

Knowing God
Study Series



DENVER CHURCH
OF CHRIST

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introductory Remarks	3
2. Pre-Study: Seeking God Talk	4
3. Study #1: The Word of God	5
4. Study #2: The Son of God	7
5. Study #3: The Sin of Man	9
6. Study #4: The Grace of God	11
7. Study #5: The Lordship of Jesus	13
8. Study #6: The Plan of Salvation.....	15
9. Study #7: The Church of Jesus.....	18
10. Attachment A: Historical Manuscripts and Evidences of the Bible.....	20
11. Attachment B: Bible History	21
12. Attachment C: Sins of Galatians 5:19-21	22
13. Attachment D: On the Physical Death of Jesus.....	23
14. Attachment E: Jesus I.....	32
15. Attachment F: Jesus II.....	34
16. Attachment G: Jesus III	36
17. Attachment H: Pride and Humility	39
18. Attachment I: The Many and the Few	42
19. Attachment J: The Big Picture	45

“KNOWING GOD”

Introductory Remarks

Creating an evangelistic study series is no simple task. How does one decide which topics and scriptures to include and which to exclude? Should the series be comprised of only the Biblical “essentials” of salvation? What are those essentials? And what role does the religious and personal background of the prospective convert play in these questions? Can there be a study series that would fit any person from any background? One might ask, “What is the value of creating such a series in the first place?” These are just some of the questions that must be considered before any attempt to create such a series is made.

It is this author’s opinion that an evangelistic study series can be extremely helpful in leading the lost to Jesus. It is helpful in training, equipping, and directing disciples to bring their friends to Christ. At the same time, it can be harmful. While the gospel is for all, a specific approach taken in a study series may not be. Every disciple must constantly search the scriptures, consider the needs of the friends they are instructing, and pray for wisdom so they can effectively lead those friends to a relationship with God.

The following study series is simply one approach to helping others find the joys of a real and lasting relationship with God. It is designed to include the basic Biblical doctrines that will be helpful in such a conversion process, while appealing to the common American experiences and backgrounds. While the Word itself cannot be compromised or changed, this study series may need to be in order to help someone become a true Christian. It may need to be augmented with other studies to help some, or to be streamlined into fewer studies to help others.

Here is an overview of the studies contained in the “Knowing God” series:

Pre-Study: Seeking God Talk—A guideline to have a genuine talk with someone to inspire them to seek a deeper relationship with God by studying the Bible.

Study #1: The Word of God—An overview of the role the Bible should play in our lives and in our approach to God.

Study #2: The Son of God—An inspirational look at Jesus, as the author and perfecter of our faith.

Study #3: The Sin of Man—An honest look at the heart of man and God’s thoughts on sin and righteousness.

Study #4: The Grace of God—A heart moving study of the incredible gift of God’s grace and the price of that grace, in Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross.

Study #5: The Lordship of Jesus—A challenging overview of the response that the cross deserves and the commitment that God expects from those who would follow him.

Study #6: The Plan of Salvation—An exhaustive study on how to become a true Christian.

Study #7: The Church of Jesus—An inspiring and informative study about what Jesus intended his church to be.

“KNOWING GOD”

Pre-Study: Seeking God Talk

Introduction: There are times when someone may not be completely ready to begin regular Bible studies with you. Perhaps they are not very eager to know God in a deeper way; Or maybe they have not considered what it really means to have a personal relationship with God; Or perhaps your relationship with them is not quite comfortable enough to launch into the Word of God Study. That is where this “Pre-Study Talk” can be especially helpful. **The purpose of this “Pre Study” is to inspire such a person to seek a deeper relationship with God by studying the Bible.** I have called this a “Seeking God Talk” as it is much more casual than the other studies. While all of the subsequent studies should feel like “good talks” as well, this is especially the goal of this one.

Key words: Genuine enthusiasm

It is a good idea to start this study with a good discussion about each other’s spiritual or religious background. Like Paul writes in I Thessalonians 2:8, we are not only sharing the gospel but our lives as well. The more you get to know about their personal background, the more you will be able to help them apply the Scriptures to their life. Without sounding like an interrogator, find out more about them, such as: their religious upbringing; whether or not they presently attend a church; their thoughts and convictions about God, the Bible, etc. Again, the more you can get to know them, the more you can help them. Make sure you share about your own life as well, so they can get to know you.

If they seem open enough to begin **Study #1 The Word of God**, then go directly to that. If not, then share one or both of the following passages:

I. Acts 17:24-28

- Look how much God wanted a relationship with man. What did He do to draw near to man?
- What did they have to do in order to find God? Seek Him.
- What does it mean to “seek God?” If someone really wanted to get closer to God, what would they do? Share personally about why and how you began to seriously seek a deeper relationship with God.
- Do you want to seek a deeper relationship with God like that?
- Explain that you have some great, personal Bible Studies that you would love to share with them, so you can help them and help each other draw nearer to God.

II. Jeremiah 29:11-13

- God is sharing His vision for His people in that day. He had incredible plans to prosper them and not to harm them; to give them hope and a future. Is it any different today? God has amazing plans for every life.
- If we are to discover those plans, we must first draw near to God. The only way to do that is to seek Him with all our hearts. What does that mean? Have you ever sought something with all your heart?
- Share about why and how you began to seek God with all your heart.
- Explain that you have some great, personal Bible Studies that you would love to share with them, so you can help them and help each other draw nearer to God.
- Set up the next study.

“KNOWING GOD”

Study #1: The Word of God

Introduction: It is a good idea to start this study with a great talk about each other’s spiritual or religious background. Like Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 2:8, we are not only sharing the gospel, but our lives as well. The more you get to know about their personal background, the more you will be able to help them apply the scriptures to their life. Without sounding like an interrogator, find out more about them, such as: their religious upbringing; whether or not they presently attend a church; their thoughts or convictions about God and the Bible, etc. Again, the more you can get to know them, the more you can help them. Make sure you share about your own life as well, so that they can get to know you.

This specific study will focus on the most important key to knowing God and knowing the truth about God—the Bible. It is important to not rush past this study, assuming they already have a deep conviction about following God’s Word. **The purpose of this study is to help your friend establish the Bible as God’s Word and God’s standard for their life.**

You can start by sharing how the Bible has impacted your life over the years. Then let them know you would like to share some things you have learned about the Word that have particularly helped you.

III. Proof of the Word

- For years many have discounted the Bible holding that it cannot be trusted as reliable. However, history and archaeology tell us otherwise. *Before we even open the Word, let’s just talk about some historical facts supporting its authenticity.*
- Historical Testing: These are the five primary tests that archaeologists and historians use to help determine whether any ancient manuscript is factual.
 - Test of Handwritten Copies...there are more ancient copies of the Bible than any other ancient manuscript
 - Test of Geography...Biblical manuscripts spread throughout the entire known world.
 - Test of Time...the writing, copying and spreading began around 1500BC and has never ended.
 - Test of External References...thousands of references to the scriptures from outside sources
 - Test of Archaeology...not one archaeological find has ever contradicted the Word, but thousands have supported it.
- Even today, the Bible has been translated into more languages than any other book in history.

- Other facts about the Bible:
 - Over 40 authors and 66 different books
 - 3 languages—Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek
 - Over 1500 year period of writing
 - One common thread of God’s relationship to man holding it all together—amazing!
 - Approximately 400 prophecies regarding Jesus in the Old Testament were fulfilled in the New Testament

[Note: For more information on Historical Manuscripts and Evidences of the Bible, see attachments A and B. You may also consult The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict by Josh McDowell.]

- *Let’s see what the Bible says about itself in this regard:*

2 Peter 1:20-21 Men wrote the Bible, but they were “carried along by the Holy Spirit.” If God were to inspire a book, this is the kind of impact it would have!

IV. The Purpose of the Word

So the Bible is from God, but what is it for?

2 Timothy 3:16-17 It is useful for us to live righteous lives and completely equip us for every good work

1 Timothy 4:16 It is crucial for salvation

Romans 10:17 It helps us to know and believe in God and Jesus

V. The Power of the Word

Hebrews 4:12-13 The word can cut deep within our lives and reveal our hearts to God.

John 8:31-32 If we hold to the Word, we will know the truth and be set free.

Hebrews 1:1-3 Jesus’ words have the power to “sustain all things.”

VI. The Priority of the Word

Mark 7:5-13 Priority over people and traditions (pastors, parents, friends, denominations, etc.)

Acts 17:10-12 Priority in our daily lives

John 12:47-48 Eternal priority, as we will be judged according to the Word

Concluding Questions and Comments:

Do you believe the Bible is the Word of God? What role do you think the Bible should play in your life? What can you change in order to make it that way? Will you agree to read the Bible daily? Encourage them to imitate the Bereans and read the Bible every day in order to form solid convictions. It is always a good idea to give them the assignment to review the entire study on their own. Remember, your goal is not just to “go through the studies” with them, but rather to help them develop their own convictions from God’s Word.

“KNOWING GOD”
Study #2: The Son of God

Introduction: It is always a good idea to start every study with a review of the previous studies that have been done—repetition strengthens conviction. What did they learn from the previous study? Was there anything that they did not understand or disagreed with? Etc. Remember, the goal is not to just “go through the studies” with them, but rather to help them develop their own convictions from God’s Word. Are they reading the Bible daily?

The purpose of this study is to instill a deeper understanding and appreciation for the life of Jesus. Far too often it has been assumed that most people already have a solid understanding of who Jesus really is. While many have heard a lot about Jesus, few have a Biblically complete view of his heart, character and ministry. This study is but one brief attempt to help someone gain such a view.

You may want to start the study with an introductory statement like: *“Today we are going to look at the most important person in real Christianity—Jesus. A lot of people have heard a lot of things about Jesus, seen the movies, etc, but few really have a solid understanding of what he was all about (perhaps share something from your life about how you were like that). What are your thoughts about Jesus? Who was he really and what comes to mind when you think about him? Etc.”*

“Let’s look at some good scriptures that talk about Jesus, all from the gospel of John.”

