asking not "are my needs being met?" "am I fitting in?" but more "God, how can you use me today in the lives of the people around me?" "I have made up my mind to bless them, Lord...." "How can I DISPLAY YOU to them?"

p.168 – The fight to become like Christ will be, as never before, a fight to see and savor Jesus Christ.

From John Piper: *Think: The Life of the Mind and the Love of God*, p.34-36

One of the gifts Jonathan Edwards gave to me, which I had not found anywhere else, was a foundation for human thinking and feeling in the Trinitarian nature of God. I don't mean that others haven't seen human nature rooted in God's nature. I simply mean that the way Edwards saw it was extraordinary. He showed me that human thinking and feeling do not exist arbitrarily; they exist because we are in the image of God, and God's "thinking" and "feeling" are more deeply part of his Trinitarian being than I had realized.

Prepare to be boggled. Here is Edwards's remarkable description of how the persons of the Trinity relate to each other. Notice that God the Son stands forth eternally as a work of God's thought. And God the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son as the act of their joy.

"This I suppose to be the blessed Trinity that we read of in the Holy Scriptures. The *Father* is the deity subsisting in the prime, unoriginated and most absolute manner, or the deity in its direct existence. The *Son* is the deity generated by God's understanding, or having an idea of Himself and subsisting in that idea. The *Holy Ghost* is the deity subsisting in act, or the divine essence flowing out and breathed forth in God's infinite love to and delight in Himself. And I believe the whole Divine essence does truly and distinctly subsist both in the Divine idea and Divine love, and that each of them are properly distinct persons."

In other words, God the Father has had an eternal image and idea of himself that is so full it *is* another Person standing forth – distinct as the Father's idea, yet one in divine essence. And God the Father and the Son have had an eternal joy in each other's excellence that carries so fully what they are that another Person stands forth, the Holy Spirit – distinct as the Father and Son's delight in each other, yet one in divine essence. There never was a time when God did not experience himself this way. The three Persons of the Trinity are coeternal. They are equally divine.

But the amazing reality for our purposes here is that God's existence as a Trinity of Persons is the foundation of human nature as head and heart, thinking and feeling, knowing and loving. We can see this even more remarkably when we watch Edwards draw out the connection between God's nature and how he designed us to glorify him. Notice how he moves from God's intra-Trinitarian glory to the glory he aims to get in creation.

"God is glorified within Himself these two ways: (1) By appearing.... to Himself in His own perfect idea [of Himself], or in His Son, who is the brightness of His glory. (2) By enjoying and delighting in Himself, by flowing forth in infinite.... delight towards Himself, or in his Holy Spirit.

"So God glorifies Himself toward the creatures also in two ways: (1) By appearing to.... their understanding. (2) In communicating Himself to their hearts, and in their rejoicing and delighting in, and enjoying, the manifestations which He makes of Himself.... *God is glorified not only by His glory's being seen, but by its being rejoiced in.* When those that see it delight in it, God is more glorified than if they only see it. His glory is then received by the whole soul, both by the understanding and by the heart.

"God made the world that He might communicate, and the creature receive, His glory; and that it might be received both by the mind and heart. He that testifies his idea of God's glory does not glorify God so much as he that testifies also his approbation of it and his delight in it."

The implications of this truth are huge. It implies, for example, that if we are to live according to our nature as human beings in the image of God, and if we are to glorify God fully, we must engage our mind in knowing him truly and our hearts in loving him duly. The *both-and* plea of this book is not a mere personal preference of mine. It is rooted in the nature of God's Trinitarian existence and in how he has created us to glorify him with mind and heart.

The Earth Is the Lord's: The Supremacy of Christ in Christian Learning

A. Biblical Foundations for Bethlehem College and Seminary

[November 05, 2008](#) / by [John Piper](#) / Topic: [Life of the Mind](#)

First a few comments about the spirit from which this vision of Bethlehem College and Seminary¹ flows. There is no sense of triumphalism here. There is no sense of having the last word in education, or easy answers to the challenges of our times, or the ideal philosophy of college and seminary training.

Instead, there is a trembling sense that pride and poverty (and many other things!) make this a dangerous undertaking. A word about each of these.

The Danger of Pride

One of the most fertile fields of pride is academic higher education. I spent sixteen years of my life in it and have felt its dangers. And I read this morning in Ezekiel 16 how God took Israel from her misery and made her beautiful and renowned. Then the dreadful verse 15 said, “But you trusted in your beauty and played the whore because of your renown” ([Ezekiel 16:15](#)).

And I thought, God has blessed Bethlehem and The Bethlehem Institute and Desiring God and me personally. And the greatest danger of all right now is that we trust in our blessed condition and our renown. Pride lurks at every door. So we tremble and ask, *Is this our motive—to flaunt power, to get praise, to make a name for ourselves?* If so, O God, may we fail, and fail quickly without harming others.

But pride has other forms, and one is cowardice—the fear of being criticized. And criticism there will be aplenty, because this school will affirm biblical truths that are unpopular, even with many Christians, as beautiful as we think they are—I will mention ten of them later on. That is the risk we believe we are called to take. And may the Lord do whatever it takes to keep us humble and make us servants, not lords, as we move forward with Bethlehem College and Seminary.

The Danger of Poverty

Another reality that makes a college and seminary a dangerous undertaking is that, as we read our books and listen to our lectures and write our papers and have our discussions, we are aware that our urban centers are broken and generations languish unable to escape the tangles of addiction and dysfunction and poverty and crime. And beyond these shores are millions of people who live with no clean water, insufficient food, no medical care, and could only dream of such an education. This vast discrepancy gives us a sense of uneasiness in the affluent halls of learning.

But then we ask, *Is the answer to the miseries of the world a generation of young people who do not know how observe accurately, or think carefully, or know history, or understand culture, or comprehend the Bible, or plan strategically?* So again we take the risk, and pray that Bethlehem College and Seminary will not be part of the problem of poverty but part of the solution because students have developed habits of mind and heart that move them toward need creatively, not toward comfort fearfully.

Biblical Foundations

We turn now to the biblical foundations of Bethlehem College and Seminary. In [1 Corinthians 10:25–26](#), the apostle Paul said, “Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience. For ‘the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof.’” This implies Jesus Christ owns the world and everything in it. It also implies that we who are his loyal subjects may make use of any of it freely for his glory. Education is about how we do that.

Abraham Kuyper, who founded the Free University of Amsterdam in 1880, said in one of his most famous sentences, “No single piece of our mental world is to be hermetically sealed off from the rest, and there is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, ‘Mine!’”¹ This was the foundation of his educational dream for the Free University.

That truth is absolutely biblical and true and foundational to Bethlehem College and Seminary, but it is not the most ultimate or defining truth. Christ not only made and owns the world; he not only holds everything together by the word of his power, but he also created it and sustains it to display his beauty and his worth and greatness so that those whom he created in his image will know him and treasure him above all things, and in that treasuring of him above all that he has made, manifest his supreme value in the universe. That’s the ultimately defining truth for Bethlehem College and Seminary.

The decisive text in this regard is [Colossians 1:15–17](#):

[Christ] 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.

So we learn that Christ made all things and holds all things together “for himself.” “All things were created through him and *for him*.” “For him” does not mean that Christ had deficiencies that he had to create the world to supply. It means that his complete self-sufficiency overflowed in the creation of the world so that the world would display the greatness of Christ.

That is the deepest foundation stone of Bethlehem College and Seminary. All things not only *belong to* Christ, but all things *display* Christ. Human beings exist to magnify his worth in the world. Our worth consists of our capacity to consciously make much of his worth. The goal of Bethlehem College and Seminary cannot be expressed with man as the end point. Christ is the endpoint. All things are from him and through him and to him ([Romans 11:36](#)). Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory ([Psalm 115:1](#)).

No paragraph outside the Bible is more foundational to this school than one from the notebooks of Jonathan Edwards. It not only sums up the ultimate purpose of God to glorify himself in creation, but also shows how God accomplishes that self-exaltation in such a way that it becomes love and not megalomania. Here is how Edwards says it. And with this he opens the door for Bethlehem College and Seminary to be unshakably joyful and radically God-exalting in the very same act.

God glorifies Himself toward the creatures also in two ways: 1. By appearing to . . . their understanding. 2. In communicating Himself to their hearts, and in their rejoicing and delighting in, and enjoying, the manifestations which He makes of Himself. . . . *God is glorified not only by His glory's being seen, but by its being rejoiced in.* When those that see it delight in it, God is more glorified than if they only see it. His glory is then received by the whole soul, both by the understanding and by the heart. . . . He that testifies his idea of God's glory [doesn't] glorify God so much as he that testifies also his approbation of it and his delight in it.²

Essential to the foundation of Bethlehem College and Seminary is the truth that God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him. God's self-exaltation and our everlasting joy are not at odds. They happen together. His worth is magnified when we treasure him above all things. Our joy in him reflects his glory. The great quest of Bethlehem College and Seminary is for minds and hearts that see and savor the glory of Christ in all things, and spread that experience to the world.³

Everywhere you turn in the history of redemption, from beginning to end, God's design is the same: that his glory—supremely the glory of his grace in the person and work of Christ—be seen and savored and spread. God is manifestly exuberant about making himself and his Son supreme in the thoughts and affections of his people, and making himself known as Lord in the world.

That is the ultimate foundation of why Christ is supreme in Christian learning and in Bethlehem College and Seminary. We are simply joining God himself in his exuberant commitment to magnify his greatness and the glory of his Son.

What Do We Study?

The question arises: *Where do we see his glory?* That is, what is the focus of our education? What do we study? If God's aim in creating and governing the world is the display of his glory that we might see it and delight in it and reflect it, where will we focus our attention? Where will we see it? How does this happen?

The answer is that God has two books: the Word and the world. The Bible, on the one hand, and the whole organic complex of nature and history and human culture, on the other hand. The Bible is inspired and authoritative. The world is not. But this doesn't mean that all we focus on is the Bible. The Bible gives the decisive meaning of all things. But the Bible itself sends us over and over again to the world for learning.

Consider the lilies; consider the birds ([Matthew 6:26, 28](#)). "Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise" ([Proverbs 6:6](#)). "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork" ([Psalms 19:1](#)). "Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these?" ([Isaiah 40:26](#)).

In fact, think about the way the prophets and apostles and Jesus himself used language. They used analogies and figures and metaphors and similes and illustrations and parables. They constantly assume that we have looked at the world and learned about vineyards, wine, weddings, lions, bears, horses, dogs, pigs, grasshoppers, constellations, businesses, wages, banks, fountains, springs, rivers, fig trees, olive trees, mulberry trees, thorns, wind, thunderstorms, bread, baking,

armies, swords, shields, sheep, shepherds, cattle, camels, fire, green wood, dry wood, hay, stubble, jewels, gold, silver, law courts, judges, and advocates.

In other words, the Bible both commands and assumes that we will know the *world*, and not just the *Word*. We will study the *general* book of God called *nature and history and culture*. And we will study the *special* book of God called *the Bible*. And the reason is that God has revealed his glory in both—and means for us to see him in both.

The two books of God are not on the same level. The Bible has supreme authority, because God gave the Bible as the key to unlock the meaning of all things. Without the truth of the Bible, the most brilliant scholars may learn amazing things about nature. And we may read their books and learn from them. But they miss the main point without the special revelation of God—that everything exists to glorify Christ, that they are blinded by sin, that they need a Savior, that Christ came into the world to save sinners, and that the whole universe gets its ultimate meaning in relationship to him. When they miss the main thing, everything is skewed.

So the entire curriculum of Bethlehem College and Seminary is permeated by the study of the Bible. The Bible gives the key that unlocks the deepest meaning of everything else.

What Do We Do With God's Books?

So if Bethlehem College and Seminary is going to focus on these two books—the Word that God inspired and the world that God made—because this is where God has revealed his glory, then what should we do with these two books? What does this education try to impart to the students?

Our aim is not to impart degrees. The BA and MDiv degrees are almost entirely incidental to the aims of education.

Our aim is not mainly to impart facts because these will be soon forgotten, but the aims of education should last.

Our aim is not mainly to impart skills for a trade or a profession, since these change with the trades and technologies.

Our aim is to build into the student habits of mind and heart that will never leave them and will fit them for a lifetime of ongoing growth. The well-educated person is the person who has the habits of mind and heart to go on learning what he needs to learn to live in a Christ-exalting way for the rest of his life—and that would apply to whatever sphere of life he pursues.

These habits of mind apply to all objects in the world, but most importantly the Bible. We can sum them up like this:

We aim to enable and to motivate the student to *observe* his subject matter accurately and thoroughly, to *understand* clearly what he has observed, to *evaluate* fairly what he has understood by deciding what is true and valuable, to *feel* intensely according to the value of what he has evaluated, to *apply* wisely and helpfully in life what he understands and feels, and to *express* in speech and writing and deeds what he has seen, understood, felt and applied in such a way that its accuracy, clarity, truth, value, and helpfulness can be known and enjoyed by others.

So the habits of mind and heart are:

- observation
- understanding
- evaluating
- feeling
- applying
- expressing

Whether you are looking at a passage in the Bible, or at the U. S. Constitution, or a mysterious pattern of scratches on your car, the habits of mind and heart are the same.

1) Observation

We aim to enable and to motivate the student to *observe* his subject matter accurately and thoroughly. We must see what is really there. Our teaching is designed to force students to see for themselves. They must keep looking until they see things they did not see at first—in the Word and in the world.

We must learn to read slowly and observe rigorously and minutely and comprehensively. The observing must be accurate and thorough. Otherwise, our understanding and evaluation will be flawed. Quickly reading *many* books ordinarily begets bad habits of mind. We will not encourage students to read for the sake of quantity but to read with rigorous observation and reflection.

2) Understanding

We aim to enable and to motivate the student to understand clearly what he has observed thoroughly and accurately. Understanding involves the severe discipline of thinking. The mind wrestles with the traits and features of what it has observed. The aim when reading the Bible is that we discern what the author intended us to understand. This understanding comes through the language conventions on the page. We observe them and we think about them until we can say, “I understand what he meant.” We want *his*, not ours. We aim to think the author’s thoughts after him. Otherwise, education simply becomes a reflection of my own ignorance.

3) Evaluating

We aim to enable and to motivate the student to evaluate fairly, but not to shrink back from the judgments that must be made about truth and value on the basis of careful observation and accurate understanding. Here is where our worldview will make all the difference. We believe there is such a thing as truth, and that with the compass of the Scriptures and the help of the Spirit, we can know it.

4) Feeling

We aim to enable and to motivate the student to feel properly in response to what he has observed and understood and evaluated. His feeling should be in accord with the truth and worth of what he has observed and understood. If he has observed and understood a terrible reality like hell, his feeling should be fear and horror and compassion. If he has observed and understood a wonderful reality like heaven, then his feelings should be joy and hope and longing.

Since God is glorified in our emotional response to his glory and not just by seeing it and understanding it and evaluating it, we cannot be indifferent to the emotional life of the students. This means that prayer and reliance on the Holy Spirit become essential in the life of Bethlehem College and Seminary.

5) Applying

We aim to enable and to motivate the student to apply wisely and helpfully what he has observed and understood and evaluated and felt. It takes wisdom, not just factual knowledge, to know how to wisely and helpfully apply what they understand and feel.

If they observed and understood and felt the truth that they should “redeem the time” (from [Ephesians 5:16](#)), a wise application might be to go to bed earlier and get up earlier so that there is time for devotions without being exhausted. Or it might be to get a job as an intern at an inner-city emergency service center. A well-educated person is growing in the wise application to life of all he learns.

6) Expressing

We aim to enable and to motivate the student to express in speech and writing and deeds what he has seen, understood, evaluated, felt, and applied. And the goal is that he do it in such a way that its accuracy, clarity, truthfulness, preciousness, and helpfulness can be known and enjoyed by others. We want the students to have a growing ability to communicate and demonstrate compellingly to others what they have seen and understood and evaluated and felt and applied.

This brings us back to our original reason for being. God created the world and inspired the Word to display his glory. A well-educated person sees the glory of God in the Word that God inspired and the world that God made and understands it and evaluates it and feels it and applies it and expresses it for others to see and enjoy.

Where We Stand

We do not assume that the process of deciding what is true and valuable starts over with every generation of students. And it didn't start with us. Therefore, we are a confessional institution. The Bethlehem Elder Affirmation of Faith defines what we believe and teach in Bethlehem College and Seminary.

We do not aim to force students into this mold. That would not be education, not an honor to Christ. We aim to come alongside them in the processes of observation, understanding, evaluation, feeling, application, and expression and show them why we land where we do. The faculty will advocate and seek to persuade. We will not coerce or deceive or hide difficult problems. In this way, we believe truth will be honored, and the integrity of careful thinking will be encouraged.

We believe that this way of doing education with a view to seeing and savoring and spreading the glory of Christ, while making his Word our supreme rule in all our thinking about his world, with these rigorous habits of mind and heart—we believe that this way of doing education leads to humble, courageous convictions in a fallen world where Christ urges us to live peaceably as far

as it lies in us ([Romans 12:18](#)), but not to shrink back from telling the truth that is often controversial ([Matthew 10:27–28](#); [Acts 20:20, 27](#)).

Therefore, I pray that Bethlehem College and Seminary will be marked by unashamed courage and openness in the stands we take. We feel the force of Martin Luther's words as they relate to the controversies of our day:

If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefield besides is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point.⁴

It will be helpful in closing to position Bethlehem College and Seminary in such battles. Here are a few with the battleground in parentheses and our position following.

1) (Historical Criticism) The Bible teaches only what is true. It is coherent and non-contradictory in the progress of revelation.

The Bible is inspired and inerrant so that what it teaches is true and stands in judgment on all tradition and all science and all culture and all human opinion. It is more precious than gold and sweeter than honey. It is worthy of a lifetime of assiduous reflection, heart-felt meditation, and joyful obedience.

2) (Roman Catholicism) Justification involves the imputation of Christ's righteousness by faith alone.

Justification by grace alone through faith alone on the basis of Christ alone for the glory of God alone is at the heart of the biblical gospel. It includes the imputation, not the impartation, of the righteousness of Christ to us and on the basis of Christ's perfect obedience to all that the Father commanded him to do.

3) (Relativism and Pluralism) Jesus is the only way to God.

In order to be saved from eternal damnation all peoples—Jewish and Muslim and Hindu and Buddhist and animist and secularist—must know and believe in Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior who died for them and rose again. World missions is a priority for all who love people, know Christ, and see the world of unreached peoples.

4) (Universalism and Annihilationism) Hell is real and terrible.

Hell, as Jesus taught more than anyone else, is real. It is a conscious, eternal experience of torment pictured in part as weeping and gnashing of teeth, outer darkness, unquenchable fire, eternal punishment, divine vengeance, and the lake of fire. People should be warned with tears and urgency.

5) (Abortion) The unfettered abortion license is abominable.

Abortion is morally monstrous. Unborn human life should be protected for the same reasons that all human life should be protected.

6) (Feminism and Egalitarianism) The complementary differences of manhood and womanhood are beautiful, practical, and important.

Concerning biblical manhood and womanhood we believe that God's merciful purpose for our great good is that humble, Christ-like, servant-hearted men bear the burden of leadership as elders and pastors in the church, and that such men function as the caring, providing, protecting, leaders of their homes; and that women come alongside these men with their manifold gifts and help them carry through the mission of the church and the home.

7) (Divorce and Homosexuality) Marriage is a life-long covenant between a man and a woman.

No kind of relationship between two men or two women is marriage. Whatever two men do or say to each other, or whatever two women do or say to each other it is not now, never has been, and never will be marriage in God's eyes. Marriage is the life-long covenant relationship between a man and a woman as husband and wife on the analogy of Christ and the church.

8) (Racism and Ethnocentrism) Delighting in and desiring racial and ethnic diversity is crucial.

Indifference to active love across ethnic lines is an assault on the purpose of the cross of Christ who ransomed people from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. Happy, unified ethnic diversity in Christ is our destiny in the age to come and should be loved, longed for, and sought after here and now.

9) (Consumerism and Materialism) Desiring riches is deadly, and wartime simplicity is good.

Desiring to be rich is suicidal, and commending that desire as part of the Christian life is therefore worse than murderous because not just this life but the next is at stake. Followers of Jesus should feel a magnetic pull on their lives toward wartime simplicity so that they may be lavish in giving and alleviate as much suffering as we can—especially eternal suffering.

10) (Arminianism and Open Theism) God is absolutely sovereign.

God is sovereign over all things including natural calamity and human sin. To quote the Bethlehem Elder Affirmation of Faith: "God, from all eternity, in order to display the full extent of His glory for the eternal and ever-increasing enjoyment of all who love Him, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His will, freely and unchangeably ordain and foreknow whatever comes to pass. God upholds and governs all things—from galaxies to subatomic particles, from the forces of nature to the movements of nations, and from the public plans of politicians to the secret acts of solitary persons—all in accord with His eternal, all-wise purposes to glorify Himself, yet in such a way that He never sins, nor ever condemns a person unjustly; but that His ordaining and governing all things is compatible with the moral accountability of all persons created in His image."

For Our Joy, To His Glory

For those who have been around Bethlehem Baptist Church for some time, you will know that our overwhelming spirit of worship and ministry and missions is aggressively proactive and positive. We do not define ourselves mainly by what we respond to or disagree with. But neither do we shrink back out of fear that others will define us this way.

The spirit of the church and the spirit of the school is the spirit of Christian Hedonism—in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, God is 100% for us and not against us. “Christ suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God” ([1 Peter 3:18](#)). And in bringing us to God, He brought us to our greatest Treasure and highest joy. To know him and enjoy him and show him in every way we can from his Word and his world is our passion, because we know that God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him. When we rest in him as our supreme Treasure, especially in times of suffering, and continue to love others for his sake, we display the glory of Christ.

May God prosper this vision for the joy of all peoples and the glory of his Son.

¹ What do we mean by the terms *college* and *seminary*? We simply mean that as soon as feasible, we will offer an accredited Bachelor of Arts and Master of Divinity. The words *college* and *seminary* do not signify hundreds of students, or multiple academic departments, or large faculties, or athletic teams. Instead, in the *seminary*, think of a group of a dozen students or so (nowadays called a *cohort*) linked with pastoral mentors, moving together through the unified course sequence based on the Greek and Hebrew Bible.

And in the *college*, think similarly of a cohort of students moving together through an integrated and unified curriculum of humanities and sciences built into a historical framework from creation to the present. Think Bethlehem faculty mentors and many guest professors.

Think of both of these programs as church-based where all the students are expected to be involved in the life and ministry of the church. Our aim is that the limited scope of the programs, and the connection with the church, and the wider funding of the vision will bring down costs to the place where students will not be burdened with debt when they are finished. The present financial crisis in higher education is one of the reasons for starting Bethlehem College and Seminary, but not the main one.

² Abraham Kuyper, *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 488.

³ Jonathan Edwards, *The “Miscellanies,”* ed. by Thomas Schafer, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 13 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 495. Miscellany #448.

⁴ I have laid out the biblical foundation for this more fully in several places. See for example, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, Second Edition (2003), pp. 21–28, and *The Pleasures of God* (2000), chapters 1 and 4. The ultimate biblical foundation for the truth that we glorify God by joining him joyfully in his goal to glorify himself in all things is that God does indeed make himself the supreme goal of all that he does in the world from beginning to end. We are not the main point of the universe. God is.

- He created us for his glory: “Bring My sons from afar And My daughters from the ends of the earth, . . . whom I have *created for My glory*, Whom I have formed, even whom I have made” ([Isaiah 43:6–7](#)).
- Christ will come again at the end of the age for his glory: “*He comes to be glorified* in His saints on that day, and *to be marveled at* among all who have believed” ([2 Thessalonians 1:9–10](#)).
- [Romans 9:23](#) says that all his mercy, all his wrath, and all his power are aiming “*to make known the riches of his glory* for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory.”
- In [1 Corinthians 10:31](#), God makes himself the aim of every human endeavor from the smallest to the largest: “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, *do all to the glory of God.*”
- In [Romans 3:23](#), God defines the very essence of sin as failing to make him supreme: “For all have sinned and *fall short of the glory of God.*” Sin is sin because it belittles the glory of God.
- And when God’s act of redemption reaches its climactic moment in the death of Christ for sinners, the aim of God is that the glory of his grace be seen and praised above all things: “He predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, *to the praise of the glory of his grace*” ([Ephesians 1:5–6](#)). And he defined the gospel in [2 Corinthians 4:4](#) as “the light of *the gospel of the glory of Christ*, who is the image of God.”

⁵ Quoted in Parker T. Williamson, *Standing Firm: Reclaiming Christian Faith in Times of Controversy* (Springfield, PA: PLC Publications, 1996), p. 5. *Luther's Works*, Weimar Edition, Letters, vol. 3, 1883, pp. 81–82.

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Is God for Us or for Himself?

[August 10, 1980](#) / by [John Piper](#) / *Topic: [The Glory of God](#)*

Years ago I went to the Billy Graham crusade in Anaheim, California. There were about 50,000 people there that night, I think, and I sat in the left field bleachers and could see the whole massive crowd wrapping around the infield. When we sang "How Great Thou Art," I managed to get out a few notes and then could scarcely sing any more. I had never heard anything like that. Fifty thousand voices singing praises to God! It so stunned my heart that I have never forgotten that moment. Nothing had ever seemed to me more right or more beautiful or more profoundly joyful than for 50,000 creatures to sing together with all their heart to God.

I really believe I got a little, tiny glimpse of heaven that night, because Revelation 5:11–13 pictures heaven like this:

And I beheld, and I heard a voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."

And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying, "Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever."

The vision of heaven is the vision of innumerable myriads of creatures praising the Father and the Son with all their might. And those who have tasted the glory of the Lamb would not miss it for the world.

God Pursues His Own Praise

The Lamb is worthy. God the Father is worthy. And therefore we ought to praise them. And we will praise them. Most believers have no difficulty with that truth. But for two weeks now we have seen from the Scripture that God has not merely acted so as to be worthy of praise, but more, he has made it his aim to win praise. God does not merely wait to be exalted for his power and righteousness and mercy, he has taken the initiative from all eternity to exalt his own name in the earth and to display his glory. Everything he does is motivated by his desire to be glorified. Isaiah 48:11 is the banner over every divine act:

For my own sake, for my own sake I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another.

Jeremiah 13:11 puts it like this:

For as the waistcloth clings to the loins of a man, so I made the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah cling to me, says the Lord, that they might be for me a people, a name, a praise, and a glory.

God's goal in all he does is to receive praise for the glory of his name.

And lest we think that this is only an Old Testament emphasis, look carefully at the morning text: Ephesians 1. What a grand book this is!—with sentences that reach not only to 11 verses in length but also to heaven in height. There is a phrase repeated three times in verses 6, 12, and 14 which makes it very clear what Paul thinks is the goal of God in saving us from sin and for himself. Notice verses 5 and 6:

He predestined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace.

Then verse 12:

We who first hoped in Christ have been predestined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory.

Finally, verse 14:

The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of his glory.

From the past eternal decrees of God in predestination to the future eternal enjoyment of our inheritance in the age to come, God's goal and purpose has been that his glory be praised, especially the glory of his grace.

That God is praiseworthy, that we ought to praise him, that we will praise him—these are common truths among Christians, and we affirm them gladly. But less often do we hear the truth that the praise of God's glory is not merely the result of his action but also the goal and purpose of that action. He governs the world precisely to the end that he might be admired, marveled at, exalted, and praised. Christ is coming, Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 1:10, at the end of this age, "to be glorified in his saints and to be marveled at by all who believe." But it has been my experience that people receive this truth with some uneasiness. It is all right for God to be praised, but it doesn't seem quite right for him to seek praise. Didn't Jesus say, "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted"? Yet, God's clear purpose from Scripture is to exalt himself in the eyes of man.

My aim in this message is to show, as best I can, that God's aim and effort to glorify himself is wholly good and without fault of any kind and is very different from human self-exaltation because it is an expression of love. Then I hope we will affirm this truth gladly and join God in his great aim.

Two Ways to Stumble over God's God-Centeredness

There are two reasons, I think, why we may stumble over God's love for his own glory and his zeal to get men to praise him for it. One is that we don't like humans who act that way, and the other is that the Bible seems to teach that a person ought not to seek his own glory. So people take offense at God's self-exaltation both because of their own everyday experience, and also because of some Scripture.

We just don't like people who seem to be very enamored by their own skill or power or looks. We don't like scholars who try to show off their specialized knowledge or who recite for us all their recent publications and lectureships. We don't like businessmen who go on and on about how shrewdly they have invested their pile of money and how they stayed right on top of the market to get in low and out high every time. We don't like children to play one-upmanship hour after hour.

And unless we are one of them we disapprove of women and men who dress, not functionally and simply and inoffensively, but instead aim to be in the latest style so they will be thought in or cool or punky or laid back or whatever the world this week says you're supposed to look like.

Why don't we like all that? I think it is because all those people are inauthentic. They are what Ayn Rand calls "second handers." They don't live from the joy that comes through achieving what they value for its own sake. Instead, they live second-hand from the praise and compliments of others. And we don't admire second-handers. We admire people who are composed and secure enough that they don't feel the need to shore up their weaknesses and compensate for their real deficiencies by trying to get as many compliments as possible.