John 1:1-18

- Incredible overview of the sovereignty and significance of Jesus:
 - He was with God from the beginning (vs.2)
 - All things were created through him (vs.3)
 - He was the Word (which was God) made into flesh (vs.14)
 - He came to make the Father known (vs.18)
 - He came to help people become children of God (vs.12-13)
- Twice this passage refers to Jesus as bringing **grace and truth** (vs.14 and 17)
- There is probably not a better way to summarize Jesus heart, life, character and purpose than with these two words. It is said here that he was **“full of grace and truth”** and that he has **“brought grace and truth.”** It was who he was and what he did.
- *“Let’s look at some examples that demonstrate this and elaborate on it more.”*

I. Full of Grace

We often associate grace with the cross, and rightly so as we will study later, but grace was a huge part of Jesus daily life and ministry. *Let’s look at a few examples.*

John 8:1-11 What a great example of Jesus grace, shown by his compassion and eagerness to forgive.

John 13:1-17 Another great example of his grace, shown by his humility and willingness to lower himself to serve others.

II. Full of Truth

The word “true” in one of its forms is used nearly 70 times in the gospel of John; it was a primary focus of Jesus as he had much to say and teach. *Let’s look at a few examples of his emphasis on truth.*

John 2:12-22 This passage shows Jesus’ courage to stand up for the truth that was being compromised by the religious leaders of his day. Notice how he used the scriptures as his standard.

John 8:31-32

- You will know his teaching is true if you put it into practice.
- “Real disciples” are the ones who put his words into practice.
- Jesus’ truth “sets us free” from our sin.

Concluding Questions and Comments:

Does this overview help you understand Jesus better? There are many other scriptures throughout the gospel of John, as well as the other three gospels that demonstrate that Jesus truly was “full of grace and truth.” Can you think of any others that you have come across in your reading?

As you continue to read through the gospels, look for these two qualities in his life and leadership—and strive to imitate them in your life as well.

“KNOWING GOD”

Study #3: The Sin of Man

Introduction: It is always a good idea to start every study with a review of the past studies that have been done—repetition strengthens conviction. What did they learn from the previous study? Was there anything that they did not understand or disagreed with? Etc. Remember, your goal is not to just “go through the studies” with them, but rather to help them develop their own convictions from God’s Word. How is their daily Bible reading going?

The purpose of this study is to open their hearts to the seriousness and depth of their own sin. In order to facilitate this, make sure that you do not come across “too preachy or teachy” but rather make it “a great talk.” Your own realness and vulnerability are very important here.

You may want to start the study with an introductory statement like: *“Today we are going to talk about one of the most misunderstood and difficult topics to discuss, but one that has changed my life so much over the years. The topic is the sin of man.”*

I. Romans 3:23-24

- What does it mean to sin?
- The word *sin* is *harmatia* in Greek, meaning “the comprehensive expression of everything opposed to God.” It is more than just “doing wrong” as all sin is ultimately directed against God.
- Our goal is to be like God and in any way we fall short, we have “sinned.”
- *Let’s look at another verse that talks about the consequence of sin.*

II. Romans 6:23

- What does it mean to say “the wages of sin is death?”
 - Physical death: murder, war, etc.
 - Emotional death: guilt, fear, insecurity, anger, apathy, etc.
 - Relational death: divorce, bitterness, resentment, etc.
 - Spiritual death: not knowing God, worshiping objects or people, etc.
 - Eternal death: if you die apart from God, you will so remain forever
- *Let’s look at another scripture about sin.*

III. Isaiah 59:1-2

- What does this scripture say about the consequence of sin?
- Sin separates us from God.
- Draw the diagram of God and Man
[See “The Big Picture” drawing, attachment J]
- In order for man to have a real relationship with God, the wall of sin must be broken down. The point in time that happens is the point that a person is “saved.”
- Jesus came to break a hole in that wall and we will study more about that in the next study.
- *Where do you think sin comes from?*

IV. Mark 7:20-23

- Where does sin come from?
- It comes from within our own hearts; we cannot blame our environment, upbringing or society.
- Here, Jesus lists many specific sins. There are over 30 such lists like this in the NT alone; why do you think the Bible is so specific?
- God wants us to know not just that we are “sinners” but what our specific sins are. It is humbling and difficult to be this specific about our sins, but that is how God wants us to be, or He would not have written it so.
- *Let’s look at another list of specific sins.*

V. Galatians 5:19-21 (sins of commission)

- Notice the groupings of the sins listed here. The first group is sexual type sins, the second is spiritual type sins, the third is sins of the heart or relational type sins, and the fourth is sins of indulgence.
[For detailed definitions of these sins, see attachment C]
- Living like this will result in eternal death.
- This might be a good time to share vulnerably from your own life about some of the sins you have struggled with over the years.
- Some examples of additional lists of sin are Romans 1:21-32, I Corinthians 6:9-10, Revelation 22:14-15
- *Let’s look at a verse that speaks of a whole different type of sin.*

VI. James 4:17 (sins of omission)

- Not only is it sin to do what is wrong, but also to not do what is right.
- Can you think of any examples of this?
- Matthew 25:31-46 gives a great example of the sins of omission

VII. Genesis 6:5-6

It is important to see sin as not just breaking a law, but as doing something that actually hurts God. He cares about us so much and wants a relationship with us so badly that His heart is filled with pain over our sin.

Concluding Questions and Comments:

What are your thoughts about these scriptures? Are there specific areas in your life that you think you need to change? What are those areas? It would be helpful to have some honest and open confession at this point. How do you think God feels about those sins? Ask them to review this study on their own and pray about the specific sins in their lives—that they may identify them and overcome them.

(Here are some scriptures to help them see the value of being open about their sins, if they need them—1 John 1:5-10, John 3:19-21, Ephesians 5:11-14)

“KNOWING GOD”
Study #4: The Grace of God

Introduction: It is always a good idea to start every study with a review of the past studies that have been done—repetition strengthens conviction. What did they learn from the previous study? Was there anything that they did not understand or disagreed with? Etc. Remember, your goal is not just to “go through the studies” with them, but rather to help them develop their own convictions from God’s Word. Are they reading the Bible daily?

The purpose of this study is to provide a heart moving overview of God’s amazing grace. This will be done by communicating both the gift of grace available to Christians as well as the price of that grace in Jesus’ death on the cross.

You may want to start the study with an introductory statement like: *“Today we are going to talk about one of the most driving forces in the heart of God and in the mission of Jesus. It is also the thing that makes the ‘good news’ such ‘good news’. It is the grace of God.”*

I. The Gift of Grace

How would you define grace? It is an undeserved gift.

Let’s look at some verses that describe God’s grace given to Christians:

- Romans 6:23 The gift of eternal life; We deserved death, but received eternal life
- Ephesians 1:7-8 The gift of forgiveness
- Ephesians 2:1-10 The gift of salvation; A great description of our lives “before grace” and “after grace”
- 1 Peter 2:9-10 The gift of new identity
 - Before grace—in darkness, not a people, no mercy
 - After grace—in wonderful light, people of God, mercy
 - Thus, Christians are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation and a people belonging to God.
- 1 John 3:1 The gift of a new relationship with God; By grace we can become true “children of God.”

These are just a few verses summarizing the gift of God’s grace that is offered freely to anyone who is truly “in Christ”.

II. The Price of Grace

While the gift of grace is truly free to those in Christ, there was a great cost to God and Jesus. To fully appreciate the gift, we need to fully understand the cost.

Romans 3:23-26 The price was Jesus’ death on the cross; thus justice was served.

*Let’s take a deeper look at what really happened to Jesus on the cross. More than anything, what Jesus experienced on the cross can be summarized as **pain**. There were three types of pain he felt—emotional, physical and spiritual pain.*

- Emotional Pain:

Matthew 26:36-56

- Jesus fell with his face to the ground
- So much stress that he may have suffered from a medical condition called *Hematidrosis*, as recorded by the physician Luke
- Judas, one of his closest friends, betrays him with a kiss
- All the disciples deserted him and fled

- Physical Pain:

Matthew 27:22-26

- Jesus was flogged
- Centurions used a flagrum to do it—an instrument with a wooden handle, leather whips and pieces of metal or rock in the ends of the whips
- The guards would stretch the person’s back out over a rock or tree and strike them repeatedly up to 39 times (the legal limit).
- Many would go into shock from such a beating or even die.

Matthew 27:27-31

- Soldiers put crown of thorns on Jesus’ head
- They drove the thorns into his head with a staff
- A hundred soldiers spitting on him and striking him and mocking him

Matthew 27:31-44

- Before this, Jesus’ face is black and blue and swollen, covered with dried blood and spit, his back is torn open and swollen.
 - The nail is placed between the ulna and the radius bones—right in a pressure point that is very sensitive
 - Other nail goes through the feet; Jesus hanging on cross by those nails
 - Most people die from suffocation, as carbon dioxide builds up in the lungs
- [For a detailed medical description of a crucifixion, see attachment D]

Isaiah 52:14

- Jesus was marred beyond human likeness
- His arms would have been so stretched out from the hanging position; his head swollen, black and blue and covered with dried blood and spit; the rest of his body swollen and covered with blood and spit as well

- Spiritual Pain: This would have been the worst pain of all

2 Corinthians 5:21

- God made Jesus become “sin” so that we could become “righteous”
- Perhaps this is why Jesus cried out, “my God my God, why have you forsaken me” on the cross right before he died. Jesus felt the nearly unbearable pain of separation from his Father in heaven for the first time in all eternity.

That is the price Jesus paid. Why again did he do all this?

Romans 5:6-8

- A demonstration of his love; he would do anything to have a relationship with you!
- A statement of the seriousness of sin; your sins necessitated this sacrifice

It is so important to personalize the cross—not just for man or the world, but for you! The grace of God is truly amazing! It is an incredible gift that came at an incredible price.

Concluding Questions and Comments:

1. *How does learning about the grace of God make you feel?*
2. *Do you see how much God loves you? How much does He love you?*
3. *How does this grace and love affect the way you view and understand your own sin?*
4. *What kind of response does grasping God’s grace and love cause you to have?*

The next time we get together we will talk more about how we should respond to the grace of God.

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Study #5: The Lordship of Jesus

Introduction: It is always a good idea to start every study with a review of the past studies that have been covered—repetition strengthens conviction. What did they learn from the previous study? Was there anything that they did not understand or disagreed with? Etc. Remember, your goal is not just to “go through the studies” with them, but rather to help them develop their own convictions from God’s Word. How is their daily Bible reading going?

The purpose of this study is to convey what it really means to make Jesus the Lord of our lives. This is a crucial study because committing to the Lordship of Jesus is necessary for salvation, yet it has been quite “watered down” in our society today.