It stands to reason therefore that any teaching which would seem to put God in the category of a second-hander would be suspect by Christians. And for many the teaching that God is seeking praise and wants to be admired and is doing things for his own name's sake does in fact seem to put God in such a category. But should it? One thing we may say for certain: God is not weak and God has no deficiencies: "All things are from him and through him and to him" (Romans 11:36). He always was, and whatever else is, owes its being to him and so can add nothing to him which is not already flowing from him. That is simply what it means to be the eternal God and not a creature. Therefore, God's zeal to seek his own glory and to be praised by men cannot be owing to his need to shore up some weakness or compensate for some deficiency. He may seem, at a superficial glance, to be in the category of second-handers, but he is not like them and the superficial similarity must be explained another way. There must be some other motive that prompts him to seek the praise of his glory.

There is another reason from experience why we don't like those who seek their own glory. The reason is not merely that they are inauthentic, trying to conceal weakness and deficiency, but also that they are unloving. They are so concerned for their own image and praise that they do not care much what happens to other people. This observation leads us to the biblical reason why it seems offensive for God to seek his own glory. 1 Corinthians 13:5 says, "Love seeks not its own." Now this, indeed, seems to create a crisis, for if, as I think the Scriptures plainly teach, God makes it his ultimate goal to be glorified and praised, how then can he be loving? For "love seeks not its own." For three weeks we have seen Scriptures that teach that God is for himself. "For my own sake, for my own sake I do it, my glory I will not give to another" (Isaiah 48:11). But if God is a God of love, he must be for us. Is, then, God for himself or is he for us?

The Infinite Love of God in Pursuing His Own Praise

The answer which I want to try to persuade you is true is this: because God is unique as the most glorious of all beings and totally self-sufficient, he must be for himself in order to be for us. If he were to abandon the goal of his own self-exaltation, we would be the losers. His aim to bring praise to himself and his aim to bring pleasure to his people are one aim and stand or fall together. I think we will see this if we ask the following question.

In view of God's infinitely admirable beauty and power and wisdom what would his love to a creature involve? Or to put it another way: What could God give us to enjoy that would show him most loving? There is only one possible answer, isn't there? HIMSELF! If God would give us the best, the most satisfying, that is, if he would love us perfectly, he must offer us no less than himself for our contemplation and fellowship.

This was precisely God's intention in sending his Son. Ephesians 2:18 says that Christ came that we might "have access in one Spirit to the Father." And 1 Peter 3:18 says, "Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God." God conceived the

whole plan of redemption in love to bring men back to himself, for as the psalmist says, "In your presence there is fullness of joy, in your right hand are pleasures for evermore" (16:11). God is after us to give us what is best—not prestige, wealth, or even health in this life, but a full-blown vision of and fellowship with himself.

But now we are on the brink of what for me was a grand discovery and, I think also, the solution to our problem. To be supremely loving, God must give us what will be best for us and delight us most; he must give us himself. But what do we do when we are given or shown something excellent, something we enjoy? We praise it. We praise new little babies that manage not to be bent all out of shape in birth; "O, look at that nice, round head; and all that hair; and his hands, aren't they big!" We praise a lover's face after a long absence: "Your eyes are like the sky; your hair is like silk; O, you are beautiful to me." We praise a grand slam in the bottom of the ninth when we are down by three runs. We praise the trees along the St. Croix during an autumn boat trip.

But the great discovery I made, with the help of C.S. Lewis, was not only that we praise what we enjoy but that the praise is the climax of the joy itself. It is not tacked on later; it is part of the pleasure. Listen to the way Lewis describes this insight from his book on Psalms:

But the most obvious fact about praise—whether of God or anything—strangely escaped me. I thought of it in terms of compliment, approval, or the giving of honor. I had never noticed that all enjoyment spontaneously overflows into praise unless (sometimes even if) shyness or the fear of boring others is deliberately brought in to check it. The world rings with praise—lovers praising their mistresses, readers their favorite poet, walkers praising the countryside, players praising their favorite game—praise of weather, wines, dishes, actors, horses, colleges, countries, historical personages, children, flowers, mountains, rare stamps, rare beetles, even sometimes politicians and scholars. My whole, more general difficulty, about the praise of God depended on my absurdly denying to us, as regards the supremely Valuable, what we delight to do, what indeed we can't help doing, about everything else we value.

I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation. It is not out of compliment that lovers keep on telling one another how beautiful they are, the delight is incomplete till it is expressed. (*Reflections on the Psalms*, pp. 93–95)

There's the key: we praise what we enjoy because the delight is incomplete until it is expressed in praise. If we were not allowed to speak of what we value and celebrate what we love and praise what we admire, our joy would not be full. Therefore, if God is truly for us, if he would give us the best and make our joy full, he must make it his aim to win our praise for himself. Not because he needs to shore up some weakness in himself or compensate for some deficiency, but because he loves us and seeks the fullness of our joy that can only be found in knowing and praising him, the most beautiful of all beings.

God is the one Being in all the universe for whom seeking his own praise is the ultimately loving act. For him self-exaltation is the highest virtue. When he does all things "for the praise of his glory" as Ephesians 1 says, he preserves for us and offers to us the only thing in all the world which can satisfy our longings. God is for us, and therefore has been, is now, and always will be, for himself. Praise the Lord! Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

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2012

Recommended resources:

www.childrenedesiringgod.org/media - 2005 Conference on the Sovereignty of God

1. John Piper: Why Theology and Doctrine Matter for Children's Ministry
2. C.J. Mahaney: Sovereign Grace and the Salvation of Children
3. David Michael: One Generation Shall Tell Your Works to Another****
4. David & Sally Michael: Great Truths for Small People: Teaching the Sovereignty of God to Children

John Piper: *God's Pleasure in the Display of His Glory*

Psalm 98:1-4 – Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. The Lord has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations. He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music....

Psalm 145:4-7 – One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts. They will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty, and I will meditate on your wonderful works. They will tell of the power of your awesome works, and I will proclaim your great deeds. They will celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness.

Acts 20:24 -the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ....

I Timothy 1:10-11 – the sound doctrine that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.

Sound doctrine = health-giving – wholesome – II Timothy 1:13; Tit.1:9-13; 2:1-2

Excerpts from Ligon Duncan: *Sound Doctrine* [from *Proclaiming a Cross-Centered Theology*]

Your life is an extension of your systematic theology and doctrine. You are what you believe.... The study of doctrine is not (or at least ought not to be) an arid, speculative, impractical enterprise. Doctrine is for life! If the truth does not mold the way we live and minister, if it does not inform our speech, our relationships, our prayer, our worship, and our ministry, then the truth has gone bad on us – no matter how true the truth is. Biblical truth is meant to be expressed in our experience and practice, if we truly understand and believe it.

God in his love gives his truth to us for our well-being. God's truth serves not only the interests of his own glory but also his people's good. Truth is for our everlasting joy in God. Furthermore, truth worked deep down into the heart and soul and bones of a preacher (teacher) and then worked out in his relationships makes him tender and humble in his dealing with the sheep and in proclaiming and explaining the Word.

God's truth is for our joy and growth in holiness.... John 17:17 – Sanctify them in the truth – Matt. 28:18-20; I Tim.1:3-5 – good theology aims for true, heart-rooted, lived-out, gospel love in believers.

Our theology – especially our understanding of God's GRACE - will powerfully shape the way we teach and encourage and relate to our students day by day.

Cf. Bruce Ware: *Big Truths for Young Hearts*

I. OUR FOUNDATION – THE GOSPEL OF GOD’S GRACE

KINDS OF RELIGION

(from G.I. Williamson *Shorter Catechism*)

TRUE	MIXED	FALSE
TOTAL DEPRAVITY Man is evil in every part Can do nothing to save himself Total Inability	Man is partly evil Can do something to help save himself Free Will; Human Ability	Man is good Can do everything to save himself
UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION All men deserve no mercy God has chosen some	CONDITIONAL ELECTION All men deserve some mercy God chooses those who choose him	All men deserve much mercy Every man chooses his own destiny
LIMITED ATONEMENT Christ died to make salvation certain for some Particular Redemption Definite Atonement	Christ died to make salvation possible for all Universal Redemption General Atonement	Christ died to set an example
IRRESISTIBLE GRACE Holy Spirit given to some He enables them to repent and believe Effectual Calling	Holy Spirit given to all He helps the ones willing to convert	Holy Spirit not needed Men can change themselves
PERSEVERANCE OF SAINTS God keeps his elect from falling They will never fall	God helps all who cooperate They may, or may not, fall	Men must keep themselves They can keep themselves
Augustine (354-430) Calvin (1509-1564), Luther, Zwingli, etc.	?Cassian (360-435) Semi-Pelagianism (condemned by Council of Orange in 529)	Pelagius (condemned by Council of Carthage in 412)
1618-19 – Synod of Dort ‘five points’	Arminius (d.1609) 1610 – “Remonstrance”	
Father elects, Son redeems, Spirit calls the same people and secures their salvation infallibly	All men are redeemed, those who hear the gospel are called, those who believe are elected	
	Man is able to take the first step toward conversion,	

GOD SAVES SINNERS	which obtains or merits the Spirit's assistance	
CALVINISM	ARMINIANISM	
Absolute divine sovereignty and human responsibility and freedom are BOTH taught in the scriptures	Human logic tells us that divine sovereignty is not compatible with human freedom, nor therefore with human responsibility	
Scriptures teach that man is responsible to repent and believe, but that he is in himself completely unable to do so	Human logic tells us that ability limits obligation	

The following excerpts are taken from Appendix D of *Romans – An Interpretive Outline* by David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas, published by The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, Phila., Pa. Copyright 1963.

The Philosophical Basis of Arminianism – J.I. Packer, in analyzing the system of thought embodied in the Remonstrance, observes, “The theology which it contained (known to history as Arminianism) stemmed from two philosophical principles: first, that divine sovereignty is not compatible with human freedom, nor therefore with human responsibility; second, that ability limits obligation.... From these principles, the Arminians drew two deductions: first, that since the Bible regards faith as a free and responsible act, it cannot be caused by God, but is exercised independently of Him; second, that since the Bible regards faith as obligatory on the part of all who hear the gospel, ability to believe must be universal. Hence, they maintained, Scripture must be interpreted as teaching the following positions: (1) Man is never so completely corrupted by sin that he cannot savingly believe the gospel when it is put before him, nor (2) is he ever so completely controlled by God that he cannot reject it. (3) God’s election of those who shall be saved is prompted by His foreseeing that they will of their own accord believe. (4) Christ’s death did not ensure the salvation of anyone, for it did not secure the gift of faith to anyone (there is no such gift); what it did was rather to create a possibility of salvation for everyone if they believe. (5) It rests with believers to keep themselves in a state of grace by keeping up their faith; those who fail here fall away and are lost. Thus, Arminianism made man’s salvation depend ultimately on man himself, saving faith being viewed throughout as man’s own work and, because his own, not God’s in him.”

Calvinism, the Theology of the Reformation – The leaders of the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century rejected Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism on the ground that both systems were unscriptural.... Luther’s chief work, ‘The Bondage of the Will,’ shows that he went into the doctrine as heartily as did Calvin himself.”.... Packer states that “all the leading Protestant theologians of the first epoch of the Reformation, stood on precisely the same ground here. On other points, they had their differences; but in asserting the helplessness of man in sin, and the sovereignty of God in grace, they were entirely at one. To all of them, these doctrines were the very life-blood of the Christian faith.... To the Reformers, the crucial question was not simply, whether God justifies believers without works of law. It was the broader question, whether

sinners are wholly helpless in their sin, and whether God is to be thought of as saving them by free, unconditional, invincible grace, not only justifying them for Christ's sake when they come to faith, but also raising them from the death of sin by His quickening Spirit in order to bring them to faith. Here was the crucial issue: whether God is the author, not merely of justification, but also of faith; whether, in the last analysis, Christianity is a religion of utter reliance on God for salvation and all things necessary to it, or of self-reliance and self-effort.

The One Point Which the “Five Point” of Calvinism Are Concerned to Establish – While recognizing the permanent value of the five points as a summary of Calvinism, Packer warns against simply equating Calvinism with the five points. He gives several excellent reasons why such an equation is incorrect, one of which we quote: “...the very act of setting out Calvinistic soteriology [the doctrine of salvation] in the form of five distinct points (a number due, as we saw, merely to the fact that there were five Arminian points for the Synod of Dort to answer) tends to obscure the organic character of Calvinistic thought on this subject. For the five points, though separately stated, are really inseparable. They hang together; you cannot reject one without rejecting them all, at least in the sense in which the Synod meant them. For to Calvinism there is really only one point to be made in the field of soteriology: the point that God saves sinners. God – the Triune Jehovah, Father, Son and Spirit; three Persons working together in sovereign wisdom, power and love to achieve the salvation of a chosen people, the Father electing, the Son fulfilling the Father's will by redeeming, the Spirit executing the purpose of Father and Son by renewing. Saves – does everything, first to last, that is involved in bringing man from death in sin to life in glory: plans, achieves and communicates redemption, calls and keeps, justifies, sanctifies, glorifies. Sinners – men as God finds them, guilty, vile, helpless, powerless, unable to lift a finger to do God's will or better their spiritual lot. *God saves the sinners* – and the force of this confession may not be weakened by disrupting the unity of the work of the Trinity, or by dividing the achievement of salvation between God and man and making the decisive part man's own, or by soft-peddalling the sinner's inability so as to allow him to share the praise of his salvation with his Savior. This is the one point of Calvinistic soteriology which the ‘five points’ are concerned to establish and Arminianism in all its forms to deny: namely, that sinners do not save themselves in any sense at all, but that salvation, first and last, whole and entire, past, present and future, is of the Lord, to whom be glory forever; amen.”

These truths are confirmed by The Augsburg Confession (1530-Lutheran); The Belgic Confession (1561) and the Heidelberg Catechism (1563-Reformed); The Thirty-Nine Articles (1563-Anglican); The Westminster Confession (1646-Presbyterian); The London Confession (1689-Baptist); The Philadelphia Confession (1742-Baptist); The New Hampshire Confession (1833-Baptist); and others.

How does our understanding of the grace of God in salvation affect the way we relate to our children?

Depravity? Effectual Calling? Definite Atonement?

Sovereignty-Responsibility; Ability-Obligation

Ephesians 2:8-10

Recommended reading: *A Journey in Grace* by Richard Belcher

II. OUR FOCUS – MAKE DISCIPLES

Matthew 28:18-20

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

A defective view of God's grace will often lead to a focus on what MAN can do, rather than that which only GOD can do. Our evangelical culture is pervaded by a focus on an act which man does to become a Christian – "accepting Jesus as my personal Savior".

Jesus says MAKE DISCIPLES – it is an emphasis on an entire LIFE – not a momentary decision – FOLLOW ME – COME TO ME – TAKE MY YOKE UPON YOU – LEARN FROM ME (Matt.11:27-30) [*learn* = μαθετε; *make disciples* = μαθητευσατε] (note also continuing tense of "whoever *believes*...." in many places)

Note the word ALL – four times

ALL AUTHORITY – HIS SOVEREIGNTY – He is worthy of your absolute TRUST

ALL NATIONS – THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE GOSPEL (Matthew written to Jews!) – the gospel is for YOU! – no exceptions – no special classes – ONE SAVIOR – no other

ALL the things I have commanded you – His PERVASIVE CLAIMS – He calls for your obedience in EVERY area of your life – note again TEACHING is intended to affect your LIFE – not just your HEAD

ALL the days, I will be with you – AN ETERNAL LOVE RELATIONSHIP – He will help you – He will be WITH you – walking with you – taking His yoke on you – learning of Him

Recommended reading:

Decisional Regeneration vs. Divine Regeneration by James Adams

III. OUR ULTIMATE GOAL – WORSHIP GOD – ENJOY GOD – (Cat.#1)

e-mail from David Blank – 6/16/10:

I have been reading Francis Schaeffer this summer. I don't think I'll make it through the complete works. I am only on page 125 of the first volume. On that page he shares this account.

A number of years ago I was at a discussion group in Detroit. An older black pastor was there. We discussed many intellectual and cultural problems and the answers given by Christianity. One would have called the discussion "intellectual" rather than devotional. As he was leaving, the black pastor shook my hand and thanked me. If he had said, "Thank you for helping me to defend my people better," or "Thank you for helping me to be a better evangelist," I would have been very glad that what I had said had been helpful, and then possibly I would not have given it another thought. But what he actually said was, "Thank you for opening these doors to me; now I can worship God better." I will never forget him because he was a man who really understood. If this is not our own response first of all, and then the response of those whom we try to help, we have made a mistake somewhere.

It seems to me that Schaeffer captures here the point of Christian education. As Christian educators we are rightfully glad for how all the things that we teach students help them in life: math so they can make change and manage finances; reading so that they can read instructions, labels and stories; science so that they can do medicine; music so that they can make beautiful sounds. But our teaching needs to open the doors for us to worship God, and then open the doors for our students to be better worshippers of God.

Of course the last line is the worst. If that is not what we are seeing take place, we have made a mistake somewhere.

The very essence of faith is LOOKING AWAY FROM SELF TO GOD, and that will make us MORE LIKE HIM, and therefore better equipped to serve those around us.

By its very nature faith looks away from itself and boasts in Christ. That's what faith *is*—the embracing of Christ as our boast. *Phil 3:3 – For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh.*

DO YOU HAVE THIS FAITH AND IS THIS THE KIND OF FAITH YOU SEEK TO STIMULATE IN OTHERS? Another way to ask this question is this:

Foundation - GRACE; Focus - DISCIPLES; Goal - GOD!

Satisfy us in the morning with YOUR unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.

D.A. Carson – *How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil*

p.43 – Before applying these basic Christian truths to our experience of suffering, there is one more point that the Bible recognizes as a “given”: the goodness of God. There is no darkness in God at all (I John 1:5). “He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he” (Deut. 32:4). If Nahum can say, “The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD takes vengeance and is filled with wrath,” almost in the same breath he can insist, “The LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble” (Nah. 1:2,7). People will not be excused on the last day on the ground that God has somehow induced them to evil (James 1:13).

Once again, there are difficult texts, especially those dealing with the sovereign sway of God in the case of evil actions. We will closely examine some of these in chapter 11. For my present purposes it is enough to discern the basic outline of the biblical plot. The sovereign and utterly good God created a good universe. We human beings rebelled; rebellion is now so much a part of our makeup that we are all enmeshed in it. Every scrap of suffering we face turns on this fact. The Bible itself centers on how God takes action to reverse these dreadful effects and their root cause, sin itself; and the believer’s hope is the new heaven and earth where neither sin nor sorrow will ever be experienced again.

From this, it follows that in any Christian understanding of God and the world, Kushner’s famous title is profoundly misleading. *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* assumes the world is populated largely by “good people.” The drift of the Bible’s story line sees things differently: we are all caught up in rebellion, and therefore none of us belongs to the “good people.” In any absolute sense, “good people” is an empty set.

I am not saying that this resolves the problem of evil and suffering, as if the proper admonition to everyone enmeshed in sorrow is a brutal “Stop complaining. You are only getting what you deserve.”.....

Yet Christians undergoing pain and suffering will be well served by contemplating the Bible’s story line and meditating on the price of sin. We live in an age where everyone is concerned about their “rights.” But there is a profound sense in which our “rights” before God have been sacrificed by our sin. If in fact we believe that our sin properly deserves the wrath of God, then when we experience the sufferings of this world, all of them the consequences of human rebellion, we will be less quick to blame God and a lot quicker to recognize that we have no fundamental right to expect a life of unbroken ease and comfort. From the biblical perspective, it is because of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed.

Most emphatically, this does not mean that every bit of suffering is the immediate consequence of a particular sin. That is a hideous piece of heresy, capable of inflicting untold mental anguish. It would mean that the people who suffer the most in this world must be those who have sinned the most in this world; and that is demonstrably untrue, both in the Bible and in experience.

p.67 – Psalm 6 – It is overwhelmingly important to reflect on the fact that this psalm and dozens of similar ones are included in Scripture. There is no attempt in Scripture to

whitewash the anguish of God's people when they undergo suffering. They argue with God, they complain to God, they weep before God. Theirs is not a faith that leads to dry-eyed stoicism, but a faith so robust it wrestles with God.

p.69 – Hab. 3:17-18 – It is the resolution of one whose eyes have been opened to see where his delight should have been in the first place. God's discipline, displayed in calamitous punishment of the nation, becomes a means of grace, if not for the entire nation, then at least for Habakkuk and those who join his train.

p.71 – So sweeping a vision changes all our priorities. Maximal comfort in this fallen world is now low on the agenda. The real question is how our current circumstances are tied to our faith in Jesus Christ, our peace with God, and our prospect of seeing him. So Paul insists that we rejoice not only in the hope of the glory of God, but “we also glory *in our sufferings*, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.”

p.72 – Hebrews 5:7-9 – There is a certain kind of maturity that can be attained only through the discipline of suffering. Son though he was, Jesus learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him. The idea is not that Jesus was *disobedient* before he suffered, but that in his incarnate state he too had to learn lessons of obedience, levels of obedience, that could only be attained through suffering. In this sense he grew to “perfection”: not that he was morally imperfect before his sufferings, but that the fullness, the perfection of his identity with the human race and of his human, temporal obedience to his heavenly Father could be attained only through the fires of suffering. This “perfection” he achieved, not only with the result that “he became the source of eternal salvation for all obey him,” but also with the result that he is able “to sympathize with our weaknesses” since he “has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet he did not sin” (Heb. 4:15). If even Jesus “learned obedience from what he suffered,” what ghastly misapprehension is it – or arrogance! – that assumes we should be exempt.?

p.95 – However hard some things are to understand, it is never helpful to start picking and choosing biblical truths we find congenial, as if the Bible is an open-shelved supermarket where we are at perfect liberty to choose only the chocolate bars. For the Christian, it is God's Word, and it is not negotiable. What answers we find may not be exhaustive, but they give us the God who is there, and who gives us some measure of comfort and assurance. The alternative is a god we manufacture, and who provides no comfort at all. Whatever comfort we feel is self-delusion, and it will be stripped away at the end when we give an account to the God who has spoken to us, not only in Scripture, but supremely in his Son Jesus Christ.

Job

p.139 – 1. The book of Job frankly insists that suffering falls within the sweep of God's sovereignty. The reader understands, as Job does not, that Job's afflictions owe everything to the exchange between God and Satan.... Intuitively, Job recognizes that nothing of the sort could have happened to him without God's sanction..... In short, all

forms of dualism are radically rejected. Job will not resort to easy comfort about this not really being the will of God: it must be the work of Satan. Of course, it was the work of Satan. But in God's universe, even Satan's work cannot step outside the outermost boundaries of God's sovereignty. While that is what raises the problem, it is also what promises hope.

2. The emphasis on Job's goodness is meant to highlight the fact that there is such a thing as innocent suffering....

3. The degree to which we struggle with this question is likely to be related to the extent of our own sufferings..... Thinking through the theology of suffering, and resolving in advance how you will respond, however praiseworthy the exercise, cannot completely prepare you for the shock of suffering itself. It is like jumping into a bitterly cold lake: you can brace yourself for the experience all day, but when you actually jump in the shock to your system will still snatch your breath away.

4. God does not blame us if in our suffering we frankly vent our despair and confess our loss of hope, our sense of futility, our lamentations about life itself. One cannot read chapter 3 without recalling that God will later excoriate the miserable comforters, but insist that Job himself said right things.

Of course, it is possible in grief and misery to say the wrong things, to say blasphemous things. Job's wife is not praised for her counsel: "Curse God and die!" But within certain boundaries, yet to be explored, it is far better to be frank about our grief, candid in our despair, honest with our questions, than to suppress them and wear a public front of puffy piety. God knows our thoughts in any case. Whatever "resolution" the book of Job provides turns on Job's questions and God's responses. Without the questions, there would have been no responses.

5. Already the theme of mystery has intruded. Neither at the beginning of the affliction nor at the end does God tell Job about Satan's challenge and his own response. Indeed, had he done so, the purpose of the affliction would have been subverted. God's intent (the readers know) is to show that a human being can love God, fear God, and pursue righteousness without receiving any prompt reward. This pursuit of God is therefore independent of material comfort; it may be in defiance of material comfort. Satan's thesis, that all religious interest is ultimately grounded in self-interest, or worse, in mercenary commitment, is thus shown to be false. But Job himself is not permitted to see this dimension to his suffering. As far as he is concerned, he faces inscrutable mystery.

6. That is why Job's initial lament, and his later questions, must be placed within the right framework. At no point does Job abandon faith in God; at no point does he follow his wife's advice to curse God. It is precisely because he knows God to be there, and to be loving and just, that he has such a hard time understanding such injustice. Job wrestles with God, he is indignant with God, he challenges God to come before him and provide some answers; but all his struggles are the struggles of a believer. That is why Job can be praised, by God himself, for saying the right things: at least he spoke within the right framework. His miserable friends did not.....

p.146 – Job's speeches are the anguish of a man who knows God, who wants to know him better, who never once doubts the existence of God, who remains convinced, at bottom, of the justice of God – but he cannot make sense of these entrenched beliefs in

the light of his own experience. That is why, in the midst of his confusion and self-justification, Job utters some remarkably assured statements of faith. He is so sure of his case that he wishes he could find someone to arbitrate between himself and God (9:33-35). Of course, this is God's universe, so he can't; but the Christian cannot read these words without thinking of the mediatorial role of Jesus. Nor does Job become apostate: "Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him; I will surely defend my ways to his face. Indeed, this will turn out for my deliverance, for no godless person would dare come before him!" (13:15-16). He is so sure of ultimate vindication that he can say, "But God knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold" (23:10). However the difficult verses in 19:25-27 be translated, the least they affirm is that Job is absolutely confident in his final vindication – by God himself.

p.151 – It is important to recognize that God does not here charge Job with sins that have brought on his suffering. He does not respond to the "whys" of Job's suffering, nor does he challenge Job's defense of his own integrity. The reason he calls Job on the carpet is not because of Job's justification of himself, but because of Job's willingness to condemn God in order to justify himself. In other words, God does not here "answer" Job's questions about the problem of evil and suffering, but he makes it unambiguously clear what answers are not acceptable in God's universe.

p.153 – The burden of God's response to Job is twofold. The first emphasis we have already noted: Job has "obscured God's plans" by trying to justify himself at the expense of condemning God; and Job is in no position to do that. "God's speeches show Job that his lowly station point was not sufficiently askew to justify the declaration 'let there be darkness.'" The second emphasis is implicit: if there are so many things that Job does not understand, why should he so petulantly and persistently demand that he understand his own suffering? There are some things you will not understand, for you are not God.

That is why Job's answer is so appropriate. He does not say, "Ah, at last I understand!" but rather; "I repent." He does not repent of sins that have allegedly brought on the suffering; he repents of his arrogance in impugning God's justice, he repents of the attitude whereby he simply demands an answer, as if such were owed him. He repents of not having known God better: "My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I... repent" (42:5-6)

To those who do not know God, to those who insist on being God, this outcome will never suffice. Those who do know God come in time to recognize that it is better to know God and to trust God than to claim the rights of God.

Job teaches us that, at least in this world, there will always remain some mysteries to suffering. He also teaches us to exercise faith – not blind, thoughtless submission to an impersonal status quo, but faith in the God who has graciously revealed himself to us.

p.155 – The book of Job has no interest in praising mystery without restraint. All biblical writers insist that to fear the Lord ultimately leads to abundant life. If this were not so, to fear the Lord would be stupid and masochistic. The book does not disown all forms of retribution; rather, it disowns simplistic, mathematically precise, and instant applications of the doctrine of retribution. It categorically rejects any formula that affirms that the righteous always prosper and the wicked are always destroyed. There

may be other reasons for suffering; reward (of blessing or of destruction) may be long delayed; knowledge of God is its own reward.

Job still does not have all the answers; he still knows nothing about the wager between God and Satan. He must simply trust God that something far greater was at stake than his own personal happiness. But he has stopped hinting that God is unjust; he has come to know God better; and he enjoys the Lord's favor in rich abundance once again.

The blessings that Job experiences at the end are not cast as rewards that he has earned by his faithfulness under suffering. The epilogue simply describes the blessings as the Lord's free gift. The Lord is not nasty or capricious. He may for various reasons withdraw his favor, but his love endures forever.

The Mystery of Providence

p.178 – The issues to be dealt with in this chapter are sufficiently difficult and contentious that Christians often disagree over them. You must make up your own mind. My only suggestion is that as you make up your mind, you try to distinguish the biblical “givens” from the arguments often used to filter them.

I am deeply persuaded that, even though the kind of approach to suffering taken in this chapter and the next may not be the sort of thing you feel you need right now, it is nevertheless the sort of thing that many more Christians ought to absorb *before* the evil day strikes....

p.179 – The Bible as a whole, and sometimes in specific texts, presupposes or teaches that both of the following propositions are true:

1. God is absolutely sovereign, but his sovereignty never functions in such a way that human responsibility is curtailed, minimized, or mitigated.

2. Human beings are morally responsible creatures – they significantly choose, rebel, obey, believe, defy, make decisions, and so forth, and they are rightly held accountable for such actions; but this characteristic never functions so as to make God absolutely contingent.