Today we are going to study about what our response to the cross should really be and about what kind of commitment God expects of us if we are to truly be his followers. This response and commitment can be summed up in one word—LORDSHIP.

What do you think it means to call someone Lord? It means they are the absolute master and ruler of your life; whatever they say, goes! Let’s look at some verses that talk about this.

Philippians 2:5-11 A great summary of Jesus’ life and death, culminating with the fact that he is Lord of all; that every knee should bow to him. He really cannot be savior without being Lord; the two go hand in hand as he is both. When one sees what an incredibly loving savior he is, it motivates them to eagerly accept his Lordship.

What does it mean to really make him the Lord of your life? It means to be in complete subservience to Jesus; to have his will and his word become the final authority in your life. It means to follow him and become a true disciple of his.

When Jesus walked the earth he taught about what it really meant to follow him and become his disciple. Let’s look at some of these passages and let him define his own Lordship. For outline sake, we will group these verses into a few specific areas over which He should be Lord.

I. Lord of Doctrine

John 8:30-32

- Real disciples hold to Jesus’ teaching over all else
- Over opinions, traditions, emotions, etc

John 14:15, 23-24

- Loving Jesus and obeying him go hand in hand
- *What are the most difficult areas for you to obey Jesus’ words in?*

II. Lord of Priorities

Luke 9:23-26

- This is the commitment of a disciple
- Foundational heart of self-denial
- Same standard for everyone
- *What areas do you think you will need to deny yourself in?*
- (share examples from your life)

Luke 14:19-26

- “Hate” is the comparative difference between two loves
- Everything is second to Jesus—people, things and self
- *What would be the most challenging thing for you to give up?*

III. Lord of Righteousness

Mark 9:43-49

- Jesus was serious about sin
- To make Jesus Lord is to adopt his radical indignation of sin
- *What areas of your life would Jesus call you to “cut off”?*
- (again, make sure you are sharing personally as well)

IV. Lord of Relationships

John 13:34-35

- Jesus expects his disciples to love like he loved
- This is inspiring—to have others love you like that
- This is challenging—to love others like that
- *What can you change to really love others like Jesus did?*

V. Lord of Our Mission

Matthew 28:18-20

- Jesus’ vision for the world is for true disciples to fill the earth
- His dream is for everyone to make him their Lord
- He calls those who are disciples to help others become disciples—this is the mission of a disciple.

Mark 1:16-18

- Jesus quickly communicated to his prospective disciples the mission he would later give them.
- Note their immediate and wholehearted response. *Why do you think they responded in this manner?*
- *What are some things you can change in your life in order to help others know Jesus?*

Concluding Questions and Comments:

Do you accept Jesus as the Lord of your life? Why are you willing to do so? What are some things that must change in your life to reflect his Lordship?

“KNOWING GOD”
Study #6: The Plan of Salvation

Introduction: It is always a good idea to start every study with a review of the past studies that have been covered—repetition strengthens conviction. What did they learn from the previous study? Was there anything that they did not understand or disagreed with? Etc. Remember, your goal is not just to “go through the studies” with them, but rather to help them develop their own convictions from God’s Word. How is their daily Bible reading going?

The purpose of this study is to present a clear and comprehensive picture of how people became Christians in the first century church, as shown in scripture. With so many different doctrines regarding salvation floating around the religious world, this is a very important study. Please note that this is a long lesson and may need to be broken down into two parts, depending on the needs of the person being taught. Some parts may be already well understood and thus can be quickly reviewed. Other parts may not yet be fully embraced and thus may deserve full attention and explanation.

Today we are going to study about how a person crosses over from darkness to light, or how they become a Christian. It might be a good idea to ask them to remind you exactly how and when they became a Christian, if you do not remember that from a previous talk. Refer to the “Big Picture” diagram (Attachment J) introduced during the “Sin of Man” study.

John 8:12

- Jesus died so he could bring light back into the world
- The whole purpose of Jesus was to help us be in a right relationship with God
- Does that mean that everyone is saved? No. But it does mean that we all have the opportunity.

How does a person get from darkness to light? How does a person receive the forgiveness of sins and become a true Christian?

Let’s look at several steps in that process.

I. Hear

Romans 10:14-17 First step to getting right with God is to hear the Word

II. Believe

Romans 10:17 The more you hear the Word, the more you will believe

Hebrews 11:6

- It is impossible to have a relationship with God without faith
- *What does it really mean to believe?*
- Two types of belief: Intellectual acceptance (e.g. I believe 2+2=4)
Passionate conviction (e.g. I believe in equal rights)

God wants more than just the intellectual acceptance, He wants deep, heart belief; to believe in who He is, His word, His heart, His cause

When we really believe like that, it will affect our actions

III. Repent

Acts 3:19-20 Repentance (*metanoia* in Greek) literally means to change your mind. It's a complete change of thinking that is shown by your change in actions.

Acts 26:19-21

- This is what Paul preached everywhere—that they should repent, turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds.
- *Why would he call them to prove it by their deeds?*

Luke 13:1-5 Without repentance, there can be no salvation

IV. Commit

Romans 10:8-10

- We must commit to the Lordship of Jesus in order to be saved
- Not enough to just stop doing what is wrong, we must also commit to doing what is right.

1 John 2:3-6

- If we claim to know God, we must walk as Jesus did
- This fits in with the Lordship of Jesus study and the verses we looked at regarding what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

V. Be Baptized

This is a very misunderstood concept and teaching. Let's take a look at several of the primary verses in the New Testament that teach about baptism.

John 3:1-7 Being born again is necessary to enter the kingdom of God. Here, water and the spirit are closely linked with being born again.

Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus commanded that his followers be baptized

Acts 2:36-39

- First time non-Christian audience is addressed after Jesus left the earth
- Question posed—"what shall we do?" (they had already heard the word and believed and understood Jesus was Lord)
- Both repentance and baptism are commanded; not just suggested
- Forgiveness of sins and receiving the Spirit take place when a believer repents and is baptized
- Repentance precedes baptism or is done simultaneously, but not after
- This plan is promised to everyone for all time
- Baptism literally means "immersion" or "dunking."

Acts 22:14-16 Paul himself was commanded to be baptized in this same manner

Romans 6:1-8 When baptized, one is actually sharing in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus

Galatians 3:26-28 Baptism is the point a person “puts on Christ.”

Colossians 2:11-12 One is buried with Christ in baptism and raised through their faith. It is essential that there be faith at that point.

1 Peter 3:18-22

- Noah was saved by water, as the rest of the sinful world was buried in water
- That water of Noah symbolizes Christian baptism
- Baptism saves you, by the resurrection of Jesus and your internal pledge to God

Concluding Comments:

This is a good summary of the whole plan of God concerning salvation. It is important to take all these verses and steps into account and not pick and choose some verses over others. Everyone who **hears** the Word, **believes** in Jesus, **repents** of their sins, **commits** to the Lordship of Jesus and is **baptized** for the forgiveness of sins is truly saved and is a true Christian!

“KNOWING GOD”
Study #7: The Church of Jesus

Introduction: It may not be necessary to cover this study prior to a person getting baptized—it may be used as a good follow up study. However, if they come from a strong religious background and have questions or concerns regarding the church, it may be helpful to cover this topic prior to their baptism.

As always, start each study with a review of the previous studies that have been covered—repetition strengthens conviction. What did they learn from the most recent study? Was there anything that they did not understand or disagreed with? Etc. Remember, your goal is not just to “go through the studies” with them, but rather to help them develop their own convictions from God’s Word.

The purpose of this study is to help them understand God’s plans and expectations for His church. Many people have had many different experiences when it comes to “church,” so it is very important to help them to base their convictions on God’s Word.

*Today we are going to take a look at what the Bible teaches about **church**. What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word “church?”*

The word for “church” in Greek is “*ecclesia*,” which means simply *a crowd of people who have been called out*. The Christian church is thus the crowd of people who have been called by Jesus out of the world and into His kingdom.

Let’s look at several characteristics of Jesus church from the scriptures.

I. Head of the Church

Colossians 1:15-21

- *Who is the head? Christ.*
- He is the one in charge of his church; whatever he says, goes

II. Membership of the Church

1 Corinthians 12:12-13

- When a person is baptized into Christ, they become a member of his body, which is the church
- There are no requirements for membership in the St. Louis Church of Christ beyond those of Jesus’ to be part of his body
- It is important to be a part of a church where the members are truly members of Jesus’ body; that is, they are true Christians

III. Relationships in the Church

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

- Others need you
- You need others
- In the body there is a mutual dependence on each other, like a family

IV. Commitment to the Church

Hebrews 10:22-25

- Do not make a habit of missing church.
- Consider how you can help your brothers and sisters in Christ

Hebrews 3:12-13

- Am I my brother's keeper in the church? Yes.
- How can I strengthen my brother? Daily encouragement.

V. Support of the Church

2 Corinthians 8:1-15

2 Corinthians 9:6-15

- Your contribution pays for facilities, staff, helping the poor, supplies, etc.
- The Old Testament standard of giving was a tithe (10 % of their gross income.)
- The New Testament does not mention any specific amount, but does lift up the example of those whose "extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity."

VI. Leadership of the Church

Hebrews 13:17, 24

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

- God's plan for the church includes human leadership. They play a crucial role in equipping disciples to be their best for God.
- It is important that we are all supportive and appreciative for their leadership.

VII. Mission of the Church

Matthew 28:18-20

- To make disciples of all nations, to his glory
- This is what the church should talk about and focus its resources on

Concluding Comments:

Let's read a description of the very first church, in Jerusalem. Look for each of the characteristics of Jesus' church that we have outlined here in this passage.

Acts 2:38-47

- Identify each of the characteristics.
- *Have you seen all these characteristics in our church?*
- Encourage them to be grateful and faithful to Jesus' church.

HISTORICAL MANUSCRIPTS AND EVIDENCES OF THE BIBLE

The "originals" have been lost, but that is no reason to fear. The "originals" of nearly every work from ancient history have been lost - but copies have been made, for the most part by very careful copyists. Whenever there is a difference between a copy and another, historians do their very best to reconstruct the original version accurately.

The Transmission of Various Ancient Manuscripts

Author	Date	Oldest Copy	Interval	# Of Copies
Aristophanes	400 BC	900 AD	1300 years	45
Aristotle	340 BC	1100 AD	1440 years	5
Demosthenes	300 BC	1100 AD	1400 years	200
Julius Caesar	50 BC	900 AD	950 years	10
Herodotus	435 BC	900 AD	1335 years	8
Homer	800 BC	100 AD	900 years	643
Plato	360 BC	800 AD	1160 years	15
Sophocles	415 BC	1000 AD	1415 years	7
Thucydides	410 BC	900 AD	1310 years	8
Old Testament	1500 - 500 BC	200 BC	200-400 years	1,000
New Testament	50 - 90 AD	325 AD	250 years	5,000

Despite the long intervals between the time of the original texts and the oldest surviving copies, historians do not conclude that these writings are "unreliable" or "corrupt." If we refuse to accept the reliable transmission of the Bible, we would logically have to reject almost everything else from ancient history!

The New Testament is supported by more manuscripts than the Old Testament, but both are extremely well attested. Included are some facts about the Bible:

- Most of the New Testament was written between 50 and 70 AD.
- The earliest fragment of a New Testament manuscript dates from 100 AD. It's from the gospel of John, which was written a generation or two earlier.
- Manuscripts of entire books of the New Testament date from 200 AD.
- The oldest copy of the complete New Testament dates from 325 AD, a gap of only 250 years, compared with gaps of four or five times as long (1000 years or so) for most works of classical authors.
- The gap for most Old Testament books, for comparison, is as little as 200-400 years.
- There are more than 5000 ancient Greek copies alone of the Old Testament
- The most significant Biblical find of the century is undoubtedly the Dead Sea Scrolls. They were discovered in 1947 next to the Dead Sea not far from Jerusalem. The scrolls contain many religious writings, including partial or complete Biblical texts from every book of the Old Testament dating back to the 3rd century BC. Before this incredible discovery, the oldest surviving manuscripts were from a thousand years later! Their significance for establishing the accuracy of the Biblical text obviously cannot be underestimated!
- Including ancient copies in other languages, there are more than 40,000 complete and partial manuscripts of the New Testament.
- In addition, there are tens of thousands of quotations from the New Testament made by early writers, almost all of which date earlier than the oldest surviving NT manuscripts. Thus, even if all our NT manuscripts were lost, it would not be difficult to reconstruct most of the NT from these references. The Bible is by far the best attested book from ancient times. No other classical work even comes close.

BIBLE HISTORY

1. The word Bible comes, through Latin, from the Greek word biblia, meaning "books," which in its turn comes from byblos, meaning "papyrus," the material from which books were made.
2. We are used to speaking of the Bible as "a book," but in fact it is a collection of books, of different authorship and written at different times, by 40 or so different men to make up the Bible as we know it.
3. The word canon, meaning "a rule," denotes the list of books that are considered to be the authoritative collection.
4. 1400-400 BCE: This is the period that the Old Testament was written and which the writers lived. There are 39 books in the OT.
5. 285 BCE: The Hebrew (OT) scriptures were translated into Greek. The completed translation is known as the "Septuagint," from the Latin word for 70 (72 scholars in 70 days). This version was very popular with the early church as well as the Jews outside Palestine who no longer spoke Hebrew.
6. 50-90 CE: The New Testament was written during this time period.
7. 95 CE: The historian Josephus identified the Old Testament canon (works officially accepted as scripture) as the 39 books we have now. Some people believe Ezra had collected them all as early as the 5th century BCE.
8. 397 CE: A meeting of church leaders known as the Council of Carthage acknowledged the 27 books of the New Testament as we know them. Most of the books had already been treated as scripture for many years, but a half dozen or so warranted further discussion and final approval.
9. 400 CE: The entire Bible was translated into Latin, primarily by Saint Jerome. This version is known as the "Vulgate," meaning, "written in the language of the people." (In the west, Latin was the language of the people.)
10. The Early and High Middle Ages (the 5th through the 14th centuries). Intense scholarship and study took place during this time, but little in the way of Bible translation. The Bible of the Christian Church was still the Vulgate.
11. 1380 CE: An English theologian named John Wycliffe began a translation of the Bible into English. The project was completed by friends after his death.
12. 1456 CE: The Gutenberg Bible was printed. It was an edition of the Vulgate, significant as the first major work printed with movable type.
13. 1525-1530 CE: William Tyndale, a scholar in the reform movement, translated the New Testament and the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament) into English despite persecution. He was martyred before he could complete the Old Testament.
14. 1548 CE: Members of the Council of Trent voted to accept the 12 books of the Apocrypha as part of the Biblical canon - a decision that was rejected by the reform movement.
15. 1611 CE: King James I of England commissioned a translation of the Bible that would become the primary Bible of the English-speaking people for more than 300 years - the King James Version.
16. 1782 CE: The first English Bible was printed in America. It was known as the Aitken Bible.
17. 1881-1884 CE: A group of English and American scholars assembled to translate The Revised Version of the Bible, using manuscripts that had not been available at the printing of the King James Bible.
18. 1900-1901 CE: The American Standard Version of the Bible was translated.
19. 1947 CE: The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in the caves of Qumran. The scrolls have been confirmed to be a thousand years older than any existing Hebrew manuscript. When the existing Hebrew manuscripts were checked against the earlier ones, the faithfulness of the text was confirmed.
20. 1978 CE: The New International Version of the Bible was completed.

SINS OF GALATIANS 5:19-21

Sexual immorality: Fornication, any sexual union outside of marriage. Denotes ungodly sexual acts and relationships; prostitution, rape, homosexuality, petting, adultery, child abuse, bestiality.

Impurity: Any sinful thinking. Anything vulgar, wrong thoughts, lust, masturbation, wrong motives, pornography, fantasy.

Debauchery: Any misuse of the body. Usually referring to sexual excesses, but in general, refers to a readiness to indulge in any pleasure (indecent, lewd dancing, anorexia and bulimia). There is no respect for anyone else. In this state, man is at the mercy of his passions, impulses, emotions, etc. He is completely undisciplined (i.e. gives in to gluttony, laziness, smoking, cravings, masturbation, unlimited pleasure.)

Idolatry: Worshipping anything other than God. Giving or devoting one's time, substance, talents, and/or self to anything that keeps one from obeying and following God in every way (i.e. status symbols, investments, engrossing sports or hobbies, selfish ambitions, relationships, property, possessions, pleasure and wants, school, work, pride). Praying to anyone other than God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit.

Witchcraft: Seeking or being involved in any spiritual realm other than God's. Includes astrology (i.e. the stars control; consequently, God does not rule), horoscopes, Satan worship, the occult, magic spells, good luck charms or pictures, praying to saints, drug use, tarot cards, palm reading, channeling (the New Age movement), Ouiji board, etc.

Hatred: Wishing ill or harm on anyone. Looking down on anyone, bitter feelings, resentment, and wanting revenge. Murder and abortion.

Discord: Anything that breaks up relationships. Stirring up trouble, an inability to get along with people, arguing, slander, gossip, malicious talk and criticalness.

Jealousy: Possessiveness, not sharing.

Fits of rage: Uncontrolled anger, losing your temper, temper tantrums, quick temper, angry shouting, cursing and profanity, fighting.

Selfish ambition: Living to please self. Wanting one's own way, getting what one wants at any cost, desiring to be first at any cost, overly competitive spirit. Not willing to do menial or demeaning tasks, refusing to admit being wrong, arrogance, doing things for honor or glory, wanting to look good for others, refusing to compromise, pride, selfishness, and independence.

Dissent: Rebelling against authority. Not submitting. Habitually disagreeing, arguing, causing division, starting arguments, stirring up trouble.

Factions: Feeling superior to others. Cliques, refusing to associate with anyone because they are different or for any other reason. Wanting to be with "own" kind, prejudice, bigotry, and racism.

Envy: Desiring something another person has while wishing that they did not have it at all. (i.e., wealth, status, ability, physical features, spirituality, relationships).

Drunkenness: Anything that causes one to lose control. Intoxication, alcohol, drug abuse.

Orgies: Living without restraint. Includes "partying," sexual parties, unrestrained sex, vandalism, carousing.

And the like: Lying, stealing, cheating, deceit, etc.

Definition of sin:

Commission—Breaking God's laws. (I John 3:4). Sin is lawlessness, going beyond God's boundary. Sin is doing wrong.

Omission—Sin is not doing right. Not doing the good we are asked by God to do. (James 4:17) (Ex: evangelism, discipleship, service, contribution, attendance, quiet times, prayer, Bible study)

ON THE PHYSICAL DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST

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Jesus of Nazareth underwent Jewish and Roman trials, was flogged, and was sentenced to death by crucifixion. The scourging produced deep stripelike lacerations and appreciable blood loss, and it probably set the stage for hypovolemic shock, as evidenced by the fact that Jesus was too weakened to carry the crossbar (patibulum) to Golgotha. At the site of crucifixion, his wrists were nailed to the patibulum and, after the patibulum was lifted onto the upright post (stipes), his feet were nailed to the stipes. The major pathophysiologic effect of crucifixion was an interference with normal respiration. Accordingly, death resulted primarily from hypovolemic shock and exhaustion asphyxia. Jesus' death was ensured by the thrust of a soldier's spear into his side. Modern medical interpretation of the historical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead when taken down from the cross. (JAMA 1986; 255:1455-1462)

The life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth have formed the basis for a major world religion (Christianity), have appreciably influenced the course of human history, and, by virtue of a compassionate attitude toward the sick, also have contributed to the development of modern medicine. The eminence of Jesus as a historical figure and the suffering and controversy associated with his death have stimulated us to investigate, in an interdisciplinary manner, the circumstances surrounding his crucifixion. Accordingly, it is our intent to present not a theological treatise but rather a medically and historically accurate account of the physical death of the one called Jesus Christ.