In what follows, I shall argue that the Bible upholds the truth of both of these propositions simultaneously. The view that both of these propositions are true I shall call *compatibilism*. We could call this view anything we like, but for various historical reasons this seems like a good term to use. All I mean by it is that, so far as the Bible is concerned, the two propositions are taught and are mutually compatible.

p.181 – Ps. 115:23; Ps. 135:6; Eph. 1:11; Acts 17:26; Matt. 6:26; Matt. 6:30; Ex. 21:13; Ruth 1:13, 20; Prov. 16:9; Jer. 10:23; Ps. 105:25; Amos 3:6; Is. 45:6-7; Lam. 3:33; Lam. 3:37-38; Rom.9:18; II Sam. 16:10; I Kings 22:21ff; I Sam. 2:25; 2Thess. 2:11; 2 Sam. 24:1 – Now the most remarkable feature of these passages – and there are scores and scores more just like them – is that at no point is the human agent exonerated of responsibility just because God is in some way behind this or that act.... At no point whatsoever does the remarkable emphasis on the absoluteness of God's sovereignty mitigate the responsibility of human beings who, like everything else in the universe, fall under God's sway.

The second proposition could be demonstrated with equal detail – Josh. 24:14-15; Rom.10:9,11; Gen. 22:12; Ex. 16:4; 2 Chron. 32:31; Ex. 19:4-6; Deut. 4:5-8; 6:6ff; Hosea 13:4; Mic. 3:12; Is. 30:18; 65:2; Lam. 3:31-36; Ez. 18:30-32; 33:11; Hosea 11:7 – Yet nowhere does such material ever function to make God absolutely contingent, that is, absolutely dependent for his being or choices on the moves taken by human beings.

p.182 – In no case is human responsibility permitted to function in such a way that God becomes *absolutely* contingent: that is, God is absolutely stymied, thwarted, frustrated, blocked, quite unable to proceed with what he himself had absolutely determined to do. There is nothing in the Bible quite like those modern writings that argue, for instance, that because men and women make moral choices, therefore God *must* be limited in power or knowledge (whether *self*-limited or limited in his very being). If there were such absolute constraints upon God, of course, then the first proposition could not possibly be true. But the remarkable thing about the Bible is that it adopts compatibilism: that is, it assumes or teaches that *both* propositions are true.

There is one more biblical emphasis that must be enunciated before we go on to look at a number of specific passages. It is to be distinguished from the two propositions that constitute compatibilism, but it is profoundly related to the theme of this book. It is this: Despite everything it says about the limitless reaches of God's sovereignty, the Bible insists again and again on God's unblemished goodness. God is *never* presented as an accomplice of evil, or as secretly malicious, or as standing behind evil in exactly the same way that he stands behind good. How to hold all this together we shall struggle with in due course; but the fact itself cannot reasonably be doubted.... The goodness of God is the assumption, the nonnegotiable. Heaven swells with the chorus, "Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the nations. Who will not fear you, Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy" (Rev. 15:3-4).

p.183ff – Gen. 50:19-20; Rev. 20:7-8; I Kings 8:46ff.; I Kings 11:11-13,29-39; 12:1-15; Is. 10:5; John 6:37-40; Acts 18:9-10; Phil. 2:12-13;

p.188 – Acts 4:23-31 – It only takes a moment's reflection to show that, if the Christian gospel is true, this tension could not have been otherwise. If the initiative had been entirely with the conspirators, and God simply came in at the last minute to wrest triumph from the jaws of impending defeat, then the cross was not his plan, his purpose, the very reason why he had sent his Son into the world – and that is unthinkable. If on the other hand God was so orchestrating events that all the human agents were nonresponsible puppets, then it is foolishness to talk of conspiracy, or even of sin – in which case there is no sin for Christ to remove by his death, so why would he have to die? God was sovereignly at work in the death of Jesus; human beings were evil in putting Jesus to death, even as they accomplished the Father's will; and God himself was entirely good.

Christians who may deny compatibilism on front after front become compatibilists (knowingly or otherwise) when they think about the cross. There is no alternative,

except to deny the faith. And if we are prepared to be compatibilists when we think about the cross – that is, to accept both of the propositions I set out at the head of this chapter as true, as they are applied to the cross – it is only a very small step to understanding that compatibilism is taught or presupposed everywhere in the Bible.

p.189 – Granted that the Bible everywhere teaches or assumes that compatibilism as defined in this chapter is true, we have still not come any closer to thinking through *how* it is true. Perhaps the following reflections will help to clarify the issue, or at least to specify a little more closely where the mystery lies – which is, after all, what I set out to find at the beginning of this chapter!

1. Most people who call themselves compatibilists are not so brash as to claim that they can tell you exactly how the two propositions I set forth in the last section fit together. All they claim is that, if terms are defined carefully enough, it is possible to show that there is no necessary contradiction between them....

2. If compatibilism is true and if God is good – all of which the Bible affirms – then it must be the case that God stands behind good and evil in somewhat different ways; that is, he stands behind good and evil *asymmetrically*. To put it bluntly, God stands behind evil in such a way that not even evil takes place outside the bounds of his sovereignty, yet the evil is not morally chargeable to him: it is always chargeable to secondary agents, to secondary causes. On the other hand, God stands behind good in such a way that it not only takes place within the bounds of his sovereignty, but it is always chargeable to him, and only derivatively to secondary agents.

In other words, if I sin, I cannot possibly do so outside the bounds of God's sovereignty (or the many texts already cited have no meaning), but I alone am responsible for that sin – or perhaps I and those who tempted me, led me astray, and the like. God is not to be blamed. But if I do good, it is God working in me both to will and to act according to his good pleasure. God's grace has been manifest in my case, and he is to be praised.

If this sounds just a bit too convenient for God, my initial response (though there is more to be said) is that according to the Bible this is the God there is. There is no other.

3. Both propositions make much of human moral responsibility. But so far I have not tried to tie human moral responsibility to the notion of freedom. That is because the notion of freedom, in any biblical perspective, is exceedingly difficult to nail down.... If compatibilism is true – and I cannot see how the biblical evidence supporting it can be evaded – then any Christian definition of freedom must lie within two constraints.

First, human freedom cannot involve absolute power to contrary; that is, it cannot include such liberal power that God himself becomes contingent.... Freedom should be related not to absolute power to contrary, but to voluntarism: that is, *we do what we want to do, and that is why we are held accountable for what we do....*

Second, human freedom since the fall cannot be discussed without reference to the fall.... Our wills are not truly free; they are enslaved by sin. Within this framework,

real freedom is freedom to obey God without restraint or reserve. It is not absolute power to contrary; it is wanting to please God at every moment.

Nowhere is this clearer than in the Christology of John's Gospel. There Jesus is repeatedly shown to be the one who fulfills what has been written of him and who aligns himself with the Father's plan, but who does this in self-conscious obedience to his Father. The cross is inevitable: Jesus is the lamb of God, the predicted "hour" must arrive, the passion is foreseen in Scripture; yet on the other hand, no one simply takes Jesus' life from him: he voluntarily lays it down of his own will (10:18). In Jesus the divine determining and the perfection of human obedience come together in one person, since his very food is to do the will of him who sent him (4:34), and he always does what pleases the Father (8:29). Here we see "free will" operating at its best!

4. The real nub of the tension lies in the kind of God who presents himself to us in the Bible. This is best seen by reflecting a little more on the nature of human responsibility.

For the Christian, virtually all of what we are held responsible for, all that we obey or disobey, all that we choose or disavow, is foundationally defined by what God has commanded or forbidden. But the notion of God commanding or forbidding depends on understanding that God is personal....

The trouble comes from the fact that all that we customarily mean by personhood or personal or personality is time-bound and finite....But when I say that God is personal, I must also say that he is transcendent – above space and time, and utterly sovereign. When God asks a question, does he not, on the bible's showing, also know the answer? When he pleads, or forgives, or forbids, or exhorts, I dare not forget that he cannot be personal in exactly the same way that finite human beings are personal; for God's transcendence and sovereignty establish one of the poles in compatibilism. That he is a person is the presupposition behind my moral accountability; but that does not permit me to think of him as finite, for I know he is not.

The problem of compatibilism, then, is tied to the fact that the God who discloses himself in the Bible and supremely in the person of his Son is himself both transcendent and personal, and not less than both. We have pursued the lines of thought that suggest themselves from the Bible's straightforward adoption of compatibilism, and find they lead to the nature of God....

5. It appears, then, that the problems involved in holding to the truth of both of the propositions that constitute compatibilism are profoundly tied to the very nature of God himself..... I see that God presents himself as personal, but I have no idea how a personal God can also be transcendent. I see that the Bible ascribes everything to him in one way or another, that his sovereignty leaves nothing out. I see that the biblical descriptions of his causation of evil deeds insist that he is good, and that secondary agents are evil. I do not know how he uses secondary agents in this way. Transparently, how he does this is related to who he is, to his "domain" outside or above space and time, to the nature of his sovereignty and his choices as a person; but I still do not see *how* he does it.

So I am driven to see not only that compatibilism is itself taught in the Bible, but that it is tied to the very nature of God' and on the other hand, I am driven to see that my ignorance about many aspects of God's nature is precisely the same ignorance that

instructs me not to follow the whims of many contemporary philosophers and deny that compatibilism is possible.

The mystery of providence is in the first instance not located in debates about decrees, free will, the place of Satan, and the like. It is located in the doctrine of God....

Material I am inserting from Francis Schaeffer: *The God Who Is There* (IVP 1968)

Schaeffer p.94 – The historic Christian answer concerning verifiable facts and knowing turns on who God is, on who is there. The God who is there according to the Scriptures is the personal-infinite God. There is no other god like this God. It is ridiculous to say that all religions teach the same things when they disagree at the fundamental point as to what God is like. The gods of the East are infinite by definition—the definition being ‘god is all that is’. This is the pan-everything-ism god. The gods of the West have tended to be personal but limited; such were the gods of the Greeks, Romans and Germans. But the God of the Bible, Old and New Testaments alike, is the infinite-personal God.

It is this God who has created various orders of creation, like this:

		GOD		
	PERSONAL	=====	INFINITE	
	Man		=====	chasm
chasm	=====		Man	
	Animals		Animals	
	Plants		Plants	
	Machines		Machines	

The biblical Christian says that, on the side of personality, man can know God truly, though he cannot know God exhaustively.

p.199 – We must be extremely careful how we handle this diversity of uses [of the “will” of God] when we come, say to 2 Peter 3:9. At the risk of simplification, it appears that when the Bible speaks of God’s will in an efficient or decretal fashion, that use of language belongs to the assumption that God is transcendent and sovereign; when the Bible speaks of God’s will as his desire, quite possibly unfulfilled desire, that use of language belongs to the assumption that God is a person who interacts with other persons. To appeal to such usage to deny that God is sovereign is as irresponsible as it is to appeal to the first usage to deny that God is personal.

Similarly, when the Bible speaks of God’s permission of evil, there is still no escape from his sovereignty. A sovereign and omniscient God who knows that, if he permits such and such an evil to occur it will surely occur, and then goes ahead and grants the permission, is surely decreeing the evil. But the language of permission is retained because it is part of the biblical pattern of insisting that God stands behind good and evil asymmetrically (in the sense already defined). He can never be credited with evil; he is always to be credited with the good. He permits evil to occur; the biblical writers would not similarly say that he simply permits good to occur! So even though permission in the hands of a transcendent and omniscient God can scarcely be

different from decree, the use of such language is part and parcel of the insistence that God is not merely transcendent, but that he is also personal and entirely good.....

p.200 – Little is gained by being more “pious” in our use of language than the Bible is, and much may be lost. By being too protective of God, we are in fact building a grid out of only a subset of the biblical materials, and filtering out some of what is revealed in the Bible about the God who has so graciously disclosed himself. The result, rather sadly, is a god who is either less than sovereign or less than personal, either incompetent and frustrated or impassive and stoical. *But the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is utterly transcendent and passionately personal. These are among the “givens” of Scripture, and we sacrifice them to our peril.*

Some Concluding Reflections

One of the common ingredients in most of the attempts to overthrow compatibilism is the sacrifice of mystery. The problem looks neater when, say, God is not behind evil in any sense. But quite apart from the fact that the biblical texts will not allow so easy an escape, the result is a totally nonmysterious God. And somehow the god of this picture is domesticated, completely unpuzzling.... It is better to let the biblical texts speak in all their power. Many things can then be said about the God who has graciously disclosed himself, but all of them leave God untamed.

It is *essential* – I cannot say this strongly enough – it is *utterly essential* to doctrinal and spiritual well-being to maintain the diverse polarities in the nature of God *simultaneously*. For instance, if you work through the biblical passages that bluntly insist God in some sense stands behind evil, and do not simultaneously call to mind the countless passages that insist he is unfailingly good, then in a period of suffering you may be tempted to think of God as a vicious, sovereign thug. If you focus on all the passages that stress God’s sovereign sway over everything, and do not simultaneously call to mind his exhortations to pray, to intercede, to repent, to examine yourself, you may turn into a Christian fatalist, and mistake your thoughtless stoicism for stalwart faith. The same lesson can be configured in many more ways: provide your own examples of distortion....

The mystery of providence defies our attempt to tame it by reason. I do not mean it is illogical; I mean that we do not know enough to be able to unpack it and domesticate it.

p.212 – *Much more could be said, but the point is simple enough: we will not be so likely to destroy the mysteries that are part of the warp and woof of Scripture, of Scripture’s disclosure about the nature of God, if we take care to allow the poles of these mysteries to function only in the way they do in Scripture....*

In John’s Gospel, Jesus is simultaneously the one whose ministry and death/exaltation are determined by his Father’s will (whether expressed in Scripture or in Jesus’ inner awareness), and the one who voluntarily obeys his Father. His obedience there provides us with a model of how we *ought* to respond to the claims of God’s sovereignty. Indeed, the Son’s dependence and obedience are so perfect that it

is precisely in such dependence upon and obedience to his Father that the Father's will is communicated and his sovereignty extended.

Above all, it is the cross of Jesus Christ where all the elements of these mysteries coalesce. The cross was nothing less than God's sovereign plan, and his sovereign sway extended not only to many details "modeled" in advance in Old Testament prophecy, but to the wicked machinations of the human agents who arranged for Jesus to be executed. Yet Jesus went to the cross voluntarily: He chose to obey the Father. He prayed, "Not my will, but yours be done!" – a prayer which needed praying, even though at one level it is scarcely conceivable that God's redemptive will on the cross could *not* have been accomplished. Here is the outbreak of the most odious evil, and here is the ultimate manifestation of God's love. Here is vile, brutal injustice, and here the justice of God is manifested as he justifies sinners. Here the Son learns the climactic lesson in obedience, and here is the hour of the power of darkness.

In each case, we have learned to live with irony and paradox, because we have come to see that, for the cross to make any sense at all, we simply *must* affirm that God was sovereign, that human beings were rebellious and morally responsible, that God's love and justice were displayed, and that Christ died voluntarily. *If we forsake any one of these truths, the significance of the cross is destroyed and we are lost.*

So also we must learn to handle the "given" of compatibilism: God is sovereign, and we are responsible, and these two truths are so construed in Scripture that neither is allowed to relativize the other. To the "givens" of compatibilism we add the "given" that God loves us, and is unfailingly good. And yet evil and suffering exist. The fall occurred. How shall we hold these pieces together?

What we must *not* do is to draw inferences from part of the evidence that contradicts other parts of the evidence. The presence of evil does not function in the Bible so as to deny the goodness of God. The absoluteness of God's sovereign sway never operates so that his ultimacy behind good and evil is entirely symmetrical. Nor does the presence of evil function in such a way as to deny God's sovereignty, or his personal attachment to his covenant people.

After we have accepted that the "givens" are nonnegotiable and done our best to see just where the mystery lies – at heart, it is bound up with the very nature of God – we must ensure that biblical truths function in our lives in much the same way that they function in Scripture. That way we will avoid implicitly denying one truth when we affirm another; we will grow in stability; above all, we will better know the God who has in his grace disclosed himself to rebels like us, taken up our guilt, participated in human suffering, and sovereignly ensured that we will not be tempted above what we are able to bear. In knowing him better we will learn to trust him, and in trusting him we will find rest.

p.221 – some pastoral reflections – excellent

Some grief takes a long time to heal.....

Frequently in the midst of suffering the most comforting "answers" are simple presence, help, silence, tears....

Some who need encouragement need reminding of simple things, not profound and complex answers to the “why” question....

When verbalized answers to anguished cries of “Why?” are required, what and how much we provide will depend largely on what might be called our spiritual diagnosis, that is, our assessment of the needs and capacity of the individual. Some crying “Why?” are not really asking questions; they are simply seeking comfort. Others are asking questions, but cannot at that moment bear more than the briefest reply. When a Christian I do not know very well asks that sort of question, my response to that question may be, “I cannot give you all the answer to your ‘Why?’ But you may draw courage from the fact that the one who loves you so much he died for you asked the same question: ‘My God, my God *why* have you forsaken me?’

In the deepest suffering, many find it almost impossible to pray. Should not the rest of us intercede for them? There have been times when I have seen the face of suffering transformed, permanently transformed, in answer to specific, believing prayer. There is surely something unhealthy and deformed about a vision of Christianity that offers counsel but not intercession – a trap into which I have tumbled on far too many occasions. If God is the God of comfort, he, finally, must provide it – often through human agents, sometimes not, but he must do it. So let us ask, remembering that he delights to give good things to his children, and that very often our lack is a reflection of a pathetic refusal to ask. (James 4:2).

Philippians 2:12-13 – work out, FOR He is working in

Hebrews 10:23 – Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

Hebrews 12:1-2,12-14 – Jesus, author and perfecter; Father disciplines for our good – so run – pursue – strengthen

Romans 8:28-39; 1-17 – sovereign love, purpose, responsibility, personal relationship

Why Christian Education?

Northumberland Christian School was founded in 1972 because of a conviction that a Christian education is an important part of the training of children. Many beliefs undergird this conviction, but five principles are central to the educational philosophy of our school.

1. God’s revelation is foundational for every area of life.

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” (Prov. 9:10) God commands His people to raise their children in a context where love for God and communication about God are pervasive. (Deut. 6:4-8) God has revealed Himself to man, and His revelation is central to all of life.

God has SPOKEN! Education is not man trying to figure out life – it is the creature sitting at the feet of its Creator. Romans 11:36 – From Him and through Him and to Him are all things! To Him be the glory forever. Amen. Christian education seeks to give God His proper place at the center of all things. To teach science with no view to the Creator, is to miss the main point of science – creation is to bring our hearts to rejoice in the glory of God.

In Romans 1:18ff, Paul says that creation reveals the power and glory of God to all men, and to reject that revelation, to refuse to give Him glory and thanks is a great offense to God. Paul says that ignoring God is a great sin, and godlessness leads to wickedness. The culture around us demonstrates this truth – as God has been ignored, wickedness has abounded. Education which omits God and His revelation or treats His revelation as optional and insignificant at best, lays the foundation for increasing wickedness, because there is no fear of God before their eyes. (Rom. 3:18) The real world is spiritual as well as material, and to ignore the centrality of God in education is to “shelter children from the real world.”

Living in the “real world” also means our students must be taught what the world around them is thinking. They need to be taught about evolution and post-modern ideas. Unlike public schools which more and more are locked into teaching politically correct ideas and are afraid to suggest any alternative understanding, we want our children to understand the alternatives to a Christian

world-view. They will stand strong for Christ not by ignoring the thinking of the world but by being able to analyze it clearly in the light of Biblical principles.

God's revelation is not only foundation for understanding science but history as well. Jesus Christ towers at the center of history (as reflected by our calendars!), and any approach to history which does not ask what Jesus Christ reveals to us about God and truth and life will miss the main point of history. True education must continually show Christ to be central to everything. He is THE way, THE truth, and THE life. No one comes to the Father except through Him.

Because God has spoken, there IS absolute truth. There is right and wrong. It is God who defines what love is, and it is only God's revelation that will help us understand people who are made in the image of God and for His glory. A God-centered education is important if our children are going to have a God-centered view of life.

2. Discipleship is an essential part of the Christian life.

Jesus' final words in the gospel of Matthew (28:18-20) are "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Our goal in teaching our children (indeed in all our relationships) is to bring them to become disciples of Jesus Christ and to grow as disciples of Christ. We teach this by our words and by our example. Indeed, Jesus says in Luke 6:40 that "everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher." Christian education is important because we want the teachers of our children to be disciples of Jesus Christ, whose influence in the lives of our children will be focused on making them disciples of Jesus Christ as well.

Our children need to know Jesus as their Prophet, Priest, and King. They must recognize their need for Jesus to teach them the truth in every area of life. They must also recognize their need of Jesus as their Savior day by day. They fall far short of God's law; they do not love God with all their heart and soul and mind and strength, and they do not love their neighbor as themselves. Their only hope is a Savior who lived the righteous life they fail to live and then died on Calvary's cross to pay the penalty for sins. They must also recognize that Jesus is Lord. No one can have Jesus as their Savior if they do not also bow to Him as the Lord of their life.

Children need to be surrounded by these realities every day. Their sin needs to be addressed as sin, and they must be pointed continually to their need for Jesus day by day – their need for Jesus to teach them, to cleanse them and pray for them, and to rule over them and defend them. Our goal is to bring our students to a living relationship with Jesus Christ that impacts every area of their lives every day. In light of this goal, we must immerse our children in the scriptures by daily teaching and memorization that will help them understand and apply God’s Word and lay it up in their hearts.

Much of evangelicalism today promotes a very shallow and erroneous view of Christianity that focuses on getting our children “saved” by something they do, and once they have Jesus as their “personal Savior”, the other areas of their lives are of secondary importance. It is easy to see why this viewpoint would place little value on Christian education. On the other hand, because we believe that God commands us to make *disciples* of our children and to bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord, we value the hours they spend in school as precious time to shape their thinking and wills and hearts to a God-centered view of every area of life. Children have much to learn to give them a solid foundation for life, and elementary school, junior high school, and senior high school are all important times of learning in the lives of our young people. They need a pervasive influence of godly teachers and instruction, not just a few references to spiritual things during the limited time after school and on weekends. All these years are formative years for our children, and as parents we want to do all we can to mold them into passionate servants of God who will make an impact in the world they live.

3. Worship is central to all of life.

Crucial to having the word of Christ dwell in us richly is not only that we teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, but that we sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in our hearts to God. (Col. 3:16) Worship is important because God commands it, emphasizes it, deserves it, prescribes it, seeks it, blesses it, and perpetuates it. An education which ignores worship will undermine the student’s view of the worth and glory of God.

Worship is neither optional nor peripheral. The first four of the Ten Commandments deal with worship, because WE WERE MADE TO WORSHIP GOD. Worship is central to who we are. Our relationships with others are intended to flow from our relationship with God. We were made in His image, and His Son came to redeem us in order to bring us back to God. The goal of life is to join in the fellowship of love and joy in the Trinity. (John 17) Worship is looking outside of ourselves to the One who alone is Worthy. We were made not

only to glorify God but to enjoy Him forever. Students must see worship as central and should be surrounded by staff members who model a genuine joy and delight in God.

4. God made us to be people who think deeply and broadly about life.

God is a God who communicates with WORDS and IDEAS, with POETRY, with SYMBOLS – a revelation that requires us to THINK and FEEL. Students must be challenged to think deeply about the things they read and learn. They must learn to ask questions about root causes and ideas and ultimate consequences. They must also be challenged to articulate feelings as well as thoughts. God reveals His glory by beauty, not just function. He calls us to respond with all our being, not just our minds.

Students must learn to appreciate the abilities and wisdom God has given to many who are not Christians, and yet they must be able to recognize how they fall short of the glory of God. They must also learn to see how God's Word applies to every area of life and thought.

5. Whole-hearted service to God should motivate excellence in the pursuit of developing our skills and abilities.

Students must learn the importance of pursuing excellence, because they are called to live for God. They are called to be like God in the way they work – concerned with precision and efficiency and beauty. They must also imitate God by working in a way that will benefit others, giving of themselves for the good of others. They need to be challenged to look beyond the pragmatism and materialism of the world around them and to aspire to something more than making money so they can have the things they want. They must be encouraged to actively develop their God-given abilities with a view to how they can best serve Him and bring Him glory in the world He has made.

Christian education is exciting! God has called us to seek to pass on to the next generation the things which God has taught us about Himself and His deeds. That's what N.C.S. is all about. We serve a great God, and we want to help young people learn to see all of life from His perspective. We long for them not only to learn but also to delight in who God is and in all the wonders He has done and continues to do. We believe that this delight in learning about God and His world is central to equipping them to be passionate disciples of Jesus Christ who seek to serve Him in every area of life.

NCS Mission Statement

*Northumberland Christian School
was founded in 1972
to provide
a God-centered education
that stimulates in the student
a passion for excellence in learning,
service, and worship.*

Northumberland Christian School

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The Foundation of Christian Education in the Nature of the Triune God

The five distinctives of NCS related to the Trinity

- **1. commitment to a God-centered approach to education.** We embrace a Biblical world and life view and seek to teach students to think about all of life based on the truth which God has revealed. The “real” world is spiritual and not just material; God’s truth is not only relevant but indispensable to a right understanding of every subject.

God is a God of REVELATION. Because He is triune, communication is essential to His nature. From all eternity, the Father has been revealing Himself to the Son and the Spirit, the Son to the Father and the Spirit, the Spirit to the Father and the Son. God is three persons, yet one God.

When God creates the world, He is REVEALING Himself, and that is not something new to Him or foreign to Him. It is who He is – a God who reveals Himself. Psalm 19 – The heavens declare the glory of God. Romans 1:18ff – Creation reveals the power and glory of God to all men – to reject that revelation, to refuse to give Him glory and thanks is a great offense to God. God has SPOKEN! Education is not man trying to figure out life – it is the creature sitting at the feet of its Creator. Romans 11:36 – From Him and through Him and to Him are all things! To Him be the glory forever. Amen. Christian education seeks to give God His proper place at the center of all things. To teach science with no view to the creator, is to miss the main point of science – creation is to bring our hearts to rejoice in the glory of God.

The place where God reveals His glory above all is in sending His only-begotten Son into the world! (Isaiah 40 – and the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all flesh will see it together.) Jesus came to REVEAL God to us. He is the WORD – John 1:1.

John 1:14,18 - The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth... No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known.

John 17:3 – Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

John 17:6 – I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world.

John 17:26 – I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known....

Colossians 1:15 - He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation

Hebrews 1:3 - The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. --- the clearest possible revelation of the glory of Jehovah.

II Corinthians 4:3-6 - And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Jesus Christ is at the center of history and is central to all of life. True education must continually show Christ to be central to everything. He is THE way, THE truth, and THE life. No one comes to the Father except through Him.

Jesus Christ reveals the glory of the Trinity

John 1:1

The Word is the eternal, self-existent One. εν αρχη ην ο λογος
In the beginning WAS the Word. He was already existing in the beginning – imperfect tense - continuous. He is ETERNAL. He is SELF-EXISTENT. Jesus is I AM!
The Jews understood that Jesus was claiming to be EQUAL with God.

John 5:18; 10:30-33

John's gospel is the gospel of the I AM statements – the bread of life, the light of the world, the door, the good shepherd, the resurrection and the life, the way, the truth, and the life, the vine.... But also simply I AM – note John 8:24,28,58; 4:26 - εγω ειμι (AV I am *he*)

Jesus is JEHOVAH – the self-existent One – John 12:41 – Jesus = Jehovah in Isaiah 6
John 17:5 – ...the glory I had with You before the world began

He is a distinct person from the Father in an intimate loving relationship with Him.

και ο λογος προς τον θεον

The word was *with* God – literally *towards* God!

Maclaren: The preposition employed means accurately "towards," and expresses the thought that in the Word there was *motion or tendency towards*, and not merely association with God. It points to reciprocal, conscious communion, and the active going out of love in the direction of God.

The Trinity is the basis and pattern of *relationship*. We were created in the image of God, and part of that is that we are relational beings – created to move *toward* others. Our sin results in our moving away from others – redemption helps us move toward God and others.

He is fully GOD. και θεος ην ο λογος

Jehovah's Witnesses and others have tried to teach from this verse that the Word was a god. Failure to understand Greek grammar. Position is used for EMPHASIS. THE is used to indicate which is the subject of the linking verb. (e.g. God is love; ie. It is not true that God is the Word or that Love is God)

John's whole gospel emphasizes this truth and comes to a climax in chapter 20:28 when Thomas falls before the risen Christ and exclaims, My Lord and my God.

Imagine what it was like for the disciples to begin to understand the Trinity – they hear Jesus speaking again and again of the Father as a distinct person from Himself, yet also clearly claiming EQUALITY with Him – claiming to be GOD Himself.

GOD IS TRIUNE – IT IS HIS VERY NATURE – HE ALWAYS HAS BEEN AND WILL BE

The Son is eternally begotten of the Father. John 1:14,18; 3:16; 5:26

Berkhof - The generation of the Son is that ETERNAL and NECESSARY act of the first person of the Trinity, whereby He, within the divine Being, is the ground of a second personal subsistence like His own, and puts this second person in possession of the whole divine essence, without any division, alienation, or change... This generation of the Son should not be regarded as an act completed in the past, but as a necessary and therefore eternal act of the Father. It is timeless, always continuing, and yet ever completed.

The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. John 15:26; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 4:6

Berkhof - Spiration is that eternal and necessary act of the first and second persons in the Trinity whereby they, within the divine Being, become the ground of the personal subsistence of the Holy Spirit, and put the third person in possession of the whole divine essence, without any division, alienation or change.

Matthew 28:19-20 - the three Persons have one being (name, not names); and that the one being exists in three Persons

II Corinthians 13:14

The mystery of the Trinity lies at the very heart of our faith – one God in three persons

Ralph A. Smith – Trinity and Reality

(The mystery of the trinity) – 6-7 – To conclude contradiction from complexity is rash folly. There is a very great difference between something being a demonstrated contradiction and something being incomprehensible... For some, it is offensive to think that the Christian faith has at its very center a mystery, an incomprehensible truth...(but trinitarian faith demands) not a sacrifice of the intellect, but the sacrifice of *the pretense of intellectual autonomy*: the notion that the mind or reason of man is the ultimate judge of truth. The Truth of the Trinity requires us to accept what we cannot fully comprehend.

The truth that defines a Christian as a Christian, our faith in the triune God, is *revealed* truth.

32 – Through creation and history, God is manifesting Himself. He does not hide from us but shines the light of His glory so that we can seek and know Him. Men fail to see Him not because He is far off but because sinful man willfully shuts his eyes to the light.... It is not simply that whatever God does must, in the nature of the case, reveal something about who He is. He reveals Himself because *revelation is an essential aspect of His trinitarian nature*. The triune God

shows Himself to us because He delights to have us draw near to Him in a real personal relationship.

Understanding the trinity is not only essential for teaching science and history, but it essential for understanding PEOPLE! We are made in the image of a Triune God!

INDIVIDUALITY is rooted in the Trinity.

Smith - Each of the three Persons of the Trinity is completely free, completely Himself, and completely free to express Himself. So, too, every person who enters heaven will be granted full freedom, individuality, and self-expression. Because we are made in the image of the triune God, we look to Him to understand ourselves. To refer to the Persons as “individuals” would not be appropriate, but there are three in God who refer to themselves as “I.” The three Persons of the Trinity are one God, one being, and therefore share their attributes in a unity that transcends the unity of the new humanity in Christ. But each of the Persons of the Trinity is unique, and each one preserves and upholds the uniqueness of the others. Thus, the Son is free to be Himself and to express all that is proper to His being because the Father and the Spirit jealously guard the Son’s glory and person. This perfect freedom of self-expression and individuality in God reveals the perfect freedom given to the resurrected believer in heaven.

[contrast Islam, Buddhism]

Unique among the religions and worldviews of man, the Bible teaches of a trinitarian God who indwells man in covenantal oneness to lead man into the fellowship of love that characterizes the divine society.... Just as the mutual indwelling of the three Persons does not interfere with freedom and true personhood, but instead brings full and perfect mutual understanding, so also God’s dwelling in us does not take away from our individuality. Rather it ensures that, through understanding His Word, we will grow and develop into fuller and better persons, more Christ-like in perfect love and goodness.

RELATIONSHIP is rooted in the Trinity.

LOVE can only flow from a Triune God. | John 4:7-21

Smith - Of all the gods in all the religions of the world, only the triune God of the Bible is truly and wholly personal... A monad is a being who is eternally alone – with no other to love, no other with whom to communicate, and no other with whom to have fellowship. In the case of such a solitary god, love, fellowship, and communication cannot be essential to his being.... (this is) far from the biblical concept of a personal fellowship of love among equals. [contrast Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism]

What we have said here about love applies to other attributes of God also. In the Bible, words like *righteousness*, *faithfulness*, and *goodness* refer to divine attributes that ultimately require the doctrine of the Trinity. None of these notions can be defined biblically apart from the relationships between Father, Son, and Spirit.... Righteousness for the triune God means that each of the persons respects and preserves the boundaries of the others. The Father honors and

Son and does not allow the infringement of what belongs to the Son. Goodness refers to their mutual seeking of blessing for one another, faithfulness to their keeping their word with one another. In the absence of a relationship among persons, these and similar words become so utterly abstract that meaning disappears.

RELATIONSHIP is primary, not RULES. But there is no dichotomy between love and law – law flows from love. God’s laws are expressions of His LOVE for us. Keeping the law expresses love. (John 15:9-10) The Father expresses fatherly love by instructing the Son. The Son’s obedience is His response of love. Law summed up in Love.

Teach students the importance of relationships – teach a right attitude toward law – ‘rules’ – don’t make unnecessary and burdensome rules that are more for your convenience than their good. Model a DELIGHT in the law of God and a MEEKNESS in dealing with His providence.

Without a Triune God who IS love and who DEFINES love, “love” is undefinable and unreliable. We live in a society which still enjoys many of the fruits of a country that was built upon an understanding of the Triune God, but the foundations are mostly gone. People are still encouraged to treat each other with love and respect, but they are taught that they are nothing but highly evolved animals who came about by chance, that there is no God, and there are no absolutes.

- **2. commitment to discipleship as an essential part of the Christian life.** We teach Jesus Christ as Lord and seek to lift the vision of each student to bow to His authority in every aspect of life. Embracing Him as Prophet, Priest, and King, with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength is the pervasive goal of education at NCS.

Discipleship begins by coming to know who God is and what He is like, then seeking to be like Him.

What God does in history flows from His nature as a Triune God. God in His very nature is a SELF-GIVING GOD, and all He does flows from Who He IS

John 3:16 – God so loved the world that He GAVE His only-begotten Son.... WHY? Because that is WHO HE IS

John 17:24 – the glory you have given me, *because you loved me before the creation of the world*

We usually describe God’s working in history in terms of covenants – the covenant of redemption, the covenant of grace.

Smith - The covenant is a revelation of the very life of the triune God... The trinitarian covenant is not a mere agreement among the three Persons. Covenant means *relationship*, and the essence of the covenant relationship is *love*.

The primary meaning of the covenant cannot be merely “agreement” or “contract.” Rather, the covenant is a relationship of love in which each party commits himself to sacrifice and self-denial for the blessing of the other.... The Persons of the Trinity share a covenant of love and bestow that love on man. Trinitarianism offers us a doctrine of a God who is in contact with us and the everyday realities of our world.

Myers - The eternal covenant is nothing less than the shared divine life of the Trinity. The bond of love that characterizes the eternal relations of Father, Son and H.S. is the eternal form or structure of the covenant. The covenant originates in the WAY the Father, Son, and H.S. relate to one another. *The structure or content of that covenant is sacrificial, self-denial.* That is what is revealed in the history of God’s working with creation – *Father, Son, and H.S. are each persons that deny themselves, sacrifice themselves and love one another and give to one another. Each of the three gives himself freely and wholly to the others. They are covenantally and ontologically constituted in their self-giving love and obedience.* It is the origin not only of love but of the ritual of love – self-denying service to another. The Father denies Himself to glorify the Son; the Son denies Himself to glorify the Father; the Son dies to Himself to glorify the Father. The Spirit is also self-effacing in His love for the Father and the Son. And this eternal dance of sacrificial self-giving is the origin and ground of both God’s covenantal love for His people, as well as His people’s covenantal love one for the other.

Creation and redemption are gifts among the Trinity

John 8:54; 12:27-28; 17:1-5, 24-26 – Jesus glorifies Father, Father glorifies Son

The mutual giving of the covenant characterizes both the original and the new creations, because mutual giving defines the covenant as the expression of love.

Col. 1:16 – All things were created by Him and for Him.

Smith - If the world is the gift of the Father to the Son through the Spirit, then the world reveals the glory of the Father to the Son and of the Son to the Father. The revelation of God’s glory is first and foremost an aspect of intertrinitarian fellowship and communion. Man may never know the full meaning of the symbols of the world, for the ramifications of each and every symbol resonate with the whole in an unfathomably complex matrix of truth. But God knows the full meaning, and that is what matters. The Persons of the Trinity share their enjoyment of the world with one another as the world reflects the beauty of God. – Prov. 8:30-31

When we understand that the symbolism of the world is primarily an aspect of the trinitarian conversation and fellowship, we are ready to appreciate how profoundly significant it is that God reveals Himself to man. *It is not so much that God condescends to speak to man, as it is that God lifts man up into the heavenly conversation.* The symbolizing work of creation – the glorious expression of God’s infinite and manifold beauty – is first of all a fellowship of love between the Persons of the Trinity. But God brings man into that fellowship. To be in covenant with God is to be in dialogue with Him. In this way, we are allowed to know what God knows and enjoy what He enjoys: “Taste and see that the Lord is good!” (Ps.34:8) God created the world with beauty and function and the Garden of Eden was His dwelling place with man. There is everywhere an excess of beauty compared to function, strictly speaking. But beauty is functional in its own way because it expresses the glory of God (Ps.19:1) and leads to the worship of God. This point is far more important than modern men realize.

Jeffrey Meyers: *Toward a New Biblical Theology of the Trinity: A Proposal for the 21st Century* (audio tape)

How does God’s Trinitarian being help us understand God’s purpose for creating the world?

He creates the world to gift and grace creation with the blessed community and happiness He experiences.

The persons of the Trinity also participate in creation as a gift to the other persons in the Trinity.

e.g. The Father creates the world as a gift for His Son. Col. 1:16 – for Him; Creation is an exchange of gifts between the persons of the Trinity.

Don’t lose the individuality of the three persons, though they are One.

Berkhof: The second and third persons are not dependent powers or mere intermediaries, but independent authors, together with the Father. The work was not divided among the three persons, but the whole work (though from different aspects) is ascribed to each one of the three persons.

Father, Son, and H.S. work together AND for one another in creating the world and man.

Also in redemption – John 6:37,39 – All that the Father gives me will come to me...; 13:3 – All things have been given to me by my Father – The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hands. – John 14:13 – that the Father may be glorified in the Son. I Cor. 15:24 – Son working for the Father; John 14 – Spirit will glorify Father and Son.

The Father redeems humanity for the Son; the redeemed humanity is the gift of the Son to the Father, and the Spirit's gift to the Father and the Son.

Creation is FOR THE SON - the gift of the Father and the Spirit to the Son. Humanity is created to be the Son's bride, given to Him by the Father and Spirit to love and to cherish.

The Father prepares daughter humanity for the Son, and both of them send the Spirit to beautify and glorify her in preparation for her entrance into the Trinitarian family.

Creation is FOR THE FATHER – the gift of the Son and Spirit to the Father. The Son in the incarnation unites Himself with created human nature, and then by the Spirit offers it to the Father as a gift. Creation is made to be the Father's adopted son, made in the image of His eternal Son. Heb.2:13 – Here am I, and the children God has given me.

Creation is FOR THE SPIRIT – the Father and Son create humanity for the Spirit to indwell. Father and Son build a house for the Spirit to dwell in. The Spirit will be the Lord and giver of Life, and humanity is created to be the Spirit's temple.

BEHOLD YOUR GOD! – continual self-giving is His very nature

Hierarchy and equality are rooted in the Trinity

grace vs. power – Gentiles lord it over them Mark 10:42-44;
LOVE – Matt. 22:36-40; John 17:1,3-6,20-26

How important to teach students a Biblical view of authority and worth, of hierarchy and equality – We are all of equal worth in the eyes of God, and should also be in the eyes of one another. That does not contradict that God gives each of us different roles, different gifts, and different circumstances. God never gives someone a 'superior' position, whether it is superior by authority or gifts or circumstances, in order for that person to be able to LORD IT OVER someone else or to enjoy their 'power'. All of our authority, gifts, and circumstances are to be used to SERVE others. Grace, not power, is ultimate because we are made in the image of a Triune God who is all-powerful, but always uses that power in self-giving love.

Smith - When we consider the gospel accounts, especially the Gospel of John, another aspect of God's self-revelation through the incarnation of Christ becomes clear. One of the most frequently repeated themes in the Gospels is **that the Father sent the Son into the world** (Mt.10:40; 15:24; Mk.9:37; Lk.4:43; 9:48; 10:16; **Jn. 3:17; 4:34; 5:23,24,30,36,37; 6:29,38,39,40; 7:16,18; 10:18...**) **Hebrews 10:5-9.**

This fact has a number of significant implications, but one of the most simple and obvious is that **there is a hierarchy within the Trinity**. The Father sends the Son. The Son submits to the Father's will... (Jn.8:29; 14:31). Of course, the very name *Father* and *Son* imply the hierarchical relationship, expressed so frequently in the Gospels as Jesus' obedience to the Father and His seeking the Father's honor and glory. Though it is not emphasized, the same relationship can be seen between the Spirit and the Son, for the Son, together with the Father. Sends the Spirit, and the Spirit glorifies the Son (Jn. 15:26; 16:7,14).

Wayne Grudem: *Systematic Theology*. The different functions that we see the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit performing are simply outworkings of an eternal relationship between the three persons, one that has always existed and will exist for eternity. God has always existed as three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These distinctions are essential to the very nature of God himself, and they could not be otherwise. Cf. Grudem p.250 – (he was the Son before the Father gave Him - the Father chose us IN HIM before the foundation of the world, etc.)

Smith - Hierarchy in relationship means that the Father is greater than the Son in His *office* only, not in His *being*... The Persons of the Trinity are equal in their being but different in their personhood, existing in a hierarchy of Father, Son, and Spirit.

There should be no dichotomy between hierarchy and equality among men, because they are not in tension in God. It is because of sin that equality and hierarchy in human relationships come into conflict....

Grudem: Finally, it may be said that there are no differences in deity, attributes, or essential nature between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each person is fully God and has all the attributes of God. *The only distinctions between the members of the Trinity are in the ways they relate to each other and to creation*. In those relationships they carry out roles that are appropriate to each person.... Ontological equality but economic subordination... equal in being but subordinate in role.

LEADERSHIP and RULE MUST NEVER BE DIVORCED FROM SELF-GIVING, because both are inherent in the Triune nature of God.

Adam was to SERVE the Garden... the word *serve* points to the essence of leadership and rule in the Bible. The ruler is the one who serve others, as we saw above in the teaching of Jesus... The Father "rules" the Son only *for* the Son, in order to bless and glorify Him. The Son and the Spirit submit to the rule of the Father because they love the Father. Rule and authority among men as well as man's rule over the rest of creation were designed to be a form of service for the blessing of all.

The root of CONTENTMENT is recognizing my worth as a person created in the image of God and recognizing that He has made me exactly who I am and given me the role and circumstances in which I find myself. I don't need to fight to be someone I am not. I can be content with the part He has given me in the context of His great plan.

Service to others flows from the Trinity

The Incarnation shows us a Father who freely GIVES and a Son who delights to do His Father's will in order to glorify His Father and provide a dwelling place for the Spirit.

Peter Leithart: The Dance of God, The Dance of Life: Perichoresis in Creature and Creator

John 17:20-21 – The life of the Trinity is a life in which each of the persons opens Himself up as a dwelling place for the others, and treats the others as a place where each person can go to dwell and to give and to love – and that is what is supposed to be going on the church.

The mutual interpenetration of our lives – weep with those who weep, etc. – we are occupied in each other's lives.

We should be opening ourselves up, not locking others out, and seeing others as a place to minister.

Loving your neighbor as yourself, is living the way God lives.

God has revealed His character to us PRE-EMINENTLY in Jesus- that's where we must go to know what God is like. The Father is IN Jesus, so Jesus reveals the Father to us.

Perichoresis – related to a similar Greek word, which means to dance around. Perichorein – to indwell; perichoreuein – to dance around. The life of the Trinity becomes an eternal dance. God is eternally active – eternally in motion. A continual movement, a continual dance of giving and receiving, of pouring oneself out and receiving the other in return. That's the life of God – God's life is perichoreographed.

God's perichoresis – mutual indwelling – is reflected in many ways in creation. “I see his father in him... I can tell he studied with so and so...” – influential people in our lives indwell us and make us who we are. We sometimes hear our parents when we address our children. No man is an island – God has made us so that we will be indwelt by others. God has made us so that we can't be ourselves unless other people are living out their lives in us.

We also see perichoresis in the use of metaphor – Scripture is constantly talking about one thing as if it is another thing – God is a rock; a righteous man is like a tree... The Bible is constantly talking metaphorically about things that are distinct in reality as if they were the same. Reflects the Trinity.

How can Adam represent the whole human race? Representation also rooted in perichoresis. In Adam or In Christ.

- **3. commitment to worship as central to all of life.** We teach students that the most important thing in life is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

Music is used extensively at N.C.S. as a vehicle for worship and for fixing God's Word in our hearts as well as in our minds.

Revelation is given to draw us into the fellowship of the Trinity

John 17 - knowing God – indwelling, delight – the goal of life is to join in the fellowship of the Trinity

Man cannot truly fulfill his task apart from Christ, for the essence of man's work is *worship*. God gives the world to man as a gift of love. Man responds to God's love by presenting himself and his work back to God.

Man was created to worship God and have covenantal fellowship with Him... Worship in the Bible involves the whole body and soul in song, dance, prayer, and feasting – the body and the soul... it is not a call to the grim and somber activity that some consider it to be. Nor is it a secondary activity. *Worship is the most essential activity of man. It is what he was created to do. In worship, man comes face to face with the eternal God. He has fellowship and communion with the Infinite One. All of man's deepest desires for life, for blessing, for knowledge, and for glory meet their highest and most holy expression in true worship. When man does not worship, he denies a fundamental aspect of his humanity. He degrades his spirit and starves his soul.*

John 4:23 – Father seeks worshippers;

I Peter 3:18 – to bring you to God; I Peter 2:9 – a people belonging to God;

I Chron.16:35 – save us, that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise

In worship we imitate trinitarian fellowship at a creaturely level... This means that Christian worship has implications for our relationships with other men as well. *Righteously seeking the honor and blessing of other people is an aspect of biblical love and an imitation of the Trinity in our daily lives.* No other religion or worldview is capable of expressing, much less teaching, this truth. Only in biblical religion can the worship of God and the love expressed in our daily lives be related to the nature of God Himself because only in biblical religion is worship an extension of the eternal fellowship of the triune God.

Mutual Indwelling is the Biblical language used to express the depth of unity among the persons of the Trinity – they are three but he is one. The Father is IN the Son; the Son is IN the Father; the Father and Son are IN the Spirit; the Spirit is IN the Father and Son. PERICHORESIS

John 10:38; 14:7-11,20; 16:13-15; 17:21

The Father, Son, and Spirit mutually *indwell* one another. This theme appears quite explicitly in the Gospel of John, but to appreciate the full meaning of the notion of indwelling, we have to

consider the history of God's self-revelation. When biblical writers speak of being "in" someone or something, they employ the analogy of physical space to convey the intimacy of covenant union.

John 14:7-10 – Jesus reveals the Father because the Father is IN Him and He is IN the Father.

Hendriksen: John 14:10-11 – I am in the Father and the Father is in me – Reason cannot penetrate these mysteries. Jewish monotheism refuses to accept the possibility that the divine essence can unfold itself in more than one divine person. Only Christian faith will do.... Father and Son are one in essence, that is, in all their divine attributes. The Father and the Son (also the Spirit, mentioned in 14:16,17,26) do not exist apart as human individualities do, but in and through each other as moments in one divine, self-conscious life.

The Jews did not make the mistake of thinking that when Jesus made statements of this character he referred merely to moral unity or ethical harmony. They clearly understood that nothing less than essential equality with God was intended.

v.10 "The words that I speak to you I do not speak of myself, but the Father who dwells in me is performing his works." Whenever Jesus speaks, the Father works by means of this speaking. Every *word* of Jesus is a *work* of the Father! This, however, does not mean that the Father is acting like a ventriloquist who speaks through his dummy. On the contrary, the Son speaks the mind of the Father *because this is also his own mind....*

v.11 – Believe me, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; but if not, then believe me because of the works themselves. They are urged to take Jesus at his word! This is ever the highest type of faith. But if this is difficult for them, let them then believe because of the works considered by themselves.

14:16 – the Holy Spirit is not merely a power but a person, just like the Father and the Son. He is *another* Helper, not a *different* Helper... If Jesus is divine, the Spirit must be divine also.

John 16:14-15 – There exists between the persons of the Trinity an eternal, voluntarily assumed relationship of love and friendship, each working for the glory and honor of the others. (14:13; 17:4,5)

The heart of redemption is God bringing us into the deep fellowship of the Trinity. The preposition IN is used repeatedly to talk of our union with God in Christ.

John 17:1-5; 14:20-23; 17:20-23, 26; Eph.1 – IN, etc.

Hendriksen: 17:1 – Glorify your Son in order that the Son may glorify you. His prayer is not a selfish prayer. Jesus wants to be glorified in order that by means of this glory he may glorify the Father. The cross and the crown reveal not only the Son's but also the Father's virtues...

17:3 – To know the Father and Jesus Christ refers to joyful acknowledgment of his sovereignty, glad acceptance of his love, and intimate fellowship with his person through Scripture and prayer.

17:5 – It is hardly necessary to add that in this yearning for future glory or future joy there was not even a trace of vulgar selfishness. To be sure, whatever God does he does for his own glory, and Jesus is God! Even in his mediatorial capacity it is the divine person who is speaking his words and performing his

deeds. Nevertheless, when we remember that God is love, that the persons in the Holy Trinity glorify one another, and that the glory and the joy of the exalted Mediator includes also this element that “he ever lives to make intercession for those who draw near unto God through Him, the problem has been solved. Here in 17:5 the Son is looking forward to the glory of rejoicing in the joy of his saved people, the very people whose salvation he (together with the Father and the Spirit) had planned from eternity, before the world existed. God ever delights in his own works. The Son glories in the Father’s glory, and rejoices in the joy of all the redeemed. When they sing, he sings! (Zeph. 3:17)

Maclaren: 17:1-5 – The petition not only reveals the conscious divinity of the Son, but also His willing acceptance of the Cross; for the glorifying sought is that reached through death, resurrection, and ascension, and that introductory clause, ‘the hour is come,’ points to the impending sufferings as the first step in the answer to the petition.... So willingly and desiringly did this Isaac climb the mount of sacrifice. ‘For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the Cross.

The purpose of this petition is to be noted; namely, the Son’s glorifying of the Father. No taint of selfishness corrupted His prayer. Not for Himself, but for men, did He desire His glory. He sought return to that serene and lofty seat, and the elevation of His limited manhood to the throne, not because He was wearied of earth or impatient of weakness, sorrows, or limitations, but that He might more fully manifest by that Glory, the Father’s name. To make the Father known is to make the Father glorious; for He is all fair and lovely....

The life which He comes to give is a life which flows from the revelation that He makes of the Father, received, not as mere intellectual knowledge, but as loving acquaintance.

God in His saving grace brings His people into that same covenantal love that is shared by the Persons of the Trinity. The language of indwelling obviously does not mean that we become ontologically one with Him. The distinction between Creator and creature is absolute and eternal... Ontological unity between Creator and creature is not conceivable in the biblical view. However, that does not mean that God is far from us or that we cannot deeply relate to Him. The unity of covenantal oneness, expressed perfectly in the mutual indwelling of the Persons of the Trinity, is granted to us in Christ. We are in Him and He is in us by His Spirit. In the covenant, God and man are united in love.

Unique among the religions and worldviews of man, the Bible teaches of a trinitarian God who indwells man in covenantal oneness to lead man into the fellowship of love that characterizes the divine society.... Just as the mutual indwelling of the three Persons does not interfere with freedom and true personhood, but instead brings full and perfect mutual understanding, so also God’s dwelling in us does not take away from our individuality. Rather it ensures that, through understanding His Word, we will grow and develop into fuller and better persons, more Christ-like in perfect love and goodness.

Hendriksen: 14:20 – On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me and I am in you. - In the new dispensation, beginning with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the disciples (and those who afterward embrace the Christ by living faith) will recognize and joyfully acknowledge the closeness of the relationship between the Father and the Son. They will then also understand that this union is in turn the pattern for the relationship between Christ and his followers. To be sure, these two relationships are not identical. Between the Father and the Son there is *basically* (as the root of the unity in outward operation) a unity of *essence*. This unity is *absolute*, incapable of growth. On the other hand, between the Son and believers there is an *ethical and spiritual* unity. We love him because he first *loved* us. This unity is capable of growth. Nevertheless, in view of the fact that Christ by means of the Spirit actually lives in the hearts of believers, the former is truly a pattern for the latter.

So close is the relation between Christ and believers that while he is the vine, they are the vine-branches. He is the shepherd; they the sheep. They are the members of the body of which He is the head. One of the most striking passages in this connection is certainly Rev. 3:21, which shows not only *the closeness and tenderness* of the relationship between Christ and believers, but also indicates, as does the passage which we are studying (14:20), that this relationship is a reflection of the everlasting and ontological union between the Father and the Son. Rev.3:21 – To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.

14:23 – If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him. And we will come to him and make our home with him. In the Spirit both the Father and the Son will come to (προς face to face with) the one who loves the Lord, and will make their home with (παρὰ by the side of) him. The clause “and make our home with him,” indicates a very close and intimate relationship. Father and Son, in and through the Spirit, are ever *by the side of* those who love their Lord, ready to comfort, ready to cheer, ready to extend any and all necessary help.

17:21 – He asks that the oneness of all believers resemble that which exists eternally between the Father and the Son. In both cases the unity is of a definitely spiritual nature. To be sure, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one in essence; believers, on the other hand, are one in mind, effort, and purpose. These two kinds of unity are not the same. Nevertheless, there is a resemblance. God is love.... It is exactly in loving one another that the oneness of all believers comes to expression.

17:22-23 – The oneness for which Christ makes request is more than an ethical unity. It is a oneness so intimate, so vital, so personal that it is patterned after, and based on, the relations which exist between the persons of the Holy Trinity. It is a oneness not only of faith, hope, and love but of life itself. Together, believers constitute one Body, of which Christ is the exalted (organic and ruling) Head.

Ephesians 1 – and other Pauline writings – IN Him – IN Christ – every spiritual blessing IN Christ; His workmanship, created IN Christ Jesus to do good works....

Smith - The God of the Bible is the God for whom self-giving and fellowship, communication and sharing, are essential to His triune covenantal being.

Our Father shares Himself with us through the Word by the indwelling Spirit. In God, the full knowledge of the trinitarian Persons is a reflection of their utter self-giving in mutual indwelling.

Covenantal perichoresis means perfect communication, for the Speaker, the Spoken, and the Breath of God are One. Since the mutual indwelling of the Persons of the Trinity is so fundamental to their perfect mutual understanding, we should not be surprised that for man, the Spirit's covenantal indwelling and illumining work is essential for him to know God and the revelation He gives in Scripture.

Our Union with God is not only a state of being but a continual activity – not only IN, but TO. God has made us to be like Himself (in His image), coming TO Him, giving ourselves to Him, revealing ourselves to Him, and embracing Him as He comes to us and dwells IN us. The key words of the gospel are words of *continual motion toward* – believe – trust – come – draw near

Matthew 11:28 – Come to me

John 14:1,3 -

Trust in God, trust also in Me – one object of faith, not two; Jesus reveals the Father to us;

Trust in = believe INTO

Maclaren: It is of no use to say to people, "Let not your hearts be troubled," unless you finish the verse and say, "Believe in God, believe also in Christ."

Hendriksen –

John 14:1 – Continue to trust in God; also in me continue to trust. This implies: I will continue to provide for you in every need. Let not your hearts any longer be troubled.

14:2 – By means of my humiliation and exaltation, I prepare a place for you. This is my mission. Without my death there would be no place for you; without my ascension and the sending forth of the Spirit, you would not be ready for the place.

14:3 – Observe that instead of saying what one might expect him to say, namely, "And when I go and prepare a place for you, I come again and will take you *to that place*," Jesus says something that is far more comforting: "I will take you *to myself*" (or: *to be face to face with me*; *προς* as in 1:1). *So wonderful is Christ's love for his own that he is not satisfied with the idea of merely bringing them to heaven. He must needs take them into his own embrace.*

John 1:12 – believe INTO; take, receive

John 1:14 – How does Jesus make God known? INCARNATION – became FLESH – we beheld His glory – not just to make Him KNOWN, but so we might RECEIVE HIM v. 12

v.16 – of His fullness we have all received – (v.14 – full of grace and truth) –

Maclaren: To *behold* is much, but to *possess* is more. It is much to say that Christ comes to manifest God, but that is a poor, starved account of the purpose of His coming, if that is all you have to say. He comes to manifest Him. Yes! But He comes to communicate Him, not merely to dazzle us with a vision, not merely to show us Him as from afar, not merely to make Him known to understanding or to heart; but to bestow – in no mere metaphor, but in simple, literal fact – the absolute possession of the divine nature.