SOURCES

The source material concerning Christ's death comprises a body of literature and not a physical body or its skeletal remains. Accordingly, the credibility of any discussion of Jesus' death will be determined primarily by the credibility on one's sources. For this review, the source material includes the writings of ancient Christian and non-Christian authors, the writings of modern authors, and the shroud of Turin. (1-40) Using the legal-historical method of scientific investigation, 27 scholars have established the reliability and accuracy of the ancient manuscripts. (26, 27, 29, 31)

The most extensive and detailed descriptions of the life and death of Jesus are to be found in the New Testament gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. (1) The other 23 books of the New Testament support but do not expand on the details recorded in the gospels. Contemporary Christian, Jewish, and Roman authors provide additional insight concerning the first-century Jewish and Roman legal systems and the details of scourging and crucifixion. (5) Seneca, Livy, Plutarch, and others refer to crucifixion practices in their works. (8,28) Specifically, Jesus (or his crucifixion) is mentioned by the Roman historians Cornelius Tacitus, Pliny the Younger, and Suetonius, by non-Roman historians Thallus and Phlegon, by the satirist Lucian of Samosata, by the Jewish Talmud, and by the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, although the authenticity of portions of the latter is problematic. (26)

The shroud of Turin is considered by many to represent the actual burial cloth of Jesus, (22) and several publications concerning the medical aspects of his death draw conclusions from this assumption. (5,11) The interpretations of modern writers, based on a knowledge of science and medicine not available in the first century, may offer additional insight concerning the possible mechanisms of Jesus' death. (2,17)

When taken in concert, certain facts -- the extensive and early testimony of both Christian proponents and opponents, and their universal acceptance of Jesus as a true historical figure; the ethic of the gospel writers, and the shortness of the time interval between the events and the extant manuscripts; and the confirmation of the gospel accounts by historians and archaeological findings (26,27) --ensure a reliable testimony from which a modern medical interpretation of Jesus' death may be made.

GETHESMANE

After Jesus and his disciples had observed the Passover meal in an upper room in a home in Southwest Jerusalem, they traveled to the Mount of Olives, northeast of the city. (Owing to various adjustments of the calendar, the years of Jesus' birth and death remain controversial. (29) However, it is likely that Jesus was born in either 4 or 6 BC and died in 30 AD. (11, 29) During the Passover observance in 30 AD, the Last Supper would have been observed on Thursday, April 6 (Nisan 13), and Jesus would have been crucified on Friday, April 7 (Nisan 14.29) at nearby Gethsemane. Jesus, apparently knowing that the time of his death was near, suffered great mental anguish, and, as described by the physician Luke, his sweat became like blood. (1)

Although this is a very rare phenomenon, bloody sweat (hematidrosis or hemihidrosis) may occur in highly emotional states or in persons with bleeding disorders. (18,20) As a result of hemorrhage into the sweat glands, the skin becomes fragile and tender. (2,11) Luke's description supports the diagnosis of hematidrosis rather than eccrine chromidrosis (brown or yellow-green sweat) or stigmatization (blood oozing from the palms or elsewhere). (18-21) Although some authors have suggested that hematidrosis produced hypovolemia, we agree with Bucklin (5) that Jesus' actual blood loss probably was minimal. However, in the cold night air, (1) it may have produced chills.

TRIALS

Jewish Trials

Soon after midnight, Jesus was arrested at Gethsemane by the temple officials and was taken first to Caiaphas, the Jewish high priest for that year. (1) Between 1 AM and daybreak, Jesus was tried before Caiaphas and the political Sanhedrin and was found guilty of blasphemy. (1) The guards then blindfolded Jesus, spat on him, and struck him in the face with their fists. (1) Soon after daybreak, presumably at the temple, Jesus was tried before the religious Sanhedrin (with the Pharisees and the Sadducees) and again was found guilty of blasphemy, a crime punishable by death. (15)

Roman Trials

Since permission for an execution had to come from the governing Romans, (1) Jesus was taken in the early morning by the temple officials to the Praetorium of the Fortress of Antonia, the residence and governmental seat of Pontius Pilate not as a blasphemer but rather as a self-appointed king who would undermine the Roman authority. (1) Pilate made no charges against Jesus and sent him to Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Judea.(1) Herod likewise made no official charges and then returned Jesus to Pilate.(1) Again, Pilate could find no basis for a legal charge against Jesus, but the people persistently demanded crucifixion. Pilate finally granted their demand and handed over Jesus to be

flogged (scourged) and crucified. (McDowell 25) has reviewed the prevailing political, religious, and economic climates in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus' death, and Bucklin (5) had described the various illegalities of the Jewish and Roman trials.)

Health of Jesus

The rigors of Jesus' ministry (that is, traveling by foot throughout Palestine) would have precluded any major physical illness or a weak general constitution. Accordingly, it is reasonable to assume that Jesus was in good physical condition before his walk to Gethsemane. However, during the 12 hours between 9 PM Thursday and 9 AM Friday, he had suffered great emotional distress (as evidenced by hematomas), abandonment by his closest friends (the disciples), and a physical beating (after the first Jewish trial). Also, in the setting of a traumatic and sleepless night, he had been forced to walk more than 2.5 miles (4.01 km) to and from the sites of the various trials. These physical and emotional factors may have rendered Jesus particularly vulnerable to the adverse hemodynamic effects of the scourging.

SCOURGING

Scourging Practices

Flogging was a legal preliminary to every Roman execution, (28) and only women and Roman senators or soldiers (except in cases of desertion) were exempt. (11) The usual instrument was a short whip (flagrum or flagellum with several single or braided leather thongs of variable lengths, in which small iron balls or sharp pieces of sheep bones were tied at intervals. (5,7,11) Occasionally, staves also were used. (8,12) For scourging, the man was stripped of his clothing, and his hands were tied to an upright post (14) The back, buttocks, and legs were flogged either by two soldiers (lictors) or by one who alternated positions. (5,7,11,28) The severity of the scourging depended on the disposition of the lictors and was intended to weaken the victim to a state just short of collapse or death. (8) After the scourging, the soldiers often taunted their victim. (11)

Medical Aspects of Scourging

As the Roman soldiers repeatedly struck the victim's back with full force, the iron balls would cause deep contusions, and the leather thongs and sheep bones would cut into the skin and subcutaneous tissues. (7) Then, as the flogging continued, the lacerations would tear into the underlying skeletal muscles and produce quivering ribbons of bleeding flesh. (2,7,25) Pain and blood loss generally set the stage for circulatory shock. (12) The extent of blood loss may well have determined how long the victim would survive on the cross. (5)

Scourging of Jesus

At the Praetorium, Jesus was severely whipped. Although the severity of the scourging is not discussed in the four gospel accounts, it is implied in one of the epistles (1 Peter 2:24). A detailed word study of the ancient Greek text for this verse indicates that the scourging of Jesus was particularly harsh. (33)) It is not known whether the number of lashes was limited to 39, in accordance with Jewish law. (5) The Roman soldiers, amused that this weakened man had claimed to be a king, began to mock him by placing a robe on his shoulders, a crown of thorns on his head, and a wooden staff as a scepter in his right hand. (1) Next, they spat on Jesus and struck him on the head with the wooden staff. (1) Moreover, when the soldiers tore the robe from Jesus' back, they probably reopened the scourging wounds. (7)

The severe scourging, with its intense pain and appreciable blood loss, most probably left Jesus in a preshock state. Moreover, hematidrosis had rendered his skin particularly tender. The physical and mental abuse meted out by the Jews and the Romans, as well as the lack of food, water, and sleep, also contributed to his generally weakened state. Therefore, even before the actual crucifixion, Jesus' physical condition was at least serious and possibly critical.

CRUCIFIXION

Crucifixion Practices

Crucifixion probably first began among the Persians. (34) Alexander the Great introduced the practice to Egypt and Carthage, and the Romans appear to have learned of it from the Carthaginians. (11) Although the Romans did not invent crucifixion, they perfected it as a form of torture and capital punishment that was designed to produce a slow death with maximum pain and suffering. (10, 17) It was one of the most disgraceful and cruel methods of execution and usually was reserved only for slaves, foreigners, revolutionaries, and the vilest of criminals. (1,25,28) Roman law usually protected Roman citizens from crucifixion, except perhaps in the case of desertion by soldiers.

In its earliest form in Persia, the victim was either tied to a tree or was tied to or impaled on an upright post, usually to keep the guilty victim's feet from touching holy ground. (8,11,30,34,38) Only later was a true cross used; it was characterized by an upright post (stipes) and a horizontal crossbar (patibulum), and it had several variations (Table). (11) Although archaeological and historical evidence strongly indicates that the low Tau cross was preferred by the Romans in Palestine at the time of Christ, (2,7,11) crucifixion practices often varied in a given geographic region and in accordance with the imagination of the executioners, and the Latin cross and other forms also may have been used. (28)

It was customary for the condemned man to carry his own cross from the flogging post to the site of crucifixion outside the city walls. (8,11,30) He was usually naked, unless this was prohibited by local customs. (11) Since the weight of the entire cross was probably well over 300 LB (136 kg), only the crossbar was carried. (11) The patibulum, weighing 75 to 125 LB (34 to 57 kg), (11, 30) was placed across the nape of the victim's neck and balanced along both shoulders. Usually, the outstretched arms then were tied to the crossbar. (7,11) The procession to the site of the crucifixion was led by a complete Roman military guard, headed by a centurion. (3,11) One of the soldiers carried a sign (titulus) on which the condemned man's name and crime were displayed. Later, the titulus would be attached to the top of the cross. (11) The Roman guard would not leave the victim until they were sure of his death. (9,11)

Outside the city walls was permanently located the heavy upright wooden stipes, on which the patibulum would be secured. In the case of the Tau cross, this was accomplished by means of a mortise and tenon joint, with or without reinforcement by ropes. (10,11,30) To prolong the crucifixion process, a horizontal wooden block or plank, serving as a crude seat (sedile or sedulum), often was attached midway down the stipes. (3,11,16) Only very rarely, and probably later than the time of Christ, was an additional block (suppedaneum) employed for transfixion of the feet. (9,11)

At the site of execution by law, the victim was given a bitter drink of wine mixed with myrrh (gall) as a mild analgesic. (7,17) The criminal was then thrown to the ground on his back, with arms outstretched along the patibulum. (11) The hands could be nailed or tied to the crossbar, but nailing apparently was preferred by the Romans. (8,11) The archeological remains of a crucified body, found in an ossuary near Jerusalem and dating from the time of Christ, indicate that the nails were tapered iron spikes approximately 5 to 7 in (13 to 18 cm) long with a square shaft 3/8 in (1 cm) across. (23,

24, 30) Furthermore, ossuary findings and the Shroud of Turin have documented that the nails commonly were driven through the wrists rather than the palms. (22,24, 30) After both arms were fixed to the crossbar, the patibulum and the victim, together, were lifted onto the stipes. (11) On the low cross, four soldiers could accomplish this relatively easily. However, on the tall cross, the soldiers used either wooden forks or ladders. (11)