‘We beheld His glory’ is a reminiscence that thrills the Evangelist, though half a century has passed since the vision gleamed upon his eyes; but ‘of His fullness have all we received’ is infinitely and unspeakably more. And the manifestation was granted that the possession might be sure, for this is the very center and heart of Christianity, that *in Him who is Christianity God is not merely made known, but given; not merely beheld, but possessed.*

In order that the divine fullness might belong to us there was needed that the Word should be made flesh; and there was further needed that incarnation should be crowned by sacrifice, and that life should be perfected in death. The alabaster box had to be broken before the house could be filled with the odor of the ointment. If I may so say, the sack, the coarse-spun sack of Christ’s humanity, had to be cut asunder in order that the wealth that was stored in it might be poured into our hands. *God came near us in the life, but God became ours in the death, of His dear Son. Incarnation was needed for that great privilege – ‘we beheld His glory’; but the Crucifixion was needed in order to make possible the more wondrous prerogative: ‘of His fullness have we all received.’ God gives Himself to men in the Christ whose life revealed and whose death imparted Him to the world.*

What do we receive? V.12 – we receive HIM.

Maclaren: *Christ is more than all His gifts. All His gifts are treasured up in Him and inseparable from Him. We get Jesus Christ Himself.*

The blessings that we receive may be stated in many different ways. You may say we get pardon, purity, hope, joy, the prospect of heaven, power for service; all these and a hundred more designations by which we might describe the one gift. All these are but the consequences of our having got the Christ within our hearts. He does not give pardon and the rest, as a king might give pardon and honors, a thousand miles off, bestowing it by a mere word, upon some criminal, but He gives all that He gives because He gives Himself. The real possession that we receive is neither more nor less than a loving Savior, to enter our spirits and abide there, and be the spirit of our spirits, and the life of our lives.

John 17:26 – I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known IN ORDER THAT the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.

Maclaren: This is the solemn and calm close of Christ's great High-priestly prayer; the very last words that He spoke before Gethsemane and His passion. In it He sums up both the purpose of His life and the petitions of His prayer, and presents the perfect fulfilment of the former as the ground on which He asks the fulfilment of the latter.

'I have declared Your name.' We have here Christ's own account of His whole life. The meaning of it all is the revelation of the heart of God. Not by words only, but far more by deeds...He has declared God's name, His last best name of Love... Love is the center of divinity, and all the rest that we call God is but circumference and fringe of that central brightness... That name is only declared by this Son.... Christ, the historical fact of the life and death of Jesus Christ, is the sole surviving source of certitude, which is blessedness, as to whether there is a God, and what sort of a God He is.

I will declare it – in the cross! And in the resurrection, ascension, Pentecost, and the whole history of the Church. The difference between the two volumes of revelation – that which includes the work of Christ upon earth, and that which includes His revelation from the heavens – is this, that the first volume contains all the facts, and the second volume contains His interpretation and application of the facts in the understanding and hearts of His people.

Christ says that His end, an end which is surely attained in the declaration of the divine name, is that 'the love with which You have loved Me may be in them.'... Continuous, full, perfect was the love that knit the Father to the Son, and continuous, full, and perfect was the consciousness of abiding in that love, which lay like light upon the spirit of Him that said 'I delight to do Your will.'.... And all that love Christ gives to us as deep, as continuous, as unreserved. Our consciousness of God's love is meant by Christ to be like His own.

'And I in them'. One may well say, 'How can it be that love should be transferred? How can it be that the love of God to me shall be identical with the love of God to Christ?' There is only one answer. If Christ dwells in me, then God's love to Him falls upon me by no transference, but by my incorporation into Him. And I would urge that this great truth of the actual indwelling of Christ in the soul is no mere piece of rhetorical exaggeration, nor a wild and enthusiastic way of putting the fact that the influence of His teaching and the beauty of His example can sway us; but it is a plain and absolute truth that the divine Christ can come into and abide in the narrow room of our poor hearts. And if He does this, then 'he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit'; and the Christ in me receives the sunshine of the divine love. That does not destroy,

but heightens, my individuality. I am more and not less myself because 'I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me.'

So, dear brethren! It all comes to this – we may each of us, if we will, have Jesus Christ for Guest and Inhabitant in our hearts. If we have, then, since God loves Him, He must love me who have Him within me, and as long as God loves Christ He cannot cease to love me, nor can I cease to be conscious of His love to me, and whatsoever gifts His love bestows upon Jesus, pass over in measure, and partially, to myself. Thus immortality, heave, glory, all blessedness in heaven and earth, are the fruit and crystallization, so to speak, of that oneness with Christ which is possible for us. And the conditions are simply that we shall with joyful trust accept His declaration of the Father's name, and see God manifest in Him; and welcome in our inmost hearts that great Gospel. Then His prayer, and the travail of His soul, will reach their end even in me, and 'the love wherewith the Father loved the Son shall be in me,' and the Son Himself shall dwell in my heart.

- **4. commitment to a broad education that embraces ideas and truths as well as skills.** We pursue a broad background in history, science, literature, languages, and the arts in order to build students with character who think deeply about life.

Because He is a God who communicates – He is a God of language – a God who reveals His glory by beauty, not just function. A God who communicates with WORDS and IDEAS, with POETRY, with SYMBOLS – a revelation that requires us to THINK and FEEL.

Smith 72 – Why should God reveal Himself? Because He is a triune God for whom the fellowship and mutual communication of Father, Son and Spirit is essential. It is not possible to imagine the Christian God not communicating, because communication is an aspect of His covenantal life as God. Why would God reveal Himself in words? Because there is something about human language that is so perfectly analogous to the communication of the Persons of the Trinity that the Second Person may be called the Word of God....

All of this clearly shows that in the Christian worldview, God is a God who communicates verbally. The rich fellowship of personal oneness and love in the Trinity comes to expression in *words*. Because God is this sort of God, He created the world by *speaking* and gave man the gift of language. The mutual indwelling of the Persons of the Trinity is the background for understanding the meaning of God's dwelling in us, and the ultimate basis for the idea that words can communicate truth.

(recall previous quote by Smith) : God created the world with beauty and function and the Garden of Eden was His dwelling place with man. There is everywhere an excess of beauty compared to function, strictly speaking. But beauty is functional in its own way because it

expresses the glory of God (Ps.19:1) and leads to the worship of God. This point is far more important than modern men realize.

- **5. commitment to pursuing excellence in acquiring skills for continued learning and service in God’s world.** We challenge students to develop math, science, language, and computer skills which will equip them to be used by God in the world in which they live.

Excellence because I don’t live for myself, but for Him! Creativity like God – doing things well – to please God – to benefit others – self-giving

Work is basic to the Christian worldview. The Bible begins with God working six days and resting one, setting a pattern for human life and society but, more importantly, revealing what kind of God He truly is. God is a God who works, and all His work is emphatically trinitarian.

But why does God work at all? Work is not essential to His life, as if He would not have food to eat if he did not work. What is work for God? The answer is that God works because He delights in it. It is the joy of trinitarian fellowship. God works even though it is not necessary because the Persons of the Trinity enjoy working together. The words “play” and “fun” are too light to adequately express the truth that God is a God of joy, but they do point to important aspects of human life where man images God. Play and fun are not only forms of recreation and relaxation, they can also describe our attitude toward work.

The essence of work is *mutual service*. Jesus gave us a basic principle of social and economic life when He taught that he who would be greatest must be the servant of all. In this, He was pointing to the principle of His own life, for He came not to be served, but to serve and give His life a ransom form many. His example of selfless service expresses the true nature of work. God has called us to serve one another and to seek mutual blessing through our labor. The Holy Spirit has given each of us gifts to exercise for the good of all (I Cor. 12). Man as worker expresses the trinitarian life of the God who works: “My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.” (John 5:17). In particular, God has called us to work and labor for His kingdom and glory, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” (Eph. 2:10)

We seek to stimulate students to develop their God-given abilities to the fullest for the glory of God.

NCS MISSION STATEMENT

*Northumberland Christian School was founded in 1972
to provide a God-centered education that stimulates in the student
a passion for excellence in learning, service, and worship.*

*[because we serve a Triune God of revelation, self-giving love, and mutual
indwelling]*

Fred Sanders: *The Deep Things of God – how the Trinity changes everything.*

p.10 – The gospel is Trinitarian, and the Trinity is the gospel. Christian salvation comes from the Trinity, happens through the Trinity, and brings us home to the Trinity.

From Sanders, p.127 – quoting John Owen: When God designed the great and glorious work of recovering fallen man, and the saving of sinners, to the praise of the glory of his grace, he appointed, in his infinite wisdom, two great means thereof: The one was the giving his Son for them, and the other was the giving his Spirit to them. And hereby was way made for the manifestation of the glory of the whole blessed Trinity; which is the utmost end of all the works of God.

God's whole purpose in creation and redemption is to bring us into the blessed fellowship of the Trinity. Christ died to bring us to God. Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

Sanders, p.106 – A gospel which is only about the moment of conversion but does not extend to every moment of life in Christ is too small. A gospel that gets your sins forgiven but offers no power for transformation is too small. A gospel that isolates one of the benefits of union with Christ and ignores all the others is too small. A gospel that must be measured by your own moral conduct, social conscience, or religious experience is too small. A gospel that rearranges the components of your life but does not put you personally in the presence of God is too small.

Sanders, p.157,165 – J.I. Packer has called adoption “the highest privilege that the gospel offers: higher even than justification.... Adoption is higher, because of the richer relationship with God that it involves.... The privilege of adoption presupposes pardon and acceptance, but is higher than either. In fact, Packer proposes that the New Testament could be summed up in the three words “adoption through propitiation.” Adoption is a central biblical description of how God saves. It emphasizes the quality of the new relationship that God brings us into, a relationship of having been made into his children. In explicitly Trinitarian terms, this means that God brings us into the relationship of sonship that has always been part of his divine life. When we become sons of God, we are joined to the sonship of the incarnate Son, and God sends the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit is the one who baptizes us into Christ, forms us into sons on the pattern of his sonship, and even takes up residence within us as the principle of sonship that enables us to call on God as Father.

Sanders, p.230 – Christian life, as C.S. Lewis describes it, is a matter of “being taken up into the life of the Trinity.” “An ordinary simple Christian kneels down to say his prayers. He is trying to get into touch with God. But if he is a Christian he knows that what is prompting him to pray is also God: God, so to speak, inside him. But he also knows that all his real knowledge of God comes through Christ, the man who was God – that Christ is standing beside him, helping him to pray, praying for him. You see what is happening. God is the thing to which he is praying – the goal he is trying to reach. God is also the thing inside him which is pushing him on – the motive power. God is also the road or bridge along which he is being pushed to that goal. So that the whole threefold life of the three-personal Being is actually going on in that ordinary little bedroom where an ordinary man is saying his prayers. The man is being caught up into the higher kind of life – he is being pulled into God, by God, while still remaining himself.

(Note 4 pages from Sanders on the Trinitarian Theology of Susannah Wesley – wonderful!)

redeemed freely.⁶ Both are wonderful, or amazing grace. Even more than we depend on God's free act of creation, we hang on his mercy for salvation, approaching him "without one plea" and answering his grace with gratitude.

But back behind even that double grace of creation and redemption is the sheer fact of God's being as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the Trinity calls us to recognize, and ponder, and rejoice in the sheer reality of who God essentially is, at home in the happy land of the Trinity above all worlds. To recognize this is to come face-to-face with the final foundation of all God's ways and works. And when we have carried out the thought experiment of thinking away everything we can (both redemption and creation), leaving nothing but God, we are not left with a formless and solitary divine blur. Instead we confess that God exists essentially and eternally as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Christians have much to say about grace. But the ground of grace is God's absolute trine self-sufficiency.

THE TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY OF SUSANNA WESLEY

Christians through the ages have always grasped the connection between the self-sufficiency of God as Trinity and the graciousness of grace, but there is one evangelical who understood it especially deeply and expressed it exceptionally well. For Susanna Wesley (1669–1742), mother of John and Charles, the first thing that came to mind whenever she thought about the Trinity was this absolute self-sufficiency of God, with the accompanying sense of his graciousness in reaching out to us in total freedom. "Consider the infinite boundless goodness of the ever blessed Trinity," she exhorted herself in her private devotional journal . . .

adore the stupendous mystery of divine love! That God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost should all concur in the work of man's redemption! What but pure goodness could move or excite God, who is perfect essential blessedness! That cannot possibly receive any accession of perfection or happiness from his creatures. What, I say, but love, but goodness, but infinite incomprehensible love and goodness could move him to provide such a remedy for the fatal lapse of his sinful unworthy creatures!⁷

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Because her starting point was the idea of the fullness of the life of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which is "perfect essential blessedness," Susanna recognized that the love of the "ever-blessed Trinity" is a "stupendous mystery." When one is suitably impressed with the absolute completeness of God's life, one recognizes that it is impossible to increase the perfection and happiness of it. As a result, the graciousness, the "infinite incomprehensible love and goodness," of God stands out more conspicuously against this vast background of Trinitarian self-sufficiency. For Susanna Wesley, the doctrine of the blessed Trinity is what makes grace so perpetually amazing.

"We know there is but one living and true God," she wrote in a letter to a friend in 1737, "though revealed to us under three characters—that of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." Susanna wrote a few more lines about the distinct roles of the three persons in the Christian life, and then, with her thoughts elevated by these ideas of the Trinity, she broke out in praise: "Let me beseech you to join with me," she wrote, "in adoring the infinite and incomprehensible love of God." And:

He is the great God, "the God of the spirits of all flesh," "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity," and created not angels and men because he wanted them, for he is being himself, and as such must necessarily be infinitely happy in the glorious perfections of his nature from everlasting to everlasting; and as he did not create, so neither did he redeem because he needed us, but he loved us because he loved us, he would have mercy because he would have mercy, he would show compassion because he would show compassion.⁸

In this model piece of theological reflection, Susanna Wesley begins with recognition of God's infinite happiness in being God, affirms the double gratuity of divine freedom in creation and redemption, and ends with an allusion to God's self-description (Ex. 33:19) of the only basis of his mercy: "He would have mercy because he would have mercy." Finally, she sums up her doctrine of the graciousness of grace with the simple paraphrase: "He loved us because he loved us."

Susanna Wesley may have been a warmhearted pietist with a burning experience of God's grace in her own life, but she was not

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THE DEEP THINGS OF GOD

just expressing a heartfelt religious sentiment when she wrote this. She was also writing from a well-formed Trinitarian theology that she had thought out to the end. Her journal from about 1710 includes an impressive entry that shows how seriously she took the doctrine. She began by accusing the great Aristotle of falling into error when he taught that the world eternally existed along with God, "streamed by conatural result and emanation" from all eternity. She mused that "this error seems grounded on a true notion of the goodness of God," which Aristotle "truly supposes must eternally be communicating good to something or other." It is true that the Supreme Being is infinitely good and that his goodness is of a kind to be always inclined to give itself away to others. Without any further information, this speculation would demand an eternal world as the eternal recipient of God's self-giving goodness. An eternally, essentially self-giving God would require an eternal world. But that sort of eternal world would make God dependent on the world for his own satisfaction. Without the world, God would be a frustrated giver.

The conclusion, which Susanna Wesley found utterly unacceptable, would be that God depended on something outside himself to make possible his full self-expression. Pondering this mistake in the great Aristotle's philosophy, Susanna mused, "It was his want of the knowledge of revealed religion that probably led him into it." Aristotle's problem came from the fact that he had no access to the revealed doctrine of the Trinity.

For had he ever heard of that great article of our Christian faith concerning the Holy Trinity, he had then perceived the almighty Goodness eternally communicating being and all the fullness of the Godhead to the divine Logos, his uncreated Word, between whose existence and that of the Father there is not one moment assignable.⁹

In Susanna's Trinitarian worldview, the eternal Son has eternally existed alongside the eternal Father, always receiving the full goodness of divinity from him. The world, therefore, does not have to bear the burden of being God's eternal recipient of self-giving goodness. To put it another way, unless the Son were the eternal recipient of the Father's

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WITHIN THE HAPPY LAND OF THE TRINITY

self-giving, the world would be metaphysically necessary to the being of God. The point Susanna made here has also been seen by numerous thinkers. The Baptist theologian Augustus H. Strong (1836-1921) put it this way: "Neither God's independence nor God's blessedness can be maintained upon grounds of absolute unity. Anti-Trinitarianism almost necessarily makes creation indispensable to God's perfection, tends to a belief in the eternity of matter, and ultimately, leads . . . to pantheism."¹⁰

Susanna Wesley's skirmish with Aristotle is a pretty tidy speculative engagement with the philosopher, and it is worth remembering that Susanna was not a theology professor but a full-time homeschooling mother when she wrote it. Little John Wesley was probably about seven years old at the time Susanna recorded these thoughts in her personal devotional journal. She obviously had a lively intellect and a mind for what mattered. What mattered, in her well-formed evangelical Trinitarianism, was that the deep Trinitarian background of the gospel stayed firmly in place so the astonishing graciousness of God's free grace could be seen for what it is.

5

WHO GOD IS AND WHAT HE DOES

Susanna Wesley is a perfect case study in well-balanced evangelical Trinitarianism because she maintained a healthy sense of proportion between who God is and what God does. She was certainly passionate about what God has done to save his people, but she knew that the gospel derives its power from the infinite background of who God is. That infinite background of God's "perfect essential blessedness" formed the ultimate horizon against which she could "adore the stupendous mystery of God's love." Balanced evangelical Trinitarianism does not just throw itself into the river of good news and swim away downstream; it also acknowledges the fountain from which that river flows. Like Susanna Wesley, it keeps one foot in the happy land of the Trinity and one foot on the ground of the gospel. When evangelicals lose their sense of proportion, they begin to talk as if they no longer care about the character of God unless they get something from it. The best defense against this has always been the doctrine of the eternal Trinity in itself. Pondering the eternal, essential Trinity is the most concrete and

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Fennema: "We are to remember that God does not depend on us but we on Him. He is able to carry out His divine will without us, but He provides us with the blessed opportunity to be instruments in this process. Our prayer life must be continual and vibrant. Praying for one's children on a daily basis is the most powerful tool available in the process of nurturing children in the Lord."

Justin Buzzard:

The Big Story: How the Bible Makes Sense Out of Life

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p.10 – *What sort of story are we in?* Throughout the ages people have given many different answers to this question. Your neighbors, coworkers, and local bookstore all offer different answers to our question. If you filled the room you're in right now with a mixture of both atheists and deeply religious people, you'd hear fifty different stories from all these people. But they all believe the story that they think makes sense out of their lives.

My conviction is that only one story is big enough to adequately answer this question, to explain all the beauty and all the brokenness we see in this world, to make sense of our desires, dreams, and disappointments. I've looked at the other answers to this question, the other stories that are out there, but they all felt too small. I don't know what people believe in your town or city, but my city is a diverse mix of Buddhists, Atheists, Sikhs, Hindus, Christians, Muslims, Mormons, Jews, and Confused (people who aren't sure what they believe). My conclusion is that these other worldviews don't make complete sense of this world. Their plots have too many gaps, and their answers are too shallow for our deepest pain, deepest desires, and deepest questions.

The Big Story, the story we need, is the old and ongoing story of the Bible. The Bible is a collection of ancient manuscripts written over fifteen hundred years by over forty different authors that tells one big story about God and people. It's a strange story. It's a good story. It's a complicated and challenging story. It's a thrilling story. It's a story that's still moving, a story in which you play an important part. It, I think, is the only story big enough to make sense out of everything you've been through and everything you and the people you love will face in the future.

Let me be up front about how wild this story is. I'm going to spend the next eight chapters walking you through the major movements in this old, yet living book called the Bible, which is about:

The One Story of God's incomprehensible, outrageous acts of redemption, the stories of a God gathering a people for His name. Here in its pages appear fierce and unlikely heroes, terrifying battles, pilloried prophets, resistant saints, miraculous healings, a foot-washing King, a bloodied God on a cross, a hollow tomb, the final wrath and glory judgment, and a denouement [the final outcome of a complex sequence of events] that ends more miraculously than anything we could imagine: the coming of a new city with open gates and a purified people now called sons and daughters who, needing no other light, will enter and walk by the light of the Lamb.

Not everyone will be there. It is not a safe or simple story. Yet the story is for all of us hear and heed. We are invited into these pages, not as editors with red pens in hand, but as supplicants seeking understanding and truth. We are invited to live into this narrative, but not to rewrite it, either

to gut it of its offense or to reshape it for short attention spans and better sales. (Leslie Leyland Fields, "The Gospel is More Than a Story," *Christianity Today*, July/August 2012, 43.)

p.12 – "All our human stories of heroes, monsters, journeys, and sacrifice give voice to our universal quest for identity, purpose, and deliverance. Instead of competing with God's story, these stories gesture toward it." (Leslie Leyland Fields)

"The whole story of the world—and of how we fit into it—is most clearly understood through a careful, direct look at the story of Jesus... how beautifully his life makes sense of ours." (Tim Keller)

p.18 – Jesus arrives on the scene with a message, an attractive message. ("The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.") It's a message people can't get enough of. He comes "proclaiming the gospel of God," that is, the *good news* of God.

Most people in your context think that Christianity is all about advice—that it's a list of "dos and don'ts." They couldn't be more wrong.... People react differently to hearing good news than they do when hearing good advice. Advice gives people more work to do. Good news gives people freedom

Jesus didn't come with advice for us to absorb and follow; He came with news. The word *gospel* means "good news." It is news that brings joy. The gospel is history-making, life-shaping, paradigm-shattering news. It is news about something done in history that changes you, that changes everything, forever. Jesus does something so radical, so violent, so dramatic, and it seals this good news and makes a way for us to join the Big Story.

It is this news that makes Jesus so attractive and that separates Him from all other religions. He didn't come dispensing advice on how to clean yourself up and make yourself better. He didn't offer a list of action items or set of instructions about things you must *do* to find God, freedom, rest, or peace. No. Jesus came saying that you can be known, loved, set free, forgiven, and made new.

This new life is open to anyone. Anyone can be made new, made clean, set free, given a relationship with the living God. And it is free. There is no earning it. It is yours, no strings attached. The gospel says all this has *been done*. There isn't any more doing to do. It's not advice, so don't treat the gospel like mere advice. Jesus came, lived, died, and rose again to earn the way to God, freedom, rest, and peace for you.

Nobody else has ever spoken this way, arriving on the scene and offering *news* of a new life instead of *advice* on how to achieve a better life. Founders of other religions and worldviews ask you to do something—to perform and obey—to bring your doing to the table in order to enjoy the benefits of karma, nirvana, inner peace, a better future, salvation, or whatever the benefit might be. Christianity is the one faith whose founder tells us not to bring Him our doing, but our *need*.

p.25 – Act 1: God

"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." (Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*).

In the beginning, God....

The happy God – The Bible begins with God already there... and happy.

God is God whether you believe in Him or not. His existence doesn't depend on you, and His happiness doesn't depend on you. He doesn't depend on you. It's the other way around.

p.32 – “Human history is the long terrible story of man trying to find something other than God which will make him happy.” (C.S. Lewis.)

p.33 – God has always existed, always been perfectly happy, always been in perfect community, and always enjoyed perfect love. And it is out of this love that He created us. How else could we be satisfied but with Him? Of course everything else fails to satisfy....

“God, you made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.” (Augustine *Confessions*)

“You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” (David, Psalm 16:11)

p.42 – This God is perfectly sovereign, perfectly wise, and perfectly good. He is the One on whom you can bank your life. He is a perfect Father to all those who trust Him. Instead of condemning you, He can adopt you into His family.

Recommended Reading: *The Jesus Storybook Bible* by Sally Lloyd-Jones (Zondervan, 2007). This isn't just a book for kids; almost every week I recommend this book to adults, to people who don't yet believe in the Big Story and people who've believed this story for decades.

p.45 – Act 2: Creation

p.49 – The God of the universe is a talker. One of the first things we learn about God in the Bible is that He is a speaker, a communicator.... God didn't tell us all this about Himself just for the sake of *explanation*, though. He told it to us for *exultation*. Life is not about simply knowing truths, it's about being wowed by what ought to wow us and worshipping what we ought to worship. Only hearts filled with the exultation of God's story will be able to handle the difficulties and disappointments that come with this life.

p.53 – Throughout the creation story, God keeps giving a verdict. On the first five days, God calls His creation “good.” But only one thing leads God to use the words “very good,” the one thing He created in His likeness. It's the crown jewel of creation and the culmination of His handiwork...

Of all the religions and belief systems and narratives in the world, only Christianity says you were made in the image and likeness of God... What does it mean to be the image of God? One word that explains it well is “representative.” As images of God, we represent God on earth. We bear His image because there is something of Him in us. We are to represent God on earth, men and women created equal, to bear God's image and represent Him. It's an identity and a calling: you are a valuable person created personally by God in His image and likeness, and your job on this planet is to creatively represent God—show forth something of God—through your life story.

p.63 – Act 3: Rebellion

p.71 – Sin is not just lawbreaking. Sin is also lawmaking. Adam and Eve didn't just break God's rules, they made up their own rules. They sought to be the god of their own lives.... Adam and Eve created a game called "hide." We still like to play this one today. But it was God who completed the game, created a better game, by adding the "seek." God is a pursuing God. We sin against Him and rebel, but He pursues us. God always makes the first move toward a relationship with us.

p.78 – God only curses the serpent. He promises that the serpent, Satan, will meet his demise. There will be an end to evil. So even as God judges humanity, His curse on the devil offers them hope.

What was this judgment God handed down to Adam and Eve, if not a curse? It was pain. God gives the first man and woman pain where it will hurt them most, in the most sensitive areas of life. To Eve He gives pain in family, marriage, childbearing, and relationships. To the man He gives pain in his work. God gave man and woman pain in those arenas of life where men and women tend to seek their significance and identity. Why did God do it this way?

Pain is a strange gift from God. It drives us back to Him. Without pain, we'd be fooled into thinking there is fulfillment away from His presence. Pain keeps us from taking God's good gifts (a spouse, a child, a job) and turning to them for ultimate fulfillment.

p.80 – Even as God tells Adam and Eve they must leave the garden, He doesn't send them empty-handed and naked. God makes clothes for them to warm and protect them. But He is meeting more than just a temporal need by covering their bodies; He is covering their guilt and shame because they will need a covering in order to enter His presence. This is the first act of atonement in the Bible. God sheds the blood of an innocent animal in order to cover His people. There is no appearing in the presence of God without covering, without something to shelter us from His glory—not in our sinful state. But even this sacrifice is not enough; it's symbolic. This sacrifice and every one thereafter foreshadow the great sacrifice yet to come.

Gen. 3:15 – the "protoevangel" – the first gospel.... From the line of the woman will come a descendant who will crush the serpent.... The rest of the Bible is the search for the serpent crusher....

p.82 – Jesus is the serpent crusher, the promised one of Genesis 3... Jesus crushed the serpent. He swallowed and took upon Himself all the pain in this world, so that one day we can live in a world where there is no pain. So that one day God could end evil and suffering without having to end you and me. Jesus was judged so that you and I don't have to be judged.

Theologian John Stott once said, "I could never myself believe in God if it were not for the cross. In the real world of pain, how could one worship a God who was immune to it?" The God of the Bible is not immune to pain. Only Christianity gives you a God who suffers, a God who cares so much about you that He entered into our broken world, got involved with the mess, and suffered pain in order to take care of us.

Why do evil and suffering continue in our world while we live in between Act 4 and Act 5, awaiting the second coming of Christ? Why is my mom dying of cancer? Why were twenty children buried in Connecticut this week? I don't know. But I know that the answer *isn't* that God doesn't care. Only the Big Story tells of a God who cares, gets involved, and suffers in order to be with us. Our world is broken. But God is not. In Chapter 2, I said that the three most important things to know about God are that He is sovereign, wise, and good. Add a fourth truth to that list: God suffers. No other story says this. Plenty of other worldviews talk about *your* suffering, about the suffering you must go through to work your way to a god. Only Christianity tells you about *God's* suffering, that God suffered in order to work His way to you.

We are rebels. And so our world is full of pain.

Fortunately, God is a good and suffering God. And so He sent His only Son, the long-promised serpent crusher, to enter into the pain and rescue rebels.

p.87- Act 4: Rescue

"The gospel is not just a series of facts to which we yield our assent but a dramatic narrative that re-plots our identity." (Michael Horton)

"I have heard your exhortations and they will not help me. Do you have good news for me?" (J. Gresham Machen)

"While we are looking at God we do not see ourselves—blessed riddance. The man who has struggled to purify himself and has had nothing but repeated failures will experience real relief when he stops tinkering with his soul and looks away to the Perfect One." (A.W. Tozer)

[Buzzard expounds the Parable of the Prodigal Son – drawing much from Tim Keller]

p.104 – Through this story, Jesus makes it clear that there are two ways to be lost. They look very different but are equally lost. There is the younger son, and it's easy to see those who emulate him.... This one is determined to run his own life, to do things his way. He says, loud and proud, "Forget You, God." It is a rebel's life and it is obvious.