Next, the feet were fixed to the cross, either by nails or ropes. Ossuary findings and the Shroud of Turin suggest that nailing was the preferred Roman practice. (23, 24, 30) Although the feet could be fixed to the sides of the stipes or to a wooden footrest (suppedaneum), they usually were nailed directly to the front of the stipes. (11) To accomplish this, flexion of the knees may have been quite prominent, and the bent legs may have been rotated laterally. (23-25, 30)

When the nailing was completed, the titulus was attached to the cross, by nails or cords, just above the victim's head. (11) The soldiers and the civilian crowd often taunted and jeered the condemned man, and the soldiers customarily divided up his clothes among themselves. (11, 25) The length of survival generally ranged from three or four hours to three or four days and appears to have been inversely related to the severity of the scourging. (8,11) However, even if the scourging had been relatively mild, the Roman soldiers could hasten death by breaking the legs below the knees (crucifragium or skelokopia). (8,11)

Not uncommonly, insects would light upon or burrow into the open wounds or the eyes, ears, and nose of the dying and helpless victim, and birds of prey would tear at these sites. (16) Moreover, it was customary to leave the corpse on the cross to be devoured by predatory animals. (8,11,12,26) However, by Roman law, the family of the condemned could take the body for burial, after obtaining permission from the Roman judge. (11)

Since no one was intended to survive crucifixion, the body was not released to the family until the soldiers were sure that the victim was dead. By custom, one of the Roman guards would pierce the body with a sword or lance. (9,11) Traditionally, this had been considered a spar wound to the heart through the right side of the chest fatal wound probably taught to most Roman soldiers. (11) The Shroud of Turin documents this form of injury. (5,11,22) Moreover, the standard infantry spear, which was 5 to 6 ft (1.5 to 1.8 m) long, (30) could easily have reached the chest of a man crucified on the customary low cross. (11)

Medical Aspects of Crucifixion

With knowledge of both anatomy and ancient crucifixion practices, one may reconstruct the probable medical aspects of this form of slow execution. Each wound apparently was intended to produce intense agony, and the contributing causes of death were numerous.

The scourging prior to crucifixion served to weaken the condemned man and, if blood loss was considerable, to produce orthostatic hypotension and even hypovolemic shock. (8, 12) When the victim was thrown to the ground on his back, in preparation for transfixion of his hands, his scourging wounds most likely would become torn open again and contaminated with dirt. (2, 16) Furthermore, with each respiration, the painful scourging wounds would be scraped against the rough wood of the stipes. (7) As a result, blood loss from the back probably would continue throughout the crucifixion ordeal.

With arms outstretched but not taut, the wrist were nailed to the patibulum. (7,11) It has been shown that the ligaments and bones of the wrist can support the weight of a body hanging from them, but the palms cannot. (11) Accordingly, the iron spikes probably were driven between the radius and the

carpals or between the two rows of carpal bones, (2, 10, 11, 30) either proximal to or through the strong bandlike flexor retinaculum and the various intercarpal ligaments. Although a nail in either location in the wrist might pass between the bony elements and thereby produce fractures, the likelihood of painful periosteal injury would seem great. Furthermore, the driven nail would crush or sever the rather large sensorimotor median nerve. (2, 7, 11) The stimulated nerve would produce excruciating bolts of fiery pain in both arms. (7,9) Although the severed median nerve would result in paralysis of a portion of the hand, ischemic contractures and impalement of various ligaments by the iron spike might produce a clawlike grasp.

Most commonly, the feet were fixed to the front of the stipes by means of an iron spike driven through the first or second intermetatarsal space, just distal to the tarsometatarsal joint. (2,3,8,11,30) It is likely that the deep peroneal nerve and branches of the medial and lateral planter nerves would have been injured by the nails. Although scourging may have resulted in considerable blood loss, crucifixion per se was a relatively bloodless procedure, since no major arteries other than perhaps the deep planter arch, pass through the favored anatomic sites of transfixion. (2,10,11)

The major pathophysiologic effect of crucifixion, beyond the excruciating pain, was a marked interference with normal respiration, particularly exhalation. The weight of the body, pulling down on the outstretched arms and shoulders, would tend to fix the intercostal muscles in an inhalation state and thereby hinder passive exhalation.(2,10,11) Accordingly, exhalation was primarily diaphragmatic, and breathing was shallow. It is likely that this form of respiration would not suffice and that hypercarbia would soon result. The onset of muscle cramps or tetanic contractions, due to fatigue and hypercarbia, would hinder respiration even further.(11)

Adequate exhalation required lifting the body by pushing up on the feet and by flexing the elbows and adducting the shoulders. (2) However, this maneuver would place the entire weight of the body on the tarsals and would produce searing pain. (7) Furthermore, flexion of the elbows would cause rotation of the wrists about the iron nails and cause fiery pain along the damaged median nerves. (7) Lifting of the body would also painfully scrape the scourged back against the rough wooden stipes. (2,7) Muscle cramps and paresthesias of the outstretched and uplifted arms would add to the discomfort. (7) As a result, each respiratory effort would become agonizing and tiring and lead eventually to asphyxia. (2,3,7,10)

The actual cause of death by crucifixion was multifactorial and varied somewhat with each case, but the two most prominent causes were probably hypovolemic shock and exhaustion asphyxia. (2,3,7,10) Other possible contributing factors included dehydration, (7, 16) stress-induced arrhythmias, (3) and congestive heart failure with the rapid accumulation of pericardial and perhaps pleural effusions. (2, 7, 11) Crucifraction (breaking the legs below the knees), if performed, led to an asphyxic death within minutes. (11) Death by crucifixion was, in every sense of the word, excruciating (Latin, *excruciatu*s, or "out of the cross").

Crucifixion of Jesus

After the scourging and the mocking, at about 9 AM, the Roman soldiers put Jesus' clothes back on him and then led him and two thieves to be crucified. (1) Jesus apparently was so weakened by the severe flogging that he could not carry the patibulum from the Praetorium to the site of the crucifixion one third of a mile (600 to 650 m) away. (1,3,5,7) Simon of Cyrene was summoned to carry Christ's cross, and the processional then made its way to Golgotha (or Calvary), an established crucifixion site.

Here, Jesus' clothes, except for a linen loincloth, again were removed, thereby probably reopening the scourging wounds. He then was offered a drink of wine mixed with myrrh (gall) but, after tasting it, refused the drink. (1) Finally, Jesus and the two thieves were crucified. Although scriptural references are made to nails in the hands, (1) these are not at odds with the archaeological evidence of wrist wounds, since the ancients customarily considered the wrist to be a part of the hand. (7,11) The titulus was attached above Jesus' head. It is unclear whether Jesus was crucified on the Tau cross or the Latin cross; archaeological findings favor the former (11) and early tradition the latter. (38) The fact that Jesus later was offered a drink of wine vinegar from a sponge placed on the stalk of the hyssop plant (1) (approximately 20 in, or 50 cm, long) strongly supports the belief that Jesus was crucified on the short cross. (6)

The soldiers and the civilian crowd taunted Jesus throughout the crucifixion ordeal, and the soldiers cast lots for his clothing. (1) Christ spoke seven times from the cross. (1) Since speech occurs during exhalation, these short, terse utterances must have been particularly difficult and painful. At about 3 PM that Friday, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, bowed his head, and died. (1) The Roman soldiers and onlookers recognized his moment of death. (1)

Since the Jews did not want the bodies to remain on the crosses after sunset, the beginning of the Sabbath, they asked Pontius Pilate to order crucifraction to hasten the deaths of the three crucified men. (1) The soldiers broke the legs of the two thieves, but when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. (1) Rather, one of the soldiers pierced his side, probably with an infantry spear, and produced a sudden flow of blood and water. (1) Later that day, Jesus' body was taken down from the cross and placed in a tomb. (1)

DEATH OF JESUS

Two aspects of Jesus' death have been the source of great controversy, namely, the nature of the wound in his side (4,6) and the cause of his death after only several hours on the cross. (13-17)

The gospel of John describes the piercing of Jesus' side and emphasizes the sudden flow of blood and water. (1) Some authors have interpreted the flow of water to be ascites (12) or urine, from an abdominal midline perforation of the bladder. (15) However, the Greek word *pleura* (32,35,36) used by John clearly denoted the laterality and often implied the ribs. (6,32,36) Therefore, it seems probable that the wound was in the thorax and well away from the abdominal midline.

Although the side of the wound was not designated by John, it traditionally has been depicted on the right side. (4) Supporting this tradition is the fact that a large flow of blood would be more likely with a perforation of the distended and thin-walled right atrium or ventricle than the thick-walled and contracted left ventricle. Although the side of the wound may never be established with certainty, the right seems more probable than the left.

Some of the skepticism in accepting John's description has arisen from the difficulty in explaining, with medical accuracy, the flow of both blood and water. Part of this difficulty has been based on the assumption that the blood appeared first, then the water. However, in the ancient Greek, the order of words generally denoted prominence and not necessarily a time sequence. (37) Therefore, it seems likely that John was emphasizing the prominence of blood rather than its appearance preceding water.

Therefore, the water probably represented serous pleural and pericardial fluid, (5-7, 11) and would have preceded the flow of blood and been smaller in volume than the blood. Perhaps in the setting of hypovolemia and impending acute heart failure, pleural and pericardial effusions may have developed

and would have added to the volume of apparent water. (5,11) The blood, in contrast, may have originated from the right atrium or the right ventricle or perhaps from a hemopericardium. (5,7,11)

Jesus' death after only three to six hours on the cross surprised even Pontius Pilate. (1) The fact that Jesus cried out in a loud voice and then bowed his head and died suggest the possibility of a catastrophic terminal event. One popular explanation has been that Jesus died of cardiac rupture. In the setting of the scourging and crucifixion, with associated hypovolemia, hypoxemia, and perhaps an altered coagulable state, friable noninefective thrombotic vegetations could have formed on the aortic or mitral valve. These then could have dislodged and embolized into the coronary circulation and thereby produced an acute transmural myocardial infarction. Thrombotic valvular vegetations have been reported to develop under analogous acute traumatic conditions. (39) Rupture of the left ventricular free wall may occur, though uncommonly, in the first few hours following infarction. (40)

However, another explanation may be more likely. Jesus' death may have been hastened simply by his state of exhaustion and by the severity of the scourging, with its resultant blood loss and preshock state. (7) The fact that he could not carry his patibulum supports this interpretation. The actual cause of Jesus' death, like that of other crucified victims, may have been multifactorial and related primarily to hypovolemic shock, exhaustion asphyxia, and perhaps acute heart failure. (2,3,5-7,10,11) A fatal cardiac arrhythmia may have accounted for the apparent catastrophic terminal event.