The other way is that of the older son, and it is subtle. It is to be the goody two-shoes, to do the right things and keep all the rules. If you are this son, you think that your excellent behavior has earned a relationship with God. You think that He owes it to you, as if such a thing can be earned. In this life, grace is a threatening thing, something to be kept away. It makes you angry. Why does it make you so angry? Because grace means there are three words you can never say to God: "You owe me." Grace destroys entitlement. But grace is the foundation of the Christian life. The younger son broadcasts his need for it. The older son hides his. But the need is equal.

p.113 – Our relationship with Jesus is based on grace—on the unexpected, undeserved, counterintuitive love of God. Grace is different than what we're used to. The math works differently. Martin Lloyd-Jones, a Welsh preacher who ministered during the first half of the twentieth century, says this about God's outrageous grace:

It is God's accountancy. He's always giving us surprises. You never know what he's going to do. His bookkeeping is the most romantic thing I know of in the world. Our ledgers are out of date. They're of no value. We're in the kingdom of God and it's God's accountancy. It's all of grace. It's grace at the beginning. Grace at the end. So when you and I come to lie upon our deathbeds, the one thing that should comfort and help and strengthen us there is the thing that helped us at the

beginning. Not what we have been. Not what we've done. But the grace of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. The Christian life starts with grace, it must continue with grace, it ends with grace. Grace, wondrous grace.

p.114 – But you need to know this: it is a risky thing to get close to Jesus and to submit to His story. The closer we get to Jesus, the more He meddles with us. Because Jesus brought good news and was a winsome guy, people loved to be around Him. But He constantly meddled with their lives!

Meddling is interfering, messing around, changing plans, getting into someone's business, and rearranging. Westerners are independent, individually minded people who don't like people messing with our stuff and our business. We want to live life our own way....

Even today, people still want Jesus; they just want Him as an add-on, an accessory. They want to customize Jesus to fit their preferences.....But Jesus doesn't come asking if He can hang out with us. He commands us to follow Him. He has total authority and will settle for nothing less; He won't settle for being an accessory, an add-on, or a peaceful accompaniment to a nice life. No, He will rule and He will meddle. To accept Jesus is to accept His total authority in your life.

p.117 – The Burden that Frees – Matthew 11:28-30 – Every one of us has a yoke. We all have a controlling influence, a system of belief, something that steers and controls us. And many of these yokes are exhaustingly heavy to bear. We submitted to this yoke, we put it on because we thought it would make life easier and better, but it has instead worn us down.

What is it that Jesus said about His yoke? Easy and light! That's what we yearn for, and it's only found under the yoke of Jesus.

p.123 – Act 5: Home

"If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world." (C.S. Lewis)

Rev. 21:1-18

p.128 – The True Story of Hope

What we need is a story about the world, a worldview that will give us true hope. We need a story that will not let us down when all the false hopes crumble. Because they surely will. This whole book is about that story, the Bible's story, as one single narrative in five acts—God, Creation, Rebellion, Rescue, Home. These same five acts can be applied to other worldviews as well, to understand their stories and what they say.

Act 1: God, asks the question, "Who is God?" Every worldview answers this question differently. The Big Story answers this in Genesis 1:1, that there is one God, a Trinitarian God, who loves to be God and enjoyed perfect community before creating any of us.

Act 2: Creation, asks the question, "Who am I?" Every worldview has an answer to this. In the biblical story the answer was found in Genesis 1 and 2. I am a person

created in the image of God, and He said I am “very good.” Other worldviews require that you earn your identity.

Act 3: Rebellion, answers the question, “What’s wrong with me and the world around me?” Our story says that the problem is we are all sinners. Some have been outwardly rebellious prodigals, going our own way and trying to rule our own lives. Others have been outward rule keepers and “good people,” but with rebellious, prideful hearts that want nothing to do with God and His grace. We are what’s wrong with the world, our sin.

Act 4: Rescue, answers the question that is the most pressing for so many hearts: “What’s the solution to all the pain in the world?” The Bible’s story tells of Jesus, God’s own Son, sent by God to pay the price of God’s judgment on people for our sins, even though He Himself never sinned. His pure sacrifice created a way for us to be restored to God again, to have a relationship that was broken by sin.

And now we are in Act 5: Home, which asks the question: “What do I hope for, and where am I going?” Only Christianity tells the story that truly gives hope, lasting and deep hope, to get us through this often painful life.

Remember, the Big Story is something different from religion. Religion is all about what *you* must do. The Big Story is not about religion, but about the gospel, about the good news of what God does for us. This is critical to understand when we talk about hope.

Christianity is the unreligion. It turns all our religious instincts on their head.... The ancient Greeks told us to be moderate by knowing our inclinations. The Romans told us to be strong by ordering our lives. Buddhism tells us to be disillusioned by annihilating our consciousness. Hinduism tells us to be absorbed by merging our souls. Islam tells us to be submissive by subjecting our wills. Agnosticism tells us to be at peace by ignoring our doubts. Moralism tells us to be good by discharging our obligations. Only the gospel tells us to be free by acknowledging our failure. Christianity is the unreligion because it is the one faith whose founder tells us to bring not our doing, but our need. (Dane Ortlund, *Defiant Grace*)

p.130 – In *The Last Battle* by C.S. Lewis, the unicorn named Jewel finally reaches heaven and exclaims, “I’ve come home at last! This is my real country.... This is the land I’ve been looking for all my life.” That’s what it means to know God, to meet Him on the other side of death. It is to come home. To arrive at a *place* where everything is put back together, made new, at peace and whole.

p.141 – Perhaps the best way to express this future that awaits all who trust in the Big Story is expressed in Tolkien’s novel *The Return of the King*, as Sam sees his friend Gandalf after thinking him dead:

But Sam lay back, and stared with open mouth, and for a moment, between bewilderment and great joy, he could not answer. At last he gasped: “Gandalf! I thought you were dead! But then I thought I was dead myself. Is everything sad going to come untrue? What’s happened to the world?”

“A great shadow has departed,” said Gandalf, and then he laughed and the sound was like music, or water in a parched land; and as he listened the thought came to Sam that he had not heard laughter, the pure sound of merriment, for days upon days without count. It fell upon his ears like the echo of all the joys he had ever known. But he himself burst into tears. Then as a sweet rain will pass down a wind of spring and the sun will shine out the clearer, his tears ceased, and his laughter welled up, and laughing he sprang from his bed.

“How do I feel?” he cried. “Well I don’t know how to say it. I feel, I feel”—he waved his arms in the air—“I feel like spring after winter, and sun on the leaves; and like trumpets and harps and all the songs I have ever heard!”

William P. Farley: *Gospel-Powered Parenting – How the Gospel Shapes and Transforms Parenting* – © 2009 P&R Publishing

p.42 – It is important to note that the primary focus of Christian parenting is not morality. Well-behaved children are not the ultimate end. Saving faith, deeply rooted in the children’s hearts, is the supreme goal of Christian parents. God saves the child who transfers all his trust from his own works to Christ’s and expresses that faith with repentance. Therefore, Christian parenting is all about the transfer of Dad and Mom’s faith. Morality is important, but it follows faith. It does not produce it.

p.45 – The scarcity of parenting texts is deliberate, premeditated, and precise. God knows there are only two in the New Testament; this is no mistake.... There are so few Scriptures because *the gospel is the classroom that teaches us everything we need to know to become effective Christian parents*. If we really understand the gospel, and know how to apply it to our marriages and parenting, we have all the tools we need to pass the baton to our children.

The gospel teaches Christian parents to fear God.

GOSPEL FEAR

p. 57 – Because it is so easy to distort, the concept of the fear of God is often ignored by the church. But the Bible claims that it is the key to friendship with God (Ps. 25:14), the fruit of single-mindedness (Ps. 86:11), the secret to wealth, riches, and long life (Prov. 10:27;22:4), and the key to the wisdom that builds families (Prov. 9:10; 24:3). In short, the fear of God is a fountain of life (Prov. 14:27) that quenches the thirst of those who possess it.

Note the connection God makes repeatedly on the connection between the fear of God and His blessing on our children.

Gen.22:12-18 – (Abraham) – now I know that you *fear God*, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.... I will surely multiply your *offspring*.... And your *offspring* shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your *offspring* shall all the nations of the earth be blessed...

Deut. 5:29 – God lamented to Moses, “Oh that they had such a mind as this always, to fear me and to keep all my commandments, that it might go well with them and *with their descendants* forever!”

Psalm 25:12-13 – Who is the man who fears the LORD? Him will he instruct in the way that he should choose. His soul shall abide in well-being, and his *offspring* shall inherit the land.

Psalm 112:1-2 – Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in his commandments! His offspring will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed.

Psalm 128:1-4 – Blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, who walks in his ways!....Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the LORD.

Jer. 32:39 – I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them.

Luke 1:50 – (Mary) – and his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

p.61 – A clear understanding of the fear of God is important. One obstacle to understanding the fear of God is the struggle to synthesize the fear of God and the love of God. How can I experience the love of God and fear him at the same time? This question really presents a false dichotomy. The two are not opposed. Rather, they are mutually dependent. You cannot separate the fear of God from the experience of his love. God's perfect love amplifies the fear of God, and the fear of God intensifies his love. It is impossible to fully know and experience God's love without learning to fear him.

The wrong type of fear is like a slave-dread that causes us to run from God. By contrast, a son-fear motivates us to pursue God.

Ex. 20:20 – (people afraid after hearing God at Sinai) – “*Do not fear*, for God has come to test you, *that the fear of him may be before you*, that you may not sin.”

According to Isaiah 11:2-3 – Jesus delighted in the fear of the Lord. No one pursued God like Jesus. No one experienced the Father's love like Jesus. And yet, no man has ever perfected the fear of God like Jesus.

p.67 – The fear of God finds its culmination, and purest expression, in the New Testament, at the cross of Christ. Psalm 130:4 reads, “With you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared.” God has designed forgiveness, received through our redemption, to provoke the fear of God. This is why gospel-centered parents are so effective. They learn the fear of God at the foot of the cross. This fear attracts us to the Father and also perfects holiness in us and our children (2 Cor. 7:1).

A HOLY FATHER

p. 72 - God is HOLY. "Holiness means *separation*," writes Philip Ryken. "Something holy is *set apart*..... Holiness is not simply his righteousness (although that is part of it), but also his *otherness*. It is the *distinction* between the Creator and the creature, the *infinite* distance between God's divinity and our humanity.

p.74 – Everything the Bible says about the holiness—the separateness—of God the Father is summed up in and emphasized by the cross. The cross is an exclamation point at the end of God's holiness.

The cross was the most graphic demonstration of the Father's holiness in human history. To understand it, we need to reflect on the Father's love for his Son.

The Father's love for his Son is intense: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). It is not a common love. It is holy. He loves his Son with omnipotence, which means all power, with infinite intensity. He also loves his Son with omniscience—all knowledge. His gaze penetrates the infinite perfection of his Son's deity. Since the Son's glory is infinite, only an infinite intellect can fully know and love him. He knows the Son exhaustively, and what the Father knows and sees is the infinite perfection of Son's divinity.

But here is the stunning truth: Such is the holiness of the Father that when his Son bore our sin and transgressions, *God separated himself from him*. "My God, my God," Jesus cried from the cross, "why have you forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). What can we say in the face of this staggering truth? How can we imagine such holiness?

p.79 – The real question is not: "How can God be loving and wrathful at the same time?" Rather, the real question is: "How could God be good—infinately good in the way the Bible describes him—and *not* feel intense anger at sin and evil?" Sin destroys everything it touches. It destroys the glory of God. It distorts individual happiness. It corrupts families. It divides churches. It is like rat poison. It smells and looks good, but it ultimately kills its victim. Although sin often brings short-term pleasure, if not atoned for, it terminates in *infinite* pain.

God is holy. How could he be infinitely good and apathetic toward evil at the same time? Infinite goodness must aggressively hate everything that destroys happiness. This is the best way to understand the perfections of God's wrath. God is angry about the source of all suffering and pain—sin—and we are thankful that he is.

All of this means that the Father's wrath is a virtue. When Christ bore our sin on the cross, the Father punished his Son in our place. He poured out his anger, so richly deserved by us, on his Son. The cross was a vehicle to express God's wrath, and God wanted it expressed. "What the cross tells us is that God hates sin," notes Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. "God is the eternal antithesis of sin. God abominates sin with the whole intensity of His divine and perfect and holy nature. And God not only hates sin, he cannot tolerate it. God cannot compromise with sin...."

God the Father worked through the Jews and the Roman soldiers to ensure that the holy wrath of God himself was fully expressed. "It was the will of the LORD to crush him; he [the Father] has put him [the Son] to grief." (Is. 53:10)

“Never did God so manifest his hatred of sin as in the death and suffering of his only-begotten Son,” wrote Jonathan Edwards. “Hereby he showed himself unappeasable to sin, and that it was impossible for him to be at peace with it.”....

The cross leads us to this conclusion: There are only two types of people. There are those who put their faith in Jesus and let him bear God’s wrath in their place. And there are those who try to earn salvation on their own terms. They will bear this wrath themselves, in hell, for eternity.

These truths are very sobering to parents. They sensitize us to sin. They motivate us to take our children’s heart-sins seriously. They motivate us to take parenting seriously. Success or failure has ominous consequences.....

In their book *How People Change*, Lane and Tripp insightfully write: “One of the reasons teenagers are not excited by the gospel is that they do not think they need it. Many parents have successfully raised self-righteous little Pharisees. When they look at themselves, they do not see a sinner in desperate need, so they are not grateful for a Savior.”

A GRACIOUS FATHER

p.87 – The previous chapter discussed God’s transcendence. He is different from us. God is holy. He hates evil. But God is not just transcendent. He is also immanent. He is close to his children. He loves them. He pursues a relationship with them. “The LORD is merciful and gracious,” wrote David, “slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love” (Ps. 103:8).

God adopts us into his family by grace through faith. We don’t get in by performing. God’s family, God’s fatherhood, is all about grace. And what makes God’s grace so wonderful is that it is *holy* grace.

Grace is the heart and soul of Christianity. It is what makes Christianity different from every other religion. Salvation cannot be earned. It is a gift. All other religions work for salvation. Hindus must pass through numerous reincarnations. Jews and Muslims obey law. Evil spirits enslave animists, who must constantly work to please them. But true salvation is the *gracious* gift of an infinitely holy God. Therefore, those who understand and exult in grace have the right to the heart and soul of Christianity. Grace is fundamental to God’s family. It is the air his children breathe. It is crucial to parenting.....

G.R.A.C.E. is God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense *extended to men and women who by nature deserve wrath*..... Wrath introduces us to grace..... John Frame says it this way: Grace is God’s “sovereign, unmerited favor, given to those who deserve his wrath.” In his *New Testament Commentary* William Hendriksen adds, “God’s grace is his active favor bestowing the greatest gift upon those who have deserved the greatest punishment.” “Grace is favor shown to people who do not deserve any favor at all,” concludes Martyn Lloyd-Jones. “We deserve nothing but hell. If you think you deserve heaven, take it from me, you are not a Christian.”....

God gave us that which he loved infinitely, his greatest treasure, his Son, to secure our adoption. The Father paid this price in the absence of any obligation to us, in the absence of any need in himself, despite infinite enmity toward us, and despite our utter helplessness. He did it because he loves us. He did it to exercise grace. He did it to glorify his grace. (Eph. 1:6).

The gospel motivates parents to lead by example.

THE FIRST PRINCIPLE OF PARENTING – the power of example

p.106 – Parents who joyfully pursue God are contagious. Joyful sacrifice for the gospel is contagious. A gospel that makes parents stable, sincere, joyful, loving, affectionate, and humble is contagious. Children will want a God that produces these qualities.

On the other hand, parents going through the motions of church, enslaved to rules, serving God to gain his acceptance, tolerating their spouses, or worse, engaging in open warfare, chase their children away from God and his church. When Mom and Dad preach one thing but do the opposite, and don't repent to their children, it makes the world attractive and the gospel irrelevant.

Kids also internalize their parents' passions. They alone see what or who you *really* love, and not what you merely pretend to love. Maybe it is upward mobility. Maybe your passion is entertainment (sports, movies, music). For others it is hunting, shopping, or golf...

Here is my point: Parenting is the most important leadership position in the church. And example is also the first principle of parenting. Parents lead the family, the smallest and most important cell in the local church. Archbishop Tillotson (1630-94) said, "To give children good instruction, and a bad example, is but beckoning to them with the head to show them the way to heaven, while we take them by the hand and lead them in the way to hell."

p.119 – Our attempts to live the gospel expose our failing, which in turn amplifies our humility, which in turn makes us attractive to our children. The gospel is good news that our children do not need perfect examples. The need *humble* examples.

Humility impacts parents in several ways. First, it makes us quick to admit wrongdoing. "The key to family functioning as a redemptive community," writes Paul David Tripp, "where the Gospel is the glue that holds the family together, is parents who so trust in Christ that they are ready and willing to *confess their faults to their children.*" When they sin against their children, humble parents quickly confess it. They confess their parental faults to God first, but they are not afraid to do so in front of their children also....

Confession sends a crucial message to our children. It reminds them that, yes, my parents are imperfect, but they are deadly earnest about following Christ, about wanting to change, and about doing things God's way. Failure to confess our faults sends the opposite message. "My parents talk much about Christ, but following him is not really that important to them. They don't walk the talk. They tell us to do one thing, but they do the other. *And when they fail, they go on as if it doesn't matter.*"

Growing humility opens our eyes to our sin. It makes us tender and gracious discipliners of our children. "Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself" (Gal. 6:1-3). Humble parents discipline their children "in a spirit of gentleness."

The gospel centers families in their male servant leaders.

GOSPEL FATHERS

p.126 – Vibrant, godly, male leadership attracts men. It encourages their involvement. It motivates them to serve in church and home. Men are irresistibly attracted to other men who model biblical masculinity.

p.137 – True masculinity expresses itself in a desire to serve women and children by leading them, protecting them, and providing for them. True masculinity is all about unselfish servanthood. It has nothing to do with muscle size or athletic ability.

Ultimately, men learn masculinity from God. God is not male. He does not have a body. But God is pure, unadulterated masculinity. Ultimately, he alone is the Christian father's role model. His masculinity expresses itself as the willingness to initiate.

A homosexual Buddhist friend once asked why I always referred to God as *him*. Quoting C.S. Lewis, I cautiously replied, "God is so masculine that, by contrast, everything that he has created is feminine." Lewis suggested that the willingness to initiate is the heart and soul of God's masculinity. God serves us by initiating. He initiated creation. He initiated our redemption. He came to us in the incarnation. We didn't go to him. This willingness is most likely what God means when he refers to himself with masculine pronouns. Although God does not have a male body, he is the ultimate initiator. He is the ultimate servant-leader. In this sense, God the Father is absolute masculinity.

By contrast, femininity responds to male initiation. For this reason God calls the church, both male and female, the bride of Christ. God initiated our creation, and he initiated our redemption. And he initiated the relationship that you and I have with him. In our relationship with God, we are all responders. In contrast with God, we are all feminine.

Here is the point: Men learn their masculinity from God. The presence of the living God makes men more masculine and women more feminine.

Jesus Christ models biblical masculinity. The gospel is all about his masculine initiation. First, he initiated our salvation at the cost of his life. He came and sought us out. Then he returned to heaven and sent his Holy Spirit to lead us to the Father. Second, he is a servant-leader of the first order. He leads the church by serving us, and he serves us by leading. Third, he provides for our daily material needs. Fourth, he protects his church at the cost of his life. "While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled" (John 17:12). The deeper a man's relationship with God's Son, the more potent his masculinity will gradually become.

The gospel teaches and motivates parents to discipline their children.

FOUNDATIONS OF DISCIPLINE

p.146 – The gospel should be at the heart of all attempts to discipline children. The gospel affects discipline in two ways. First, it motivates our discipline. Second, communicating the gospel becomes the *end* of effective Christian discipline.

p.156 – Biblical parents don't just exercise authority. They exercise servant-authority.... *The Trinity is inherently authoritative and hierarchical.* Therefore, if Christian culture, including families, is to imitate God, it must be also. Children learn to exercise and submit to servant-authority in their families. Dr. Bruce Ware reminds us that “we live in a culture that despises authority at every level.... We find it hard to think about authority for one simple reason: We are sinners who want to be in charge of our own lives.... One of the lessons of the Trinity is that God loves what we despise; namely, God loves, exercises, and embraces rightful authority-submission relationships. God loves this authority-submission structure because God embodies this very structure in his Trinitarian relations of Persons.”

DISCIPLINE THAT PREACHES – Using discipline to teach the gospel

p.167 – The first step is the most difficult. It is consistency. Pat Fabrizio reminds us that every time your child rebels and you ignore it, you are training your child. If she throws herself on the floor and you say, “If you don't stop in three minutes, I'm going to discipline you,” you are training her that a three-minute temper tantrum is okay. If you say, “I am going to count to five. If you don't respond, I will discipline you,” you are training your child to disobey until you count to five.

We are always training. There is no neutrality. When your child knows that disrespectful speech is against the rules, and you say, “If you do that again, I will have to spank you,” you are training him that the rules don't matter. He can get away with the first act of rebellion. You are also telling him that rebellion against authority is no big deal. It is much better to stop and spank him without further command. When your child knows the rules, and has broken them, nothing further needs to be said.

God expects us to obey on first command.... Train your children to respond on the first command.

Second, always put your discipline in the context of love....

Third, when appropriate, reference Scripture....

Fourth, make sure it hurts....

Fifth, hold the child until he or she stops crying. This communicates love and affection. It connects the pain of the discipline with physical affection. This connection will be very important when, in later life, God takes over your child's discipline.

Sixth, use the discipline event to rehearse the gospel.

Seventh, ask them to verbally confess the specific sin for which they are being disciplined.

Finally, have your child perform restitution.

In summary, God the Father is our model.... He parents us sacrificially.... He parents us purposefully.... He disciplines us—painfully, if necessary.

The gospel motivates parents to teach their children.

FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY

Teach your children! Apply the gospel. Ask questions. Deal with heart issues.

The gospel motivates parents to lavish their children with love and affection.

GOSPEL LOVE

Love God more than your children.

Love children sacrificially.

Love children affectionately.

 Focused attention

 Eye contact

 Physical touch

 Identifying evidences of grace in our children – Although there are times when you must criticize, the emphasis should be on encouragement.... Behind almost every child's weakness is a corresponding strength. After you have disciplined the weakness, take a moment to identify the strength.

The gospel is the solution for inadequate parents.

AMAZING GRACE

When we turn to the gospel, it transforms our weaknesses.... God uses the imperfect efforts of gospel-centered parents to do his deep and abiding work in our children. In the meantime, the gospel frees us from the burden of perfection.

 Parents who repeatedly find forgiveness in the gospel can extend that forgiveness to their children. Your children need to watch you continually shedding your guilt and fear at the foot of the cross....

 The gospel is about grace. It is about grace that is truly amazing. For weak and needy parents, it is good news indeed. Apply it to your conscience daily! Your children will be the beneficiaries.

[quotes from *The Silence of Adam* by Larry Crabb]

Genesis 1:27 tells us explicitly that God created man and woman “in his own image.” In this passage, the word *man* is translated from the Hebrew word *zakar*, which means “the remembering one.” What a curious word to describe a man. One might have expected a word meaning “the strong one,” “the one who leads,” or “the powerful one.” But instead man is described as the one who remembers.

SA,p.80 - Remembering is a theme repeated throughout the Bible.... in worship.... Neh.9:9-12... History was told and retold in remembered stories. Think of the number of times in the Bible when the works of God are recounted. Why so many? In the Old Testament, God was eager to reveal himself to a people who lived in the midst of chaos. The elders knew that stories of God’s loyal love were a necessary anchor for continued trust. Their retelling of old stories conveyed a vital message: “God is faithful to his people. Time and time again he has intervened on our behalf. He has proved his goodness. And he is the same God now as he was then. So take courage. Have faith. Don’t forget what he is like and what he has done.”

FORGETTING GOD IS THE ROOT OF SIN - Romans 1; II Peter 3:1-5; II Peter 1:12-15; I Timothy 2:7-14 -note esp. v.8

Young people - Ecc.12:1 - REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR IN THE DAYS OF YOUR YOUTH

ADAM FAILED TO REMEMBER GOD - HE FAILED TO BE WHAT HE WAS DESIGNED TO BE - “THE REMEMBERING ONE”

SA,56 - I wonder if we have, in our day, lost the excitement and drama of our calling: to reveal the unseen God by the way we live, especially by the way we relate to one another. The single most important truth about people is the truth most easily ignored: that we bear the image of God. As image-bearers, we are called to tell his story with our lives, not to tell our stories with his resources. By neglecting that truth, the calling to be like God has been reduced to a whisper, and the invitation to make our lives work better is being given with a shout...

GOD CALLS US TO BE A PEOPLE WHO **REMEMBER AND SPEAK.**

SILENCE IS OFTEN A RESULT OF FORGETTING GOD. SILENCE IS OFTEN A FAILURE TO REFLECT THE IMAGE OF GOD. WHEN WE REMEMBER GOD, WHEN WE REMEMBER HE HAS MADE US FOR RELATIONSHIP, MADE US TO THINK AND TO CHOOSE, THEN WE WILL LEARN TO BE MORE AND MORE LIKE GOD AND TO **SPEAK** WORDS THAT BRING ORDER AND LIFE IN THE MIDST OF CONFUSION AND DARKNESS.

SA,p.61 - The first thing revealed about God in the Bible is that he is the CREATOR and that he created by SPEAKING INTO DARKNESS. The first thing God told Adam to do was NAME THE ANIMALS. Adam was called to “speak order into existence” where there was none, just as God had done in creation.

BUT IN GENESIS 3, ADAM WAS **SILENT**, AND HIS SILENCE BROUGHT CHAOS AND DARKNESS INTO THE WORLD.

Most people assume that while the serpent and Eve conversed Adam was elsewhere. They suppose that after Eve sinned, she found Adam and tempted him to eat of the forbidden fruit.... Genesis 3:6 says he was there...

God used language to establish relationship; Adam used silence to destroy relationship.... Adam was “right there with her” literally. [remember that I Tim 2 says that Adam was NOT deceived]

SA, p.97 - Adam was not only silent with the serpent, he was also silent with Eve. He never reminded her of God’s word. He never called her to a larger vision. He did not join his wife in battling wits with the serpent. He passively listened to her speak, rather than speaking with her in mutual respect.

I am not saying that Adam should have spoken *for* Eve - or *to* her, as a father speaks to a child or as a superior speaks to an inferior. Many men make that mistake. Nor am I suggesting that men are to speak and women are to keep silent. Both men and women are created in God’s image to speak. This is just where the first man sinned.

Adam disobeyed by failing to speak with the serpent and with his wife. He was absent and passive. *His silence was symbolic of his refusal to be involved with Eve.* And God punished Adam for his silence. “To Adam he said, ‘Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, “ You must not eat of it,” Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life” (Gen.3:17). *God punished Adam for eating the forbidden fruit. But he also punished him for listening to his wife. Adam’s disobedience was a process. Adam was silent and then he ate from the tree. His disobedience did not begin with his eating but with his silence. **Disobeying God was a result of retreating from his wife. It was a silent man who eventually broke God’s clear command.***

The theme of masculine silence appears again and again. Several of the men portrayed in Genesis choose to be silent and oblivious, absent and forgetful. And they consistently get into trouble whenever they choose silence over involvement, or forgetting over remembering. eg. Abram listened to Sarai re: Hagar instead of speaking.... And just as Eve gave forbidden fruit to her husband, so Sarah gave her handmaid to Abraham - and he took her! Abraham was silent and passive. And his silence still speaks, four thousand years later. Ishmael, Hagar’s son - whose descendants comprise the Arab nations - despises Israel to this day. cf. also Judah and Tamar, 38:11 for he feared that he too would die, like his brothers.

SA, p.98 - And so men disappear into their work, their hobbies, and their sports. Things that matter less than relationship. **Silence or disappearing becomes our best defense against fear.**

That is exactly where the problem lies. My silence is a defense *against* chaos, not an entry *into* chaos. When we refuse to enter the chaos of our lives, we miss a grand opportunity. God created men in his image to create, to make a difference, to leave a legacy. He created men to bring redemption to a tragic world. He created them strong to protect the boundaries of those around him. He created them to have vision for other people.

But every man has felt the touch of tragedy. He has been damaged by his father, mother, grandparents, wife, children, superiors, business partners. Every man knows all too well that this world is dangerous. He knows the risk of sticking his neck out, whether it be relationship or work. Many men are convinced that the confusion of relationships and the uncertainty of the future can destroy them. So they remain silent. When men are silent, though, they deny the existence and goodness of God. That thought troubles me. I count myself as one who believes in God. But when I am silent, I live as an atheist: I give witness to my belief that chaos is more powerful than God.

SPEAKING IN THE MIDST OF CONFUSION IS THE RESULT OF TRUSTING GOD.

When we talked about thinking deeply and choosing deeply, we studied our tendency to try to reduce the confusion of life to simple formulas and simple answers that we feel we understand, instead of being willing to keep on thinking and acknowledging the complexity and mystery of life and people - and being willing to speak and act WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING EVERYTHING - WITHOUT BEING SURE ABOUT EVERYTHING - but TRUSTING GOD as we move in the darkness.

SA - "Recipe theology vs. transcendent theology"

p.55 - *I suggest that a man is most manly when he admits "I don't know what to do in this situation, but I know it's important that I get involved and do something. I will therefore envision what God may want to see happen in this person's life or in this circumstance, and I will move toward that vision with whatever wisdom and power God supplies me." A manly man moves even when there are no recipes.*

My quarrel with recipe theology is not with the biblical principles it affirms or with its requirement that we follow them. It is rather with its tendency to make biblical principles into a formula for success.

God has not written a cookbook for living, with recipes for every dish we may want to prepare. He responds to our individual situations by inviting us to participate in a story larger than our lives. Recipe theology studies the bits and pieces of life in order to help us tell *our* story better. God invites us to join him in telling *his*.....

Recipes are useful in a well-lighted kitchen. Recipe theology, that collection of practical biblical principles that tell us what to do in every situation, treats confusion as something to be solved rather than entered. It reduces the mysteries of life to things we can manage.

Recipe theologians tell us how to make life work by simplifying things and relieving confusion. Transcendent theologians know there is a darkness of confusion that can only be entered by knowing Christ, by abiding in him, by trusting him to supply supernatural power to hover over whatever darkness we face, and then by moving into that darkness with words that bring life

SA,p.79 - *Men are created in God's image. By design, we are called to uniquely express something of Him by how we live and relate in our world. We are designed to move, to speak, to create, to love. If our lives do not reflect this image, something is wrong...*

A man lives out the image of God as he moves and speaks into the chaos of his world.

SA, p.99 - Speaking is the gateway to relationship. Silence is the gatekeeper. The Hebrew Bible teaches us that words usher us out of silence and connect us to God.... Every moment of my life, I stand in the balance between creation and destruction. Silence destroys. Speaking creates. Even though I am a silent man, I want to be a man who speaks, who is present, who - like his God - makes something from nothing.

KNOWING WHAT TO SAY COMES FROM REMEMBERING GOD - HIS WORDS AND WORKS.

Contrast the temptation of the second Adam! - HE SPOKE - HE REMEMBERED GOD'S WORDS.

SA, p.101 - God is telling a story, a story full of life, love, and grace, a story of hating evil and honoring good, a story rich in drama, poetry, and passion. As we see his story told through our lives, we find the courage to handle the inevitable confusion of life. We find the strength to move ahead, to take risks, to relate deeply, because we are caught up in the larger story of God.

I SAMUEL 23:16 - JONATHAN HELPED DAVID FIND STRENGTH IN GOD - NOT BY GIVING DAVID ALL THE ANSWERS TO HIS PROBLEMS!

ADULTS - REMEMBER and TELL!

Deuteronomy 4:9-10; 6:4ff, 20ff
Psalm 48:12-14

WE NEED TO REMEMBER GOD, AND SPEAK IN THOSE CONFUSING SITUATIONS - TO TRUST GOD AND SPEAK EVEN WHEN IT IS HARD - TO TALK ABOUT THE THINGS THAT ARE HARD TO TALK ABOUT - BECAUSE RELATIONSHIP IS IMPORTANT - AND BECAUSE WE NEED TO REMEMBER GOD AND TELL HIS STORY

We are the remembering ones. We are created to remember the words of God and the works of God. Men are called to remember God by faithfully telling others who he is and what he has done.

SA,p.119 - Because men, like women, are fundamentally relational beings, all movement will be seen most clearly in the way a man relates. A man will either call forth life and beauty in the people he knows or he will destroy that same life and beauty. A man's effect on others may be imperceptible or dramatic, but it is there. No interaction of more than a few seconds, no conversation beyond the most casual leaves the other person unchanged.

Manly men release others from their control and encourage them with their influence. They touch their wives, children, and friends in sensitive ways that free them to struggle with *their* loneliness and selfishness and pain. Manly men nudge their family and friends to the same crossroads where they, as men, have found that trust or unbelief must be chosen.

Unmanly men require their friends and family to meet their demands. Men who move with control, anger, and terror deaden others into conformity or incite them to self-preserving rebellion.

APPLY ALL THIS TO CHRISTIAN EDUCATION - OUR MAIN TASK IS TO REMEMBER GOD AND **SPEAK!**

Psalm 71

Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love... establish the work of our hands.

Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God*, p.223-228

Christianity, alone among the world faiths, teaches that God is triune. The doctrine of the Trinity is that God is one being who exists eternally in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Trinity means that God is, in essence, relational.

The gospel writer John describes the Son as living from all eternity in the “bosom of the Father” (John 1:18), an ancient metaphor for love and intimacy. Later in John’s gospel, Jesus, the Son, describes the Spirit as living to “glorify” him (John 16:14). In turn, the Son glorifies the Father (17:4) and the Father, the Son (17:5). This has been going on for all eternity (17:5b).

What does the term “glorify” mean? To glorify something or someone is to praise, enjoy, and delight in them. When something is useful you are attracted to it for what it can bring you or do for you. But if it is beautiful, then you enjoy it simply for what it is. Just being in its presence is its own reward. To glorify someone is also to serve or defer to him or her. Instead of sacrificing their interests to make yourself happy, you sacrifice your interests to make them happy. Why? Your ultimate joy is to see them in joy.

What does it mean, then, that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit glorify one another? If we think of it graphically, we would say that self-centeredness is to be stationary, static. In self-centeredness we demand that others orbit around us. We will do things and give affection to others, as long as it helps us meet our personal goals and fulfills us.

The inner life of the triune God, however, is utterly different. The life of the Trinity is characterized not by self-centeredness but by mutually self-giving love. When we delight and serve someone else, we enter into a dynamic orbit around him or her, we center on the interests and desires of the other. That creates a dance, particularly if there are three persons, each of whom moves around the other two. So it is, the Bible tells us. Each of the divine persons centers upon the others. None demands that the others revolve around him. Each voluntarily circles the other two, pouring love, delight, and adoration into them. Each person of the Trinity loves, adores, defers to, and rejoices in the others. That creates a dynamic, pulsating dance of joy and love. The early leaders of the Greek church had a word for this—*perichoresis*. Notice our word “choreography” within it. It means literally to “dance or flow around.”

The Father... Son... and Holy Spirit glorify each other.... At the center of the universe, self-giving love is the dynamic currency of the Trinitarian life of God. The persons within God exalt, commune with, and defer to one another.... When early Greek Christians spoke of perichoresis in God, they meant that each divine person harbors the others at the center of his being. In constant movement of overture and acceptance each person envelops and encircles the others. (Cornelius Plantinga)

In Christianity God is not an impersonal thing nor a static thing—not even just one person—but a dynamic pulsating activity, a life, a kind of drama, almost, if you will not think me irreverent, a kind of dance.... The pattern of this three-personal life is.... the great fountain of energy and beauty spurting up at the very center of reality. (C.S. Lewis)

When people say, “God is love,” I think they mean that love is extremely important, or that God really wants us to love. But in the Christian conception, God really has love as his essence. If he was just one person he couldn’t have been loving for all eternity. If he was only the impersonal all-soul of Eastern thought, he couldn’t have been loving, for love is something persons do. Eastern religions believe the individual personality is an illusion, and therefore love is, too. Chesterton wrote, “For the Buddhist...personality is the fall of man, for the Christian it is the purpose of God, the whole point of his cosmic idea.” It is the purpose of God because he is essentially, eternally, interpersonal love.

Ultimate reality is a community of persons who know and love one another. That is what the universe, God, history, and life is all about....

Jonathan Edwards, in reflecting on the interior life of the triune God, concluded that God is infinitely happy. Within God is a community of persons pouring glorifying, joyful love into one another. Think about this pattern in our own experience. Imagine there is someone you admire more than anyone else in the world. You would do anything for him or her. Now imagine you discover that this person feels exactly the same about you, and you enter into either a lifetime friendship or a romantic relationship and marriage. Sound like heaven? Yes, because it comes from heaven—that is what God has known within himself but in depths and degrees that are infinite and unimaginable. That is why God is infinitely happy, because there is an “other-orientation” at the heart of his being, because he does not seek his own glory but the glory of others.

“But wait,” you say. “On nearly every page of the Bible God calls us to glorify, praise, and serve him. How can you say he doesn’t seek his own glory?” Yes he does ask us to obey him unconditionally, to glorify, praise, and center our lives around him. But now, I hope, you finally see why he does that. He wants our joy! He has infinite happiness not through self-centeredness, but through self-giving, other-centered love. And the only way we, who have been created in his image, can have this same joy, is if we center our entire lives around him instead of ourselves.

Why would a God like this create a world of beings like us? On the basis of Biblical passages such as John 17:20-24, Jonathan Edwards reasoned it out. Historian George Marsden summarizes Edward’s idea:

Why would such an infinitely good, perfect, and eternal being create?... Here Edwards drew on the Christian Trinitarian conception of God as essentially interpersonal.... The ultimate reason that God creates, said Edwards, is not to remedy some lack in God, but to extend that perfect internal communication of the triune God’s goodness and love....

God's joy and happiness and delight in divine perfections is expressed externally by communicating that happiness and delight to created beings.... The universe is an explosion of God's glory. Perfect goodness, beauty, and love radiate from God and draw creatures to ever increasingly share in the Godhead's joy and delight.... The ultimate end of creation, then, is union in love between God and loving creatures.

God did not create us to GET the cosmic, infinite joy of mutual love and glorification, but to SHARE it. We were made to join in the dance. If we will center our lives on him, serving him not out of self-interest, but just for the sake of who he is, for the sake of his beauty and glory, we will enter the dance and share in the joy and love he lives in.....

The Son of God was born into the world to begin a new humanity, a new community of people who could lose their self-centeredness, begin a God-centered life, and, as a result, slowly but surely have all other relationships put right as well. Paul calls Jesus "the last Adam." As the first Adam was tested in the Garden of Eden, the last Adam (Jesus) was tested in the Garden of Gethsemane. The first Adam knew that he would live if he obeyed God about the tree. But he didn't. The last Adam was also tested by what Paul called a "tree," the Cross. Jesus knew that he would be crushed if he obeyed his Father. And he still did.

Why did Jesus die for us? What was Jesus getting out of it? Remember, he already had a community of joy, glory, and love. He didn't need us. So what benefit did he derive from this? Not a thing. And that means that when he came into the world and died on the cross to deal with our sins, he was circling and serving *us*. "I have given them the glory that you gave me" (John 17). He began to do with us what he had been doing with the Father and the Spirit from all eternity. He centers upon us, loving us without benefit to himself....

When we discern Jesus moving toward us and encircling us with an infinite, self-giving love, we are invited to put our lives on a whole new foundation. We can make him the new center of our lives and stop trying to be our own Savior and Lord. We can accept both his challenge to recognize ourselves as sinners in need of his salvation, and his renewing love as the new basis of our identity. Then we don't need to prove ourselves to others. We won't need to use others to bolster our fragile sense of pride and self-worth. And we will be enabled to move out toward others as Jesus has moved toward us.

Kevin DeYoung, *Just Do Something – a liberating approach to finding God’s will – OR How to make a decision without dreams, visions, fleeces, impressions, open doors, random Bible verses, casting logs, liver shivers, writing in the sky, etc.*

p.46 – We need to be careful that we aren’t using God as the trump card in all our decisions. Just because you pray doesn’t mean your decisions are beyond objection. I know some people talk about God’s work in their lives using different phrases. But if we say “*God* told me to do this” or “*God*’s leading me here,” this puts our decisions out of reach from criticisms or concerns. We should choose some different terminology. “I prayed about it, and this seems best” or “It seems like the Lord is leading” would be a more helpful way of communicating our dependence on God. We don’t want “God told me so” or “God laid it on my heart” or “It’s God’s will” or worse yet, “God told me that He wants you to do such and such” to be conversation stoppers that remove accountability in decision making.

p.50 – Our decisions are subjective sometimes. That’s not always bad. Sometimes we go on a hunch or an intuition or a feeling. It’s not necessarily bad to make nonmoral decisions based on our gut or feelings. What’s bad is when we are slaves to this kind of subjectivism. So we never take risks because we never feel peace about them. Or we second-guess our decisions because we feel uneasy about them. The fact is, most big decisions in life leave us feeling a little unsettled. They are, after all big decisions....

I’m not saying subjective decisions are wrong. We make decisions based on a “feeling” all the time. But a subjective divining of God’s will should not be your decision-making process. It’s a dead-end street. How do you know when an open door is the Lord’s open door or the Devil tempting you? How do you know when a closed door is the Lord’s answer to your prayer or the Lord testing your steadfastness and resolve? These are the conundrums people get into when all their decisions come from subjective attempts to discern God’s will for their lives.... Don’t confuse hunches and subjective feelings with certain words from the Lord.

William P. Farley, *The Secret of Spiritual Joy*

p.5 – If *The Secret of Spiritual Joy* sounds like a pretentious title, I don’t mean it that way. This book is not a cure for all that ails us, a guarantee of cork-popping effervescence for the rest of your life. It is about the application of a crucial biblical principle that if applied methodically will increase your faith, amplify your humility, and expand your joy.

I have intentionally not titled it *The Secret of Spiritual Happiness*. We generally become happy when we interpret external circumstances as good or positive. When the weather is nice and everyone loves me I *feel* happy. But happiness is not a common biblical idea. The English Standard Version of the Bible translates the original languages into *happy* or *happiness* only thirteen times. By contrast, *joy*, *rejoice*, or *joyful* appear 359 times.

Joy is something we are commanded to do. It is also something we experience. It is a fruit of the Spirit. Like happiness, joy can refer to positive feelings flowing from pleasant circumstances. But it can also refer to a deep-down-inside, quiet, settled conviction that all is well even when circumstances are horrendous.

p.77 – This is not about putting on a Pollyanna happy-face and pretending we have no struggles. Gratitude does not always bring instant improvement in our souls. Sometimes we will find ourselves outwardly expressing gratitude when inside we actually feel sorrow, fear, anxiety, or depression. A

true confession of biblical gratitude may not always express our feelings, but it will always express our faith. Nevertheless, whatever our emotional state, we can give thanks because we *believe* what the cross teaches about ourselves and God.

p.80 – Words of gratitude not only reveal what is in the heart. They are also the rudder that guides the heart (James 3:4-5). The words we think or speak change us, for good or for ill. “Gratitude is a revealer of the heart, not just a reporter of details,” notes Nancy Leigh DeMoss. “And among the things it reveals about us most is our level of humility.” There is a profound connection between gratitude and humility. Humility is essential to Christianity. It attracts God’s favor. It is the virtue from which all other virtues spring. It is essential to godliness.

p.82 – When you humble yourself with thanksgiving, you let thanksgiving have its humbling effect on your heart. The tongue is the rudder. The more we speak words of gratitude and thanksgiving, the more we feel the humility that gratitude expresses.

Grateful Christians are increasingly meek. Words of heartfelt gratitude also express and advance a virtue that is closely related to humility—meekness. Meekness is the ability to respond to troubles and unexpected events with serenity and composure. Meekness expresses deep faith and trust in God.

p.83 – Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) was a model of meekness. Most consider him North America’s greatest theologian. Despite this, and for petty reasons, in 1750 his Massachusetts congregation fired him. He had been their pastor for more than twenty years. He was in his late forties, with a large family, no other job prospects, and no ability to do anything but preach and write. Most people in a similar situation would respond with self-pity and worry, or worse.

Instead, Edwards responded with meekness. Here is how a fellow minister described Jonathan during the week of his trial by the church council that eventually dismissed him. “I never saw the least symptoms of displeasure in his countenance the whole week, but he appeared like a man of God, *whose happiness was out of the reach of his enemies*, and whose treasure was not only a future but a present good, overbalancing all imaginable ills of life, even to the astonishment of many, who could not be at rest without his dismissal.” Edwards’ reaction to their rejection is a picture of biblical meekness.

p.84 – Contentment is the ability to embrace the fact of our needs with the joy that only a grateful heart can produce.

p.86-87 – Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise... Thanksgiving will morph into praise, and praise into heart-felt worship. It would be no exaggeration to say that every time a believer lifts up his or her heart to God in thanksgiving, God gets the worship and praise that pleases him. “Thanksgiving in Paul *is an act of worship*,” notes David Pao. “It is not focused primarily on the benefits received or the blessed condition of a person; instead, *God is the center of thanksgiving*.” It is virtually impossible for an ungrateful Christian to be a worshiping Christian. And it is almost impossible for a grateful, thankful Christian to *not* be a worshiping Christian.

p.91 – Gratitude is the secret of spiritual joy. In the Bible, thanksgiving is a big subject, and the apostle Paul is its greatest advocate. New Testament scholar P.T. O’Brien observes that “Paul mentions the subject of thanksgiving in his letters more often, line for line, than any other Hellenistic author, pagan or Christian.” Paul’s letters literally bristle with exhortations to a grateful, thankful way of life.

BUILDING A CHRISTIAN APPROACH TO TEACHING
By Timothy C. Evaritt, Ed.D. ©1992

I. THE FOUNDATION

A. Introduction

1. There is nothing quite as practical as good theory or philosophy.
2. Many Christian schools have a clear and wonderfully written statement of their philosophy of education but... the major issue which faces every Christian teacher and Christian school is... how do we take what we say we believe about what it is to educate Christianly and... connect those beliefs to what we do in our classrooms? Is it rhetoric or reality?
3. What is the difference tween a Christian teacher and a teacher who happens to be a Christian? *The objective for this session: to identify the "big beliefs" which make up the foundation of Christian education.*

B. What is happening every day when children and young people come to school (any school – this one or any other school)?

1. All students are trying to make sense out of life and the world in which they're living.
2. A school is a place where students encounter many "bits and pieces" of knowledge and information. Every student is involved in putting the pieces together in a manner that makes sense to him/her.

C. The process of developing a way of looking at life and the world can be called the development of a world-view. A world-view is a set of big beliefs which we hold consciously or subconsciously about the basic makeup and meaning of the world and life. Where do students "learn" these "big beliefs" that shape their world-views? Everywhere – including five or six hours a day in your classroom. A primary goal of each teacher should be that one's students will develop a biblical world-view. This will help them to evaluate the "big beliefs" and practices of the world and those around them, and respond more adequately to God through loving Him, serving Him, and exercising dominion over His creation.

D. A world-view is the foundation of an education. The main difference between a Christ-centered education and any other education is found in a careful analysis of the world-view. The "big beliefs" of any world-view (the building blocks of a foundation) ask and answer seven fundamental questions.

1. What is reality? What is really real (ultimate reality)?

Non-Christian: only matter and energy

Christian: there is also the infinite personal God who created matter and energy

2. What about God? Is there a God? If so, what is He like?

Non-Christian: Maybe there is a god and maybe not. He may be good or he may not. He is impersonal and cannot be known.

Christian: Affirms He is and He is infinite and personal. He can be known and has made himself known in Jesus Christ. The God revealed in creation is the God of the Bible.

3. Who is man? What is he like?

A typical secular view: Man is merely a biological organism who can be conditioned to behave. He is born good (neutral) but because of circumstances in his environment, he may go bad. Each person lives for himself or others.

Christian: Sees in man a unique person who is a special creature having been made in the image of God. Because of this, he has immeasurable worth and value (to God). He is by nature a sinner but is capable of being redeemed. He is made to know God and live for Him and for others.

4. What is right and what is wrong? The question of morality.

Non-Christian: Our secular society says that society-at-large decides what is right or wrong. "Man is the measure of all things."

Christian: Sees morality as established by the character of God and revealed through principles laid down in His word.

5. What is the meaning of this life and this world? This is the question of history.

A secular view may conclude that the world has no direction and one's personal meaning to life is whatever one makes it.

A Christian view: God has revealed purpose and plan for his world and that plan is being unfolded. A Christian's worth rests in the fact that he is a creation of God; meaning derives from the significance of being part of God's plan.

6. What happens when we die? The question of death.

A non-Christian view: Death is the end. Life here on earth is all there is. We're here and we're gone; extinction is the end.

The Christian view: Death, for the believer, is the entrance to life with God. One is not ready to live unless one is ready to die. Knowing that God has prepared an eternal rest for us makes life on earth meaningful. This view of death is the Christian's "blessed hope."

7. How do we know what we know? This is the question of knowledge and knowing.

Non-Christian: Might say we can know **only** what we know through reason and our senses.

Christian view: Also knows through reason and senses but believes in a special way of knowing. Christians often refer to this as "special revelation" in that it is known only through the written word of God. "General revelation" refers to creation and those things all around us that reveal something of who God is. Paul speaks of this in Romans 2.

The very fact that we have God's revelation makes it possible to answer the other six questions of a world-view. This knowledge is not exhaustive but is sufficient to live lives which please God.

II. THE PROCESS OF SCHOOLING

I. Introduction

A. Everyone (young and old alike) operates his/her life on the basis of his/her world-view, which deals with the questions of Reality, God, Man, Morality, History, Death, and Knowledge.

B. A Biblical world-view, applied to schooling, should result in teachers making a conscious or deliberate effort to help students build a solid foundation in their lives.

1. Knowledge of a biblical world-view provides teachers with a basic framework out of which teachers may teach everything and live accordingly.

2. There is no such thing as a neutral education.

3. The development of a biblical world-view into the lives of students is a long term process; there is no set formula by which it occurs.

II. Applying a Biblical world-view to education.

A. Plank One: The Task of Education

1. To learn the truth in order to respond more adequately to God, through loving him, serving Him, and by exercising dominion over His creation.

B. Plank Two: The Nature of the Learner

1. Every student is made in the image of God. He/she is purposeful, rational, creative, moral, social, responsible, called to love, and able to exercising dominion over creation.

2. By nature each student is also sinful, finite, and dependent.

3. The consequences are that each student has a basic need for security, structure, discipline, guidance, a model to follow, and instruction to grow.

C. Plank Three: The Role of the Teacher

1. Teachers have a great responsibility that includes planning skills, the ability to organize and manage a classroom, knowledge of the growth and development of one's students, knowledge of the content to be taught, the ability to use media and materials, good interpersonal skills, and the ability to use effective instruction skills.

2. The role of a teacher is to nurture the growth of students so that they will learn the truth in order to respond more adequately to God through loving Him, serving Him, and exercising dominion over His creation.

3. Christian teachers function as reconciling agents of Jesus Christ. They serve in the three offices in which Christ serves.

a. KING: who uses authority to serve others.

*Leading students in the discovery and application of truth

*Helping students exercise dominion that

>uses resources for God's glory and man's benefit

>unfolds the creative potential in people and the world

>gives witness to the redemption found in Jesus Christ

- b. PROPHET: who teaches the truth involving knowing and interpreting:
 - *God and His revelation
 - *The reality of the world
 - *Oneself and one's relationship to God, self, and one's fellowman
- c. PRIEST: who shares oneself with students and empathizes with them.
 - *Listening and perceiving needs
 - *Confronting problems
 - *Reconciling students – to God, themselves, others, and the world in which they live.

D. Plank Four: The Content to Be Learned

1. All truth is God's truth.
2. Biblical truth must provide the framework for all academic inquiry.
3. Knowledge, in all its diversity, is unified.
4. Knowing, in a Biblical sense, carries with it the responsibility of doing.
5. Facts, concepts, and the implication of both must be taught.
6. God spoke His Word to people so they might understand reality around them and act in a godly way.

E. Plank Five: the Teaching-Learning Process

1. The heart is the source of one's behavior.
2. Learning is initiated through a challenge, a tension, a dissonance, or awakening a need.
3. One attends to those things which are related to one's needs or are personally meaningful.
4. Learning occurs when one accepts something as truth which then impacts one's subsequent behavior.
5. Learning involves the intellect, the will, and the actions of the individual.
6. Genuine thinking involves memory, comprehension, application and/or synthesis.
7. Modeling is extremely important in learning.

F. Conclusion

1. Teaching can seem to be a bit overwhelming.
2. A Philosophy of Education is to school what the heart is to the body.

The Norm is not perfection... the Norm is growth.

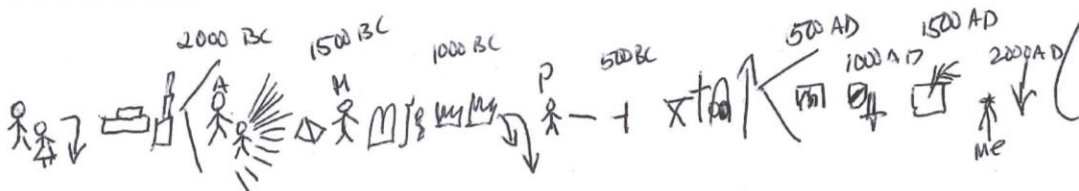
Next page: Pastor Cantine's 5 Questions and Chronology

THE FIVE QUESTIONS _____ NAME _____

THE QUESTION	OUR CULTURE'S ANSWER	THE TRUTH
1. Where did I come from?	Chance product of random chemicals and processes	Created by a wise and loving God
2. Why am I here?	No reason, so enjoy everything you can	To glorify and enjoy Him
3. What is wrong with me?	Someone or something kept you back	Sin has twisted
4. How can I change?	Get advice, and try harder	God changes us through the Gospel
5. Where will I go when I die?	Nowhere. When you are dead, you are dead.	Heaven or Hell

Every culture has an answer to these five questions.

Figure out what any person thinks about these five questions. You will understand why they live as they do.



John 1:19-51 – POINTING STUDENTS TO JESUS

Gilbert, *Who is Jesus*, p.107-108—When John the Baptizer cried out that day, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”, he recognized Jesus to be the ultimate sacrifice who would die in his people’s place, the long-foretold Suffering Servant who would be crushed for his people’s iniquities.

And so, as we’ve seen, Jesus was baptized not because he needed to repent of his own sins, but because he was identifying with and uniting himself to the sinful people he had come to save—as Son of God, as Representative, as King, as Champion, and as Suffering Servant of the Lord. That’s the last piece of what the voice from heaven meant when it said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” Those words, “with whom I am well pleased,” are a deliberate echo of words from the book of Isaiah that God first spoke about the Suffering Servant.

I hope you can see now the extraordinary thing that was happening that day on the banks of the Jordan River. With his baptism and these words from heaven, Jesus was stepping fully into the roles—the offices—that God intended him to fill from the very beginning. You might even say that with these words from heaven, God declares Jesus to be triply crowned—with the crown of heaven as God’s Son, the crown of Israel as the long-awaited King, and the crown of thorns as the Suffering Servant who would save his people by dying for them, in their place.

John 1:29 - Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Our job as teachers is to be saying to our students, "Look!"

The most important place we can turn their eyes is to Jesus.

Heb 12:2 -Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us – let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

II Cor. 3:18 – And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect [contemplate] the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

II Cor 4:18 – So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Hughes: “I am the voice.” He did not say “I am the Word.” He reached back seven hundred years to the words prophesied in Isaiah 40 and said, “I am just a voice.” He was not the substance but just the communicator. Borrowing the imagery from the O.T. passage, he was saying, “I am merely a workman making a road for the Messiah.” He turned the conversation away from himself and pointed to Jesus Christ. Not only that, he claimed for Jesus a place so exalted that ordinary people like himself were unworthy to perform a task relegated to the lowest slave.

What humility! Yet Jesus said about John, ‘Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist’ (Matt. 11:11). Of all who ever lived, including Moses and Abraham, John the Baptist was the greatest of mortals.

Keddie: Lamb of God – It is important to recognize that this title was something completely new. Plenty of lambs were sacrificed in the Old Testament, but it remains a fact that there was no identification of a personage called ‘the Lamb of God’ in that period. Even when Isaiah describes the ‘Suffering servant’ of the Lord as being led ‘like a lamb to the slaughter’, it is an illustration of the meekness of Christ rather than an identification of his person in its entirety.

Keddie: The core significance of this is the idea that Jesus is *the sinless, self-sacrificing sin-bearer*. Lambs are the quintessence of unblemished innocence and therefore the perfect symbol for substitutionary atonement. The participle ‘takes away’ (ο αἰρων) carries the notion of ‘lifting up’ and ‘bearing away’ its object. – 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13 quoting Deut. 21:23; 1 Peter 1:18-20; Rev. 13:8)

Keddie: The Lamb is God’s free-grace provision to carry sin away and remake spiritually dead, lost and condemned sinners into new people, reconciled to God through the blood of the Son. The Lamb establishes the pattern of true discipleship (Phil 2:5-8), The Lamb is the Judge of everyone who will ever live upon this earth (Rev.5:5-6; 6:16). The Lamb is the glory of heaven (Rev. 21:23). It is in his priestly office that Christ is exalted in glory as the very light of heaven.

Hughes: Christianity is a bloody religion—the blood of Christ cleanses us of all sin! This reality must be primary in our witness and in our thinking! Yes, Christ came to give abundant life. Yes, Christ worked miracles, and he can work miracles in our lives today. But these are *benefits* of the gospel, not the gospel itself. The gospel centers upon Christ as the sin-bearer—“the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”

The Lamb is our eternal message. The encounter between Abraham and Isaac *prophesied* his sacrifice. The Passover *applied* the principles of his sacrifice. John 1 *identified* the sacrifice. And it is *magnified* in Revelation 5:9-14.

SEE THE GOOD OF CONTINUALLY TESTIFYING OF JESUS! - The next day AGAIN, John said, Look! The Lamb of God! – THIS time two of his disciples followed Jesus.

We need to call them again and again to look to Jesus.

Isaiah 40 – O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, get thee up into the high mountain... lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, *Behold your God!*

An Important Question – What do you want?

Maclaren: It was not an accident that the first words which the Master spoke in His Messianic office were this profoundly significant question, “What do you want?” He asks it of us all, He asks it of us today. Well for them who can answer, “Rabbi, we are seeking you!”....

First, the question suggests to us this: *the need of having a clear consciousness of what is our object in life*. The most of men have never answered that question. They live from hand to mouth, driven by circumstances, guided by accidents, impelled by unreflecting passions and desires, knowing what they want for

the moment, but never having tried to shape the course of their lives into a consistent whole, so as to stand up before God in Christ when He puts the question to them, "What do you seek?" and to answer the question.