Thus, it remains unsettled whether Jesus died of cardiac rupture or of cardiorespiratory failure. However, the important feature may be not how he died but whether he died. Clearly, the weight of historical and medical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead before the wound to his side was inflicted and supports the traditional view that the spear, thrust between his right ribs, probably perforated not only the right lung but also the pericardium and heart and thereby ensured his death. Accordingly, interpretations based on the assumption that Jesus did not die on the cross appear to be at odds with modern medical knowledge.

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JESUS I

Introduction

- Ask them if they had a chance to review the notes from last time or think about seeking God more
- Inspire them about really understanding the truth about God
- The best way to really know and seek God is to understand Jesus. Jesus had one purpose in his life - to help people know God
- *What do you know about Jesus already?* Let's look at what the Bible says about Jesus

1. Jesus is a Historical Fact

Luke 1:1-4

- *The author:* Luke was a physician and noted historian. He wrote the books of Luke and Acts. The book of Acts is well regarded as an accurate history of that period. The book of Luke is also widely admired for its eloquent beauty. It reflects the education of its author
- *Purpose:* To show that Luke is an intelligent, thinking man whose writing about Jesus can be trusted

Luke 2:1-7

- Ask your friend what he sees. Explain the birth of Jesus is a historical event. (For there to be a real historical event, you must have a time, a place, and a name.)
- *Time:* Caesar Augustus' reign, time of Roman census. Quirinius is governor of Syria
- *Place:* Nazareth, Galilee, and Bethlehem (all these towns still exist today)
- *Name:* Quirinius governor of Syria. Jesus, son of Mary and Joseph would be written in this census
- If your friend still doesn't believe because he hasn't seen with his eyes, use the example of Alexander the Great. Although we haven't seen him we believe that he existed because we read about him in history books and we can see his accomplishments.
- *Conclusion:* Jesus is a fact of history. Jesus is not a legend or fairy tale. We can learn about Jesus through many witnesses like Matthew, Mark and John. They wrote an orderly account of Jesus. They wrote at different times and all the things written about Jesus match perfectly. Therefore, we are confident that Jesus is a fact in history.
- Even beyond what the Bible says, think of some other things that show Jesus was real:
 - *Christmas:* Most of the world celebrates his birthday even after 2000 years! Why don't we celebrate Superman's birthday?
 - *Calendar:* Historians worldwide chose and accepted Jesus as the center of the measurement of time (B.C./A.D.)
- Jesus is a fact in history just like Napoleon or Alexander the Great. There are no historians that question this fact.

2. The Character of Jesus

Jesus was a real man - but what was he like? We could talk for days about all of his great characteristics, but for the sake of time, we will just focus on two for now. We will look at two events that took place in Jesus' life and see what we can learn about his character:

a. John 8:1-11 **The Love of Jesus**

- What happened here?
- What characteristic of Jesus do you see?
- The LOVE of Jesus! Jesus loves like no one else!
- *Love that protects* - Jesus stood up to protect this woman from punishment. Jesus said, "If anyone of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." People began to go away, starting from the old (the older the person, the more sin). No one stoned her because everyone sins. So she was saved.
- *Love that forgives* - Jesus said, "Then neither do I condemn you." Jesus could have stoned this woman because Jesus had never sinned, but Jesus forgave her.
- *Love that challenges* - Jesus told her, "Leave your life of sin." We believe that this woman will stop sinning because she almost died as a result of her sin. Jesus loved her enough to give her another chance to begin a new life.
- We need to have this kind of love today! What would it be like if everyone loved like this? We need to imitate Jesus' love!

b. John 2:13-17 **The Courage of Jesus**

- What happened here?
- What characteristic of Jesus do you see?
- The COURAGE of Jesus!
- Jesus was not quiet and religious. When he saw people sinning or doing what was wrong in the eyes of God, he was angry. He didn't lose his temper - he just acted out of his conviction and challenged what was wrong. He was not afraid of what people thought, even though he was only 30 and they were probably over 60! He had courage to stand up for what was right and challenge what was wrong.
- We need this kind of courage in America and in our own lives. Courage to stand up for what is right and challenge what is wrong in others and us.

Summary

- Jesus was definitely a real man in history!
- Jesus was amazing in his love and courage.
- When can we get together again to study more about Jesus?

JESUS II

Introduction

- As always, start out by asking if they had a chance to review the notes from last time.
- Ask, “What do you remember from the last time we got together?” Make sure they understand and remember what they have studied before you go on.
- Last time we looked at the human side of Jesus. He was real and had an incredible character. We will look at another side of Jesus even more amazing - his divine side. Specifically, we will look at the spiritual power that Jesus had.

1. Power Over Evil Spirits

Luke 4:31-37

- What happened here?
- We all grow up with such a fear of ghosts (i.e. a scary show on TV)
- We can be so confident with Jesus - only he has authority over all evil spirits

2. Power Over Sin

Matthew 9:1-8

- What happened here?
- The crowd saw this and believed it was a miracle (They were critics before)
- Only Jesus can forgive sins! And he can forgive all sins!
- He can help you change any sin!
- Wouldn't it be great to have all your sins forgiven?
- (Share from your life how you felt when your sins were forgiven)

3. Power Over Nature

Matthew 8:23-27

- What happened here?
- These men were fishermen. They grew up on this sea; yet, they were sure they were going to drown.
- They watched Jesus calm the storm instantly, with a word!
- They did not expect Jesus to have this much power, but Jesus convinced them he did!

4. Power to Create Something from Nothing

John 6: 1-13

- Facts: 5 small loaves, 2 small fish, over 5,000 people
- “Enough to eat” with 12 full baskets left over!
- The point is Jesus can do anything!
- Jesus did many miracles like this during his lifetime. The most amazing thing about his miracles was that no one could deny them - they were clearly, absolutely miracles. Look at some of the ways people responded to the miracles:

John 2:11 The disciples, or followers, believed because they saw the power clearly

John 3: 1-2 The main critics, the Pharisees, really knew Jesus was from God because of the miracles

John 6:14 After people saw, they believed

John 11:45-48 Even the biggest critics knew everyone would believe in Jesus if they saw his miracles

John 20:30-31 The Bible is written so that we can see enough about Jesus to really believe and know the truth

Conclusion

- What do you think about Jesus so far?
- When can we get together again?

JESUS III

Introduction

- As always, ask if they reviewed the last study or remember what it was about. Do they have any questions about it?
- Now we will go over the last study about Jesus and by far the most important of them all so far. Let's talk about the greatest event in the life of Jesus - his resurrection from the dead! This is the foundation of the Christian faith.
- We will examine four facts:

1. Jesus Predicted His Suffering, Death, and His Resurrection

Matthew 16:21, Matthew 20:17-19

- Jesus clearly predicted his suffering, death, and resurrection after three days
- Why would Jesus predict it so specifically, even to the exact day he would rise? If it did not happen, who would ever follow him?
- He knew it would happen

2. Jesus Suffered and Died, as He Predicted

Matthew 27:26-35 He was tortured and crucified

John 19: 31-37

- He died
- He was stabbed with a spear to make sure
- Lymph and blood came out - a condition only occurring after death
- If he was not dead, only blood would come out

3. Jesus Rose from the Dead

John 20: 1-10 Jesus' disciples thought the body was stolen—they didn't really expect him to rise from the dead

John 20:11-18

- Jesus did rise as predicted
- Mary did not recognize Jesus for two reasons:
 - 1) She did not expect to see him alive
 - 2) It was still dark (John 20:1)

John 20:24-29

- Thomas, one of Jesus’ disciples, was absent when Jesus appeared before the disciples. He didn’t believe at first, so Jesus made it very obvious!
- Today, though we cannot see Jesus, we have the written record of eyewitnesses to believe. (i.e. we cannot see Alexander the Great, but we believe because of the written record of eye-witnesses.)

4. The Disciples Changed Dramatically

John 20:19 They were afraid, hiding and discouraged

Acts 4:1-4, 18-20 They were not hiding anymore—they were full of zeal and courage!
Something happened!

Acts 4:20

- They were fully convinced that Jesus rose from the dead. They became strong and very bold.
- 10 of the 11 disciples were killed because of their preaching. One was sentenced to prison on an island for the rest of his life. None of them ever changed their conviction - they truly saw Jesus raised from the dead.

Questions and Summary

If Jesus did not rise from the dead, where would Jesus’ dead body be? There are 3 possibilities:

1. Jesus’ disciples stole the body
 - Would the disciples believe in Jesus themselves if Jesus predicted that he would die and on the third day rise to life and the prediction did not come true?
 - Would the disciples be willing to die for a lie? Many of the disciples were persecuted and martyred.
 - Probability = 0%
2. His enemies stole the body
 - If you were Jesus’ enemy, you had Jesus’ body, and the disciples were preaching that Jesus rose from the dead, how would you refute the disciples’ claim?
 - Jesus’ enemies never had the body. If they did, Christianity would have ended at that time.
 - Probability = 0%
3. Jesus rose from the dead
 - At first, the disciples did not believe and were afraid. After Jesus appeared to them, they believed and were not afraid anymore - even death did not stop them from preaching about the resurrection of Jesus.
 - Probability = 100%

Was Mary hallucinating when she saw Jesus?

- It is possible that Mary was hallucinating when she saw Jesus
- However, as we read in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, all 11 apostles saw him as well and over 500 other people
- This means more than 1000 eyes saw and recognized Jesus after he rose from the dead
- Also, Acts 1:1-3 shows he gave many convicting proofs over a period of 40 days
- The possibility of the hallucination of over 500 people for 40 days = 0%

Conclusion

- Summarize Jesus I, II, and III
- Ask them “Who do you think Jesus is?”
- There are only 4 possibilities of who he was:
 1. *Jesus is a lunatic*—“He is crazy! He only thought he was the Son of God.” He spoke with such wisdom, that many people tried to trap him in his words or find a fault in his life but they were unable! Jesus changed so many lives - can a lunatic do that?
 2. *Jesus is a legend*—“He did some good things, but the stories got bigger and bigger over the centuries.” There were many witnesses, many written accounts about his life that all support each other, and many actual followers and believers.
 3. *Jesus is a liar*—“He was deceiving the people about who he really was.” Again, he spoke with such accuracy and conviction about the truth, that no one could ever trap him in his words or deny the power of his miracles.
 4. *Jesus is Lord*—“He is not a lunatic, not a legend, not a liar. He must be who he said he was—Lord! Son of God!”
- What do you think? I want to give you the same challenge Jesus gave Thomas - “Stop doubting and believe!”
- The next time we get together, we will study about what it means to really follow Jesus. When can we get together again?

PRIDE AND HUMILITY

Luke 18:9-17

- What is the main point of these two stories?
- Everyone would think the Pharisee would be more righteous because he is even confident in his righteousness, but the tax collector sees his own sin! He has a better heart because he is broken about his sin
- Jesus is so serious about pride! Anyone who does not have the humility of a child will not go to heaven!
- Pride = eternally threatening problem

Let's look at some verses that show us God's feelings about pride.

1. **Pride**

Proverbs 16:5

- God detests (strong word) pride: All the proud of **heart**
- Most of us don't think of pride as a condition of the heart, we think of it as an outward thing
- There are not many places in the Bible that say "be sure of this" - shows you how important this is

Psalm 138:6

- God is close to humble people but far away from prideful people
- Have you ever been around a really prideful person? It is so annoying that you don't even want to be in the same room with them! That is how God feels when you are so prideful.

1 Peter 5:5

- God opposes the proud
- What a horrible thing it is to be opposed by God!

Psalm 101:5

- Whoever has a proud heart will not be endured

Jeremiah 13:17

- God is moved to tears because of our pride
- Our pride not only angers God and makes us distant from him, it hurts him!

Pride = knows from afar, weeps secretly, will not endure

2. Humility

1 Peter 5:5 God gives grace to the humble

James 4:10

- God lifts up the humble
- The difference between pride and humility is like the difference between night and day, heaven and hell

3. Why does God Hate Pride so Much?

a. Pride keeps you from knowing yourself

Psalm 36:1-4

- What is his problem? He does not fear God. In his own eyes he flatters himself too much to see his own sin. His pride is blinding him from seeing himself as God sees him. (i.e. When you have bad breath, usually you can't smell it, so you need someone else to tell you)
- When you are prideful, you do not see yourself - you either do not see your sin or you do not hate it
- What happens? Plots evil, commits himself to a sinful course (pride causes other sins)

b. Pride keeps you from getting convicted about your sin

Jeremiah 8:11-13

- Say "but" a lot: "But I didn't do," "it's not serious," "lighten up," or "chill out"
- They are not ashamed. They are prideful because they do not see their sin like God sees it
- To show them how serious their pride is, God takes away their harvest
- If you don't get deeply convicted about your sin you will never change and God will take away your harvest

c. Pride makes you resist correction

Proverbs 12:1

- How can God ever shape us into what we need to be if we resist correction?
- When we refuse to be shaped by God, his hands are tied

Psalm 141:5

- The attitude we should have towards correction

d. Pride keeps you from seeking and following advice

Proverbs 12:15 Listen to advice

Proverbs 13:10 Wisdom = taking advice not just listening

Proverbs 19:20 After listening to a lot of advice, you become wise (can see it with parents that are wiser later on in life)

Proverbs 20:18 Does it say come up with your own plans and then bounce it off someone? No - the essence of planning is asking advice

Proverbs 4:13 Your life = instruction given to you (that's how important it is)

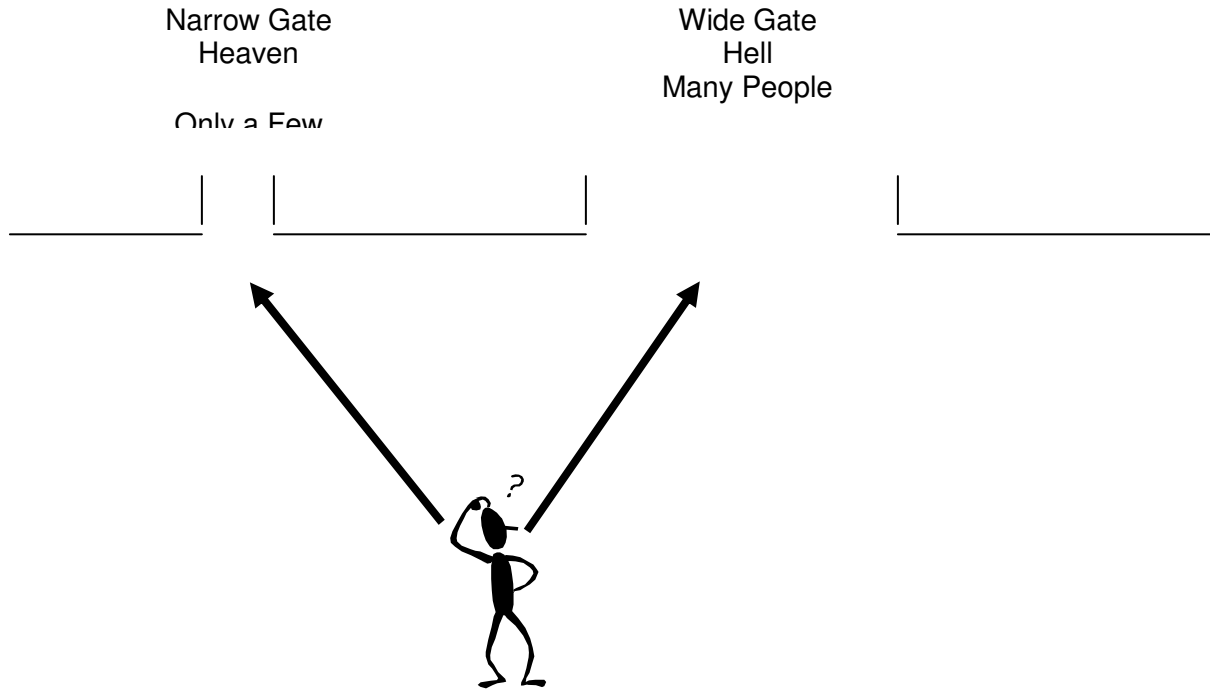
Hebrews 13:17 Pride makes a leader's job a burden - trying to take care of you when you resist and do not follow advice

- Prideful response = Thank you for your input, but I'm going to do my own thing, or I don't need help at all
- Pride hurts others and keeps people from being close

James 4:13-17 Instead of saying, we will do this or that, just ask yourself what God wants you to do.

THE MANY AND THE FEW

Matthew 7:13-14 How many gates are there? Just two.



- Everyone must decide which path to take
 - Jesus says there are only two ways
 - As people, we don't like to think of it that way - we like to think we always have other choices - "There must be a back door I can enter." "Isn't there some other way?"
 - Jesus says not only are there just two paths but many people will be wrong (wide, broad, many)
 - Because America is run by democracy, we tend to think that most people are right, but in terms of heaven and hell, Jesus says that most people will be wrong!
- Two Verbs:
 - Many will **enter**
 - Few will **find**
 - What is the difference between enter and find?
 - Enter** = like cows, following the one in front of them, no thought, no search, not much effort
 - Find** = implies that you have been searching, crying out for answers, etc.

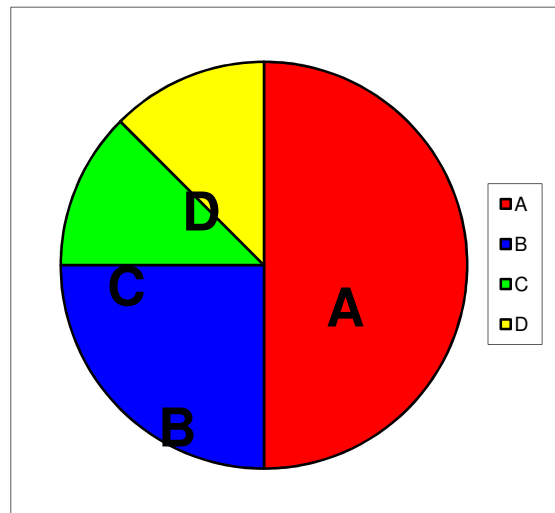
Matthew 7:15-20

- Now it is even more difficult because not only are most people wrong, there are false prophets along the way that will point you the wrong way
- You will not be able to recognize them from their appearance - they are sheep in wolves clothing
- How can you recognize false prophets? Do they have a sign around their neck saying false prophet? By their fruit you will recognize them (How is their life, walk with God, marriage, kids, etc.)

Matthew 7:21-23

- How do you know if you are on the right road then? How does anyone? *"Only he who does the will of my father who is in heaven."* (7:21)
 - The only way to know we are on the right path (the narrow road) is if we are obeying the Bible (the will of God)
- What are the characteristics of the false prophets?
 - They called him Lord - believed in Jesus - said that Jesus is Lord so they were confident in their salvation, they preached the word in Jesus' name, changed lives (drove out demons), even did many miracles
 - Do you think this person would be saved? Yes, everyone would, but Jesus said they were not! Why? There was something they were not being obedient in. They were not doing the will of God

- How many people believe in Jesus in the world? (Less than 50%, but we will be generous and say 50%)
What do we know about people that do not believe in Jesus? Not saved (Hebrews 11:6)
- How many of these people that believe in Jesus go to church and read their Bible? (50% - again being generous)
- How many people believe in Jesus, go to church, read the Bible, and do all the deeds that the people in verse 22 do? (25% - generous)
- And Jesus said that out of what we have left only the few will make it! That is difficult.



- Out of all the people in the world, Jesus says that only a few will be saved - what is even more difficult, is that many people think they are saved when they are really not because they are not doing the will of God
- World's most important question: How do you know which path you are really on? By doing the will of God = following the Bible
 - Are you telling me most people are lost? Yes
 - Even those who believe in Jesus? Yes
- The Bible is the will of God! It is our guide! You are so much better off than most other people in the world (studying Bible, coming to church, etc.) but that is not the issue. The issue is are you doing the will of God? Completely?
- People that did not completely follow God, Jesus said, "I will tell them plainly, I never knew you."

Acts 13:22

- David did everything God wanted him to do! I want God to say that about me!
- We must be real with ourselves and see where we are at so that we can help "the few" be as big as possible and help more people get to heaven
- How did Jesus know 2000 years ago that people would claim to be his followers and not really obey him? People are the same (John 8:31, John 14:15.)

THE BIG PICTURE