These incoherent, instinctive, unreflective lives that so many of you are living are a shame to your manhood, to say nothing more. God has made us for something else than that we should thus be the sport of circumstances. It is a disgrace to any of us that our lives should be like some little fishing boat, with an unskillful or feeble hand at the tiller, yawing from one point of the compass to another, and not keeping a straight course. I pray you, dear brethren, to face this question: "After all, and at bottom, what is it I am living for? Can I formulate the aims and purposes of my life in any intelligible statement of which I should not be ashamed?"....

Ah, brethren! *If we would ask ourselves this question, and answer it with any thoroughness, we should not make so many mistakes as to the places where we look for the things for which we are seeking. If we knew what we were really seeking, we should know where to go to look for it. Let me tell you what you are seeking, whether you know it or not. You are seeking for rest for your heart, a home for your spirits; you are seeking for perfect truth for your understandings, perfect beauty for your affections, perfect goodness for your conscience. You are seeking for all these three, gathered into one white beam of light, and you are seeking for it all in a Person. Many of you do not know this, and so you go hunting in all manner of impossible places for that which you can only find in one. To the question, "What seek ye?" the deepest of all answers, the only real answer is, "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God." If you know that, you know where to look for what you need.*

Isn't this what Christian education is all about?

An important question – but also an encouraging promise

Maclaren: : "What do you want?" That question would derive all its meaning from the look with which it was accompanied, and the tone in which it was spoken. It might mean either annoyance and rude repulsion of a request, even before it was presented, or it might mean a glad wish to draw out the petition, and more than half a pledge to bestow it. All depends on the smile with which it was asked and the intonation of voice which carried it to their ears. And if we had been there we should have felt, as these two evidently felt, that though in form a question, it was in reality a promise, and that it drew out their shy wishes, made them conscious to themselves of what they desired, and gave them confidence that their desire would be granted. Clearly it had sunk very deep into the Evangelist's mind; and now, at the end of his life, when his course is nearly run, the never-to-be-forgotten voice sounds still in his memory, and he sees again, in sunny clearness, all the scene that had transpired on that day by the fords of the Jordan.

These words are not only a question, but are really a veiled and implied promise. The question, "What do you want of Me?" may either strike an intending suppliant like a blow, and drive him away with his prayer sticking in his throat unspoken, or it may sound like a merciful invitation, "What is your petition, and what is your request, and it shall be granted to you?" We know which of the two it was here. *Christ asks all such questions as this (and there are many of them in the New Testament), not for His*

information, but for our strengthening. He asks people, not because He does not know before they answer, but that, on the one hand, their own minds may be clear as to their wishes, and so they may wish the more earnestly because of the clearness; and that, on the other hand, their desires being expressed, they may be the more able to receive the gift which He is willing to bestow....

Imitate Jesus is being inviting and welcoming and encouraging to students.

Use questions to draw them out and help them think.

Who is He that thus stands up before a whole world of seeking, restless spirits, and fronts them with the question which is a pledge, conscious of His capacity to give to each of them what each of them requires? Who is this that professes to be able to give all these men and women and children bread here in the wilderness? There is only one answer – the Christ of God.....

Whatever you desire, you will find in Jesus Christ. The first words with which He broke the silence when He spoke to men as the Messiah, were at once a searching question, probing their aims and purposes, and a gracious promise pledging Him to a task not beyond His power, however far beyond that of all others, even the task of giving to each man his heart's desire.

Help them see that all they need is found in Jesus.

A Gracious Invitation – Come and you will see

Maclaren: *He who notices the first beginnings of return to Him, and always comes to meet men, and is better to them than their wishes, will not let them steal behind Him uncheered, nor leave them to struggle with diffidence and delay.*

This invitation of the Master is also a very distinct call to a first-hand knowledge of Jesus Christ. Andrew and John had heard from the Baptist about Him, and now what He bids them to do is to come and hear Himself. That is what He calls you, dear brethren, to do. Do not listen to us, let the Master Himself speak to you. "Come and see" is a distinct

call to the personal act of faith... Come to Me, and see Me by faith; and then your hearts will have found what they seek, and your weary quest will be over, and, like the dove, you will fold your wings and nestle at the foot of the Cross, and rest for evermore. Come! "Come and see!"

Keddie: The hearers of the Word responded by turning in faith to Jesus. This was a physical as well as a mental and spiritual commitment. The two are inextricably bound up together. You cannot follow Jesus in your mind and not also follow him in your body. What you do expresses what you are: 'With the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation' (Rom. 10:10)... It is precisely because we love the Lord that we will keep his commands. Faith without works is 'dead'.... Andrew and John followed Jesus (1:37); they enquired of him in such a way as to indicate their desire to learn from him (1:38b)); and they remained with him,

undoubtedly to sit under his teaching (1:39a-c). these are the practical evidences that their faith was real. They challenge us as to our devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you have such an open-faced, teachable spirit? Are you eager to be his disciple, to learn from him and to follow him in personal godliness?

A Personal Testimony – We have found the Messiah

Maclaren: Notice the simple word which is the most powerful means of influencing most men.... I recently read a story about a minister who preached a very elaborate course of lectures in refutation of some form of unbelief, for the special benefit of a man that attended his place of worship. Soon after, the man came and declared himself a Christian. The minister said to him, "Which of my discourses was it that removed your doubts?" The reply was, "Oh! It was not any of your sermons that influenced me. The thing that set me thinking was that a poor woman came out of the chapel beside me, and stumbled on the steps, and I stretched out my hand to help her, and she said, "thank you!" Then she looked at me and said, "Do you love Jesus Christ, my blessed Savior?" And I did not, and I went home and thought about it; and now I can say / love Jesus." The poor woman's word, and her frank confession of her experience, were all the transforming power.

They need to see we walk with Jesus more than that we have the answers to all their questions.

A Transforming Savior – You will be called Cephas

That change of names implies Christ's power and promise to bestow a new character and new functions and honors. Peter was by no means a "Peter" then.... He was rash, impulsive, headstrong, self-confident, and therefore, necessarily changeable... Jesus named him not for what he was but for what, by God's grace, he would become.

Keddie: It is remarkable that Jesus called Peter – a perfect stranger – by his name. 'You are Simon the son of Jonah.' You would be impressed were a stranger to identify both your name and that of your father! Matthew Henry is correct in seeing this as 'a proof of Christ's omniscience.' It is surely as amazing as his later, better-known, revelation that he saw Nathaniel 'under the fig tree.' The general point is that the Lord knows those who are his – and does so before they come to him by faith.

Also remarkable is his assignation of a new name to Simon... the designation 'A Stone' is, of course, 'Peter' – the name by which we know the apostle. Leon Morris points out that when God gives a name, it denotes his ownership and also speaks of a new character in which the man henceforth appears (e.g. Ge. 32:28).

If you will go to Jesus Christ He will make a new man of you.... He will not make a Peter into a John, or a John into a Paul, but He will change a Simon into a Peter... The process will be long. It will be painful. There will be a great deal pared off... We have to thank God's providence that we do not know all the sorrows and trials of the process of making us what He wills us to be. But we may be sure of this, that if only we keep near our Master, and let Him have His way with us, and work His will upon us, and if

only we will not wince from the blows of the Great Artist's chisel, then out of the roughest block He will carve the fairest statue; and He will fulfill for us at last His great promise: "I will give to him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knows save he that receives it."

Labor to have a vision for what your students can become by the transforming grace of God. Pray to that end.

John 1:43 – Philip – FOLLOW ME

JESUS SEEKS HIS PEOPLE -

The good shepherd seeks His lost sheep (Luke 15; John 10).

Zaccheus! Luke 19:10 – For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.

You serve a Savior who is actively seeking these children.

JESUS CALLS US TO FOLLOW HIM

Maclaren: Follow Me!.... The words mean, Be My disciple. Think what is implied in them, and ask yourself whether the demand that Christ makes in these words is an unreasonable one, and then ask yourselves whether you have yielded to it or not.... We lose the force of the image by much repetition.

This CALL was to characterize Jesus' ministry – this was the first time, but there were many more to come – when Jesus would say to people, "Follow Me." Matt. 8:22; 9:9 – As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.

Often in the fuller form – Matt. 10:38 – Anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me – or fuller still – Matt.16:24 – If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. Luke adds (9:23) take up his cross DAILY

Jesus describes Himself as the Good Shepherd who SEEKS His sheep and He describes His Sheep as those who listen to His voice and FOLLOW Him (John 10:27)

Platt: Just as Jesus' invitation to those first disciples was a call to leave behind all things, so also when we follow Him *we leave behind all things*, including our comfort. The early disciples left behind everything that was familiar and natural for them. They exchanged comfort for uncertainty. They didn't know *where* they would be going; they only knew *who* they would be with. All followers of Christ must respond to this same call today: we may not always know all the details about *where* Christ is leading us, but we do know *who* we're following.

While following Christ requires abandoning everything, at the core it means that we must abandon our sin. That is, we admit our sin in brokenness before God, and then we run from it. That's what it means to abandon ourselves. This is the central

message for any prospective disciple: “If anyone wants to come with Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me.” That’s where following Jesus starts. In a world where everything revolves around self—protect yourself, promote yourself, preserve yourself, take care of yourself—Jesus says, “Slay yourself.”

...The costly call to abandon everything for Jesus can be stated another way. We lay down all things so that *we live for one thing: to honor the King*. To follow Jesus means to hold loosely to everything else and to cling tightly to the person of Christ and the mission of His kingdom. This may sound extreme to some people, but we can’t forget who the “me” is here. To lay down everything in your life doesn’t make sense until you realize who the King is. Once you realize this, leaving behind all things is the only thing that makes sense.

Platt: It should be clear by now that following Christ is not easy. However, this is not a call to earn something from God by our sacrificial lifestyles. As we live with radical abandonment for Christ’s glory, we are to *live with joyful dependence on His grace*. See the beauty and wonder of God’s grace in those words, “Follow Me.” God takes the initiative to choose.

A CALL TO FAITH

John 8:12 – I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

Maclaren: Jesus Christ was His own great theme. Whatever be the explanation of the fact, there stands the fact that, if we know anything at all about His habitual tone of teaching, we know that it was full of Himself. We know, too, that what He said about Himself was very unlike the language becoming a wise and humble religious teacher. Both the prominence given to His own personality, and the tremendous claims He advanced for Himself, are hard to reconcile with any conception of His nature and work except one, - that here we see God manifest in the flesh.... The world, instead of turning away from such monstrous assumptions, and drowning them in scornful laughter, or rebelling against them, has listened, and largely believed, and has not felt them to mar the beauty of meekness, which, by a strange anomaly, this Man says that He has.... Words parallel to these are frequent on our Lord’s lips.

Do you follow Him in your belief, and following Him in your belief, do you accept Him as, by His death and passion, the Savior of your soul? That is the first step – to follow Him, to trust Him completely for what He is, the Incarnate Son of God, the Sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, and therefore for your sins and mine. This is a call to faith.

A CALL TO OBEDIENCE

Maclaren: Sedulously plant your tremulous feet in His firm footsteps. Where you see His track going across the bog be not afraid to walk after Him, though it may seem to lead you into the deepest and the blackest of it. Follow Him and you will be right. Follow Him and you will be blessed.

To follow Jesus means to live with total trust in His authority. We might put it this way: He is the Master of every domain in our lives. He is the Lord of every detail of our lives.

To follow Him is to live with total trust in His sovereign, supreme authority in every domain and in every detail of your life.

A CALL TO IMITATION

Mark 8:34 – Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said, If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

(Maclaren on Luke 9:23) The cross which is our hope is also our pattern. In a very real sense we have to be partakers of the sufferings of Christ, and no faith in these as substitutionary is vital unless it leads to being conformed to His death.

Maclaren: No man has penetrated to the depths of that stringent and all-comprehensive commandment who has not recognized that there is one special thing in which Christ is to be our Pattern, and that is in regard to the very thing in which we think that He is most unique and inimitable. It is His Cross, and not His life; it is His death, and not His virtues, which He is here thinking about, and laying it upon all of us as the encyclopedia and sum of all morality that we should be conformed to.... Christ's death is the pattern which is here set before us. Of course we cannot imitate that in its effects, except in a very secondary and figurative fashion. But the spirit that underlay it, as the supreme Example of self-sacrifice, is commended to us all as the royal law for our lives, and unless we are conformed to it we have no right to call ourselves Christ's disciples....

There are two ways of looking at Christ's Cross. You must begin with recognizing it as the basis of all your hope, the power by which you are delivered from sin as guilt, habit, and condemnation. And then you must take it, if it is to be the sacrifice and atonement for your sins, for the example of your lives, and mould yourselves after it.

1 Peter 2:21 – To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps

The word here in Peter is different from the main word for follow. This one in Peter *επακολουθεω* is to follow after, close upon – to follow in the steps.

But the main word does not give the picture of following behind but rather of following AS A COMPANION

A CALL TO FELLOWSHIP

Wuest – The word “follow” is *ακολουθεω* “to take the same road as another does.” The idea is not that of following behind another, but that of accompanying the other person, taking the same road that he takes and fellowshiping with him along that road.

In these four things – faith, obedience, imitation, fellowship – lies the essence of discipleship. No man is a Christian who has not in some measure all four.

Vine - *ακολουθεω*, to be an *ακολουθος*, a follower, or companion (from the prefix *α*, here expressing union, likeness, and *κελευθος*, a way; hence, one going in the same way), is in the literal sense and metaphorically, of discipleship. It is used 77 times in the Gospels, of following Christ, and only once otherwise.

John 12:26 – Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be...

....The true characteristic of Christian teaching as to conduct lies in this, that the law is in a Person, and that the power to obey the law comes from the love of the Person. All things are different; unwelcome duties are made less repulsive, and hard tasks are lightened, and sorrows are made tolerable, if only we are following Him.

Maclaren: I remarked at an early stage of this sermon how singular it was that our Lord should present Himself as the Pattern for all human excellence. Is it not even more singular that He should venture to present His own companionship as the sufficient recompense for every sorrow, for every effort, for all pain, for all pilgrimage? To be with Him, He thinks, is enough for any man and enough for all men. Who did He think Himself to be? What did He suppose His relation to the rest of us to be, who could thus calmly suggest to the world that the only thing that a heart needed for blessedness was to be beside Him?

Follow Him. Trust, obey, imitate, hold fellowship with Him. You will always have a Companion, you will always have a Protector.... Praise Him for His grace which sweetly drew you in – His grace which keeps you day by day - FOLLOW

John 1:44-51 – Nathanael

Notice how Philip brings him to Jesus - Come and see....

Bring them to Jesus - pray with them - in class - individually - make it the natural thing to do - let's talk to Jesus about it - let's thank God for what He has shown us.....

Hughes: Jesus emphasized that Nathanael was a transparent, honest man. That is probably why Nathanael reacted to Philip's news by saying, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" He said what he thought. I think that characteristic was confirmed by Nathanael's reaction to Jesus' words: "How do you know me?" Now, if Jesus said to me, "Behold, a believer in whom is no deceit!" I would probably say, "Me? Not me. But I guess if you say so, maybe I am." But Nathanael just owned up to it. He was in fact a guileless man.

an *Israelite* in whom was no guile. Jesus put deliberate emphasis on that word because Jacob, the O.T. patriarch, was Israel, and he was full of guile... Temple's translation says, "Behold an Israelite in whom there is no Jacob." Nathanael was evidently an O.T. believer, like Simeon and Anna, who was looking for God. The Lord knew Nathanael's character before he met him and said he was a guileless man. How could Jesus know? That thought must have flashed through Nathanael's mind. Beautiful revelation!

Notice how we have here our Lord's omniscience set forth as cognizant of all our inward crises and struggles. 'When you were under the fig tree, I saw you.' I suppose all of us could look back to some place or other, under some hawthorn hedge, or some boulder by the seashore, or some mountain-top, or perhaps in some back-room, or in

some crowded street, where some never-to-be-forgotten epoch in our soul's history passed, unseen by all eyes, and which would have shown no trace to any onlooker, except perhaps a tightly compressed lip. Let us rejoice to feel that Christ sees all these moments which no other eye can see. In our hours of crisis, and in our monotonous, uneventful moments, in the rush of the furious waters, when the stream of our lives is caught among rocks, and in the long, languid reaches of its smoothest flow, when we are fighting with our fears or yearning for His light, or even when sitting dumb and stolid, like snow men, apathetic and frozen in our indifference, He sees us, and pities, and will help the need which He beholds.

Hughes: 'when you were under the fig tree' – this is one of the great cryptic statements of the N.T.... What is important is that Nathanael had a religious experience that no one but Jesus knew about. Maybe Nathanael had been reading the story of Jacob's ladder. Maybe he had been contemplating being baptized by John the Baptist. Maybe he was thinking about the Messiah. Maybe he had prayed that the Messiah would reveal himself to him. The point is, Nathanael had had a spiritual experience under a fig tree and Jesus was saying, "I know about the experience you had that you shared *only* with God." Jesus knew!

Nathanael was not only guileless—he was able to put two and two together quickly. He knew that God is omniscient, and he realized that Jesus' statement demonstrated omniscience. This man had to be God!

We need to spend time under our fig trees! Time when we are open and honest with God about our struggles.

Hughes: In other words, Jesus says, "Nathanael, because you saw I am omniscient, you believe? You have not seen anything yet." Christ really took the lid off in verse 51. It is significant that he switched from the second person singular to the second person plural, making his words universal in meaning.

A. Faith is the heart of discipleship

Maclaren: Here is the first time that the word 'believe' came from Christ's lips; and when we remember all the importance that has been attached to it in the subsequent history of the Church, and the revolution in human thought which followed upon our Lord's demand of our faith, there is an interest in noticing the first appearance of the word. It was an epoch in the history of the world when Christ first claimed and accepted a man's faith.

It is clear that our Lord here uses the word for the first time in the full Christian sense, that He regards the exercise of faith as being practically synonymous with being a disciple, that from the very first, believers were disciples, and disciples were believers. Notice further that our Lord here employs the word 'believe' without any definition of what or whom it is that they were to believe. He Himself, and not certain thoughts about Him, is the true object of a man's faith. We may believe a proposition, but faith must grasp a person. Even when the person is made known to us by a proposition which we have to believe before we can trust the person, still the essence of faith is not

the intellectual process of laying hold upon a certain thought, and acquiescing in it, but the moral process of casting myself in full confidence upon the Being that is revealed to me by the thought – of laying my hand, and leaning my weight, on the Man about whom it tells me. And so faith, which is discipleship, has in it for its very essence the personal element of trust in Jesus Christ.

B. Faith is seeing

Maclaren: Unless we trust Christ and take our illumination from Him, we shall never 'see' a whole set of truths which, when once we trust Him, are all plain and clear to us.... If you trust Him, if you fall at His feet and say 'Rabbi! You are my Teacher and my illumination,' then you will see. You will see God, man, yourselves, duty; you will see light upon a thousand complications and perplexities; and you will have a brightness above that of the noonday sun, streaming into the thickest darkness of death and the grave and the awesome hereafter. Christ is the Light. In that "Light shall we see light." And just as it needs the sun to rise in order that my eye may behold the outer world, so it needs that I shall have Christ shining in my heaven to illuminate the whole universe, in order that I may see clearly. 'Believe and you shall see...' For only when we trust Him do the mightiest truths that affect humanity stand plain and clear before us.

Maclaren: And besides that, if we trust Christ, we get a living experience of a multitude of facts and principles which are all mist and darkness to men except through their faith; an experience which is so vivid and brings such certitude as that it may well be called vision. The world says, 'seeing is believing.' So it is about the coarse things that you can handle, but about everything that is higher than these invert the proverb, and you get the truth. 'Seeing is believing.' Yes, in regard to outward things. Believing is seeing in regard to God and spiritual truth. You believe... you shall see.

Maclaren: "You shall see greater things than that," has its proper fulfillment in the gradual manifestation of His person and character, which followed through the events recorded in the Gospels. His life of service, His words of wisdom, His deeds of power and of pity, His death of shame and of glory, His Resurrection and His Ascension, these are the 'greater things' which Nathanael is promised. They all lay unrevealed yet, and what our Lord means is simply this: 'If you will continue to trust in Me, as you have trusted Me, and stand beside Me, you will see unrolled before your eyes and comprehended by your faith the great facts which will make the manifestation of God to the world.

C. Faith results in progress

Maclaren: Faith at first, both in regard to its contents and its quality, is very rudimentary and infantile. A man when he is first converted – perhaps suddenly – knows after a fashion that he himself is a very sinful, wretched, poor creature, and he knows that Jesus Christ has died for him, and is his Savior, and his heart goes out to Him, in confidence and love and obedience. But he is only standing at the door and peeping in as yet. He has only mastered the alphabet. He is but on the frontier of the promised land. His faith has brought him into contact with Infinite power, and what will be the end of that? He will indefinitely grow. His faith has started him on a course to which there is

no natural end. As long as it keeps alive he will be growing and growing, and getting nearer and nearer to the great center of all.

Maclaren: So here is a grand possibility opened out in these simple words, a possibility which alone meets what you need, and what you are craving for, whether you know it or not, namely, *something that will give you ever new powers and acquirements; something which will ensure your closer and ever closer approach to an absolute object of joy and truth; something that will ensure you against stagnation and guarantee unceasing progress.* Everything else gets worn out, sooner or later; if not in this world, then in another. There is one course on which a man can enter with the certainty that there is no end to it, that it will open out, and out, and out as he advances – with the certainty that, come life, come death, it is all the same.

Maclaren: You professing Christian people, are you any taller than you were when you were born? Have you grown at all? Are you growing now? Have you seen any further into the depths of Jesus Christ than you did on that first day when you fell at His feet and said, “you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel”?

Hughes: There is also a promise of growth implicit in Christ’s words to Nathanael. We will experience ongoing growth and increasing understanding of the heavenly realities all around us.... Christ is infinite, and his infinite love will unfold for eternity. We will always be surprised and will keep growing into new knowledge of his love. His power, his mercy, his strength, his transcendence—all these things will keep unfolding for eternity. All these experiences are bound up in Jesus’ statement to Nathanael (and to us).

I. Jesus’ claim

Maclaren: Our Lord recognizes and accepts the faith of Nathanael and his fellows, but, like a wise Teacher, lets His pupils at the very beginning get a glimpse of how much lies ahead for them to learn; and in the act of accepting the faith gives just one hint of the great tract of yet uncomprehended knowledge of Him which lies before them.

Look! The Lamb of God!... We have found the Messiah! The One written about in Moses and the Prophets.... You are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel!... All these crowns had been put on His head by human hands, but here He crowns Himself. He makes a mightier claim than any that they had dreamed of, and proclaims Himself to be the medium of all communication between heaven and earth.

We have here, as I said, our Lord crowning Himself by His own witness to His own dignity. *Mark how, with superbly autocratic lips, he bases this great utterance upon nothing else but His own word.* Prophets ever said, “Thus saith the Lord.” Christ ever said: ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you.’ [Truly, truly, I say to you... αμην, αμνη, λεγω υμιν] “Because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself.” He puts His own assurance instead of all argument and of all support to His words.

Hughes: [Genesis 28:12] – Under that ominous Syrian sky God gave him a vision of encouragement. “Look, Jacob, do you think you are all alone out here? There is traffic between Heaven and earth on your behalf. Let that comfort you.” That was the dream Jesus referred to when speaking to Nathanael, though he mentioned no ladder.

The finest Greek scholars, from J.H. Bernard to C.K. Barrett say this means Jesus is the ladder. What a tremendous truth! The ladder is Christ! “Nathanael, you have not seen anything! As you enter into the fullness of your relationship with me, and as your spiritual vision is broadened, you are going to see swarming angels and hear the rustle of their wings as they move on that ladder between Heaven and earth for you.” And this is actually what happens on behalf of believers today. We need to hold on to this and understand it and believe it until we can almost hear the rustle of their wings.

Jesus’ words bring into our lives the stunning realities that were Jacob’s! God is often the closest when he seems farthest away. Have you ever been out in the wilds of life, with stone pillows, so that it seemed as if God was far away? We learn from Jacob’s vision that God is active in our lives when we are in the wilds. And we see that angels really do minister on our behalf? Hebrews 1:14 says, “Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation.” Heavenly hosts minister to us!

Maclaren: The opening heavens and the descending angels began to be manifested from that first hour of His official work... the allusion is to the story of Jacob at Bethel.... So, says Christ, you shall see, in no vision of the night, in no transitory appearance, but in a practical waking reality, that ladder come down again, and the angels of God moving upon it in their errands of mercy.

That is to say, to put it into plain words, Christ is the sole medium of communication between heaven and earth, the ladder with its foot upon the earth in His humanity, and its top in the heavens.

What a privilege to point our students to such a sure foundation! - the only foundation!

Maclaren: Christ is the medium of all communication between heaven and earth, inasmuch as He is the medium of all revelation....

Christ is the ladder between heaven and earth, inasmuch as *in Him the sense of separation, and reality of separation, are swept away*. Sin has shut heaven; there comes down from it many a blessing upon unthankful heads, but between it in its purity and the earth in its muddy foulness ‘there is a great gulf fixed.’ It is not because God is great and I am small, or because He is Infinite and I am a mere pin-point as against a great continent, it is not because He lives for ever, and my life is but a handbreadth, it is not because of the difference between His Omniscience and my ignorance, His strength and my weakness, that I am parted from Him. “Your sins have separated between you and your God,’ and no man, build he Babels ever so high, can reach thither. There is one means by which the separation is at an end, and by which all objective hindrances to union, and all subjective hindrances, are alike swept away.

Christ has come, and in Him the heavens have bended down to touch, and touching to bless, this low earth, and man and God are at one once more.

[Hendriksen: Jacob's ladder finds its antitype or fulfillment in Christ.... *the link between heaven and earth, the bond of union between God and man, the One who by means of His sacrifice reconciles God to man.* With the eye of faith the disciples will be able to see him in that light. They will be able to see the angels of God ascending and descending upon the *Son of man*. For Jesus this mysterious term (Son of man) is as rich in meaning as is the concept of Messiah. The term is based on Dan. 7 – cf. John 12:34 – Jesus' most common title for himself, used 81 times in the Gospels and never used by anyone but Jesus]

He is the ladder, or sole medium of communication, inasmuch as by Him all divine blessing, grace, helps, and favors, come down angel-like, into our weak and needy hearts. Every strength, every mercy, every spiritual power, consolation in every sorrow, fitness for duty, illumination in darkness, all gifts that any of us can need, come to us down on that one shining way, the mediation and the work of the Divine-Human Christ, the Lord.

He is the ladder, the sole medium of communication between heaven and earth, inasmuch as by Him my poor desires and prayers and intercessions, my wishes, my sighs, my confessions rise to God. "No man comes to the Father except through Me."

He is the ladder, the means of all communication between heaven and earth, inasmuch as at the last, if ever we enter there at all, we shall enter through Him and through Him alone, who is 'the Way, the Truth, and the Life.'

Gordon Keddie: There is no evidence that this was to be a single vision and there is no record of such an event. Rather, Jesus appears to be speaking in a 'durative sense... "you shall see again and again."' And what would they see? They would see that Jesus is the ladder spanning earth and heaven, that he is the Mediator between God and man. Everything that the disciples would see Jesus do and teach would demonstrate his Messiahship. Miracle after miracle and utterance after utterance, Christ would be to them a vision of mediation and reconciliation between God and sinners.

Furthermore, Christ does quite literally open heaven for those he saves, and he will bring them to glory in his time. Christ also gives believers, in this life, communion with God through the exercise of a living faith in him. 'Christ is to us as Jacob's ladder,' says Matthew Henry, 'by whom angels continually ascend and descend for the good of the saints.'

Jesus' use of the term 'Son of Man' reaches back to the vision described in Daniel 7:13-14.... The term 'Son of Man' appears more than eighty times in the Gospels and is used by Jesus in such a way as to transform it from the mysterious reference in Daniel 7 to a clear assertion of his Messiahship. Lenski best sums up Jesus' identification of himself as the Son of Man when he notes that 'Daniel pictures the Messiah, yet the Jews had not drawn a title for the Messiah from it. This Jesus himself did.'

Maclaren: One thing is needful for this wonderful consummation, even our faith. And oh! how blessed it will be if in waste solitudes we can see the open heaven, and in the blackest night the blaze of the glory of a present Christ, and hear the soft rustle of angels' sings filling the air, and find in every place 'a house of God and a gate of heaven,' because He is there. All that may be yours on one condition. You believe.... You shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.

PSALM 90:12, 14, 16-17

(Psalm nine - ty: ver - ses twelve, four - teen, six - teen, sev - en - teen:)

5 12) Teach us to num - ber our days a - right, that we may gain a

11 heart of wis - dom. 14) Sat - is - fy us in the morn - ing with your un - fail - ing

16 love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. 16) May your

21 deeds be shown to your ser - vants, your splen - dor to their child - ren. 17) May the fa - vor of the

26 Lord our God rest up - on us; es -

29 tab - lish the work of our hands for us - yes, es - tab - lish the work of our hands.

N.C.S Staff Prayer

Tune adapted from FAITHFULNESS by William M. Runyan, 1923; this arrangement c 1995 John Rees