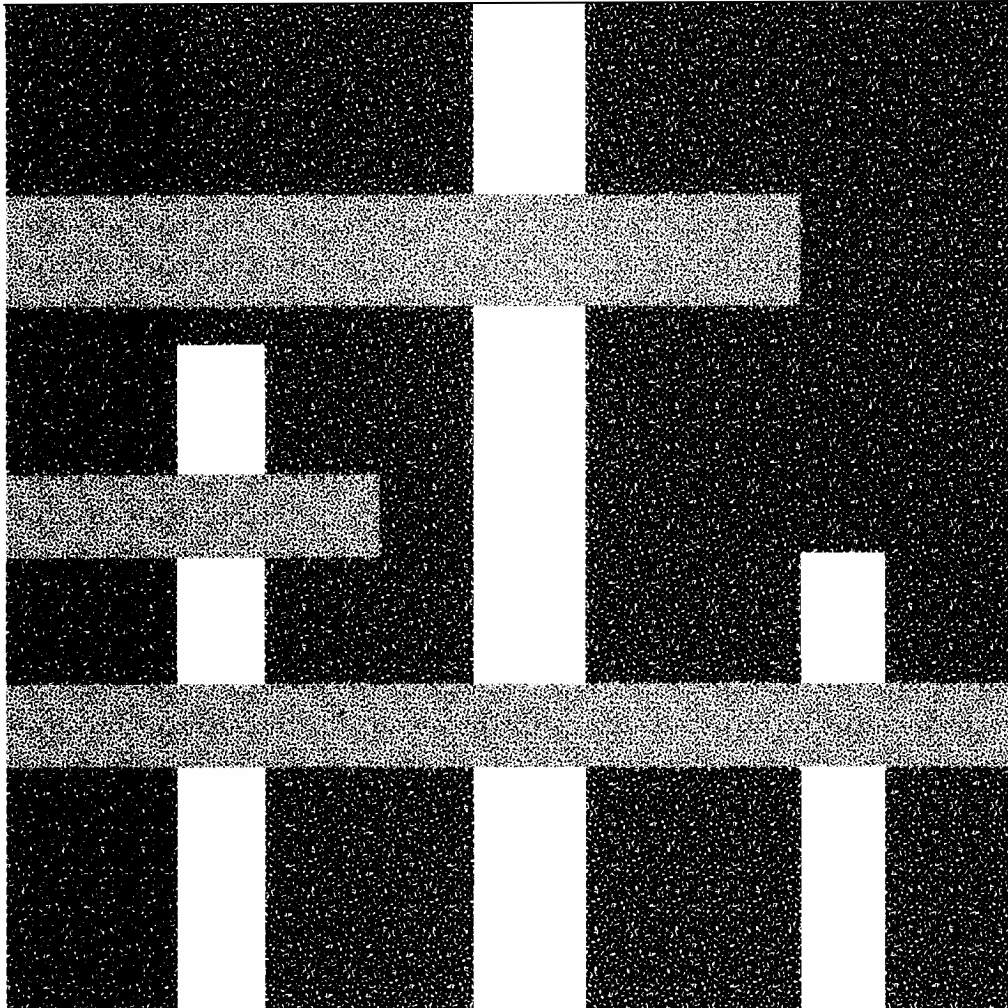


# ESSENTIALS



# OF THE FAITH

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# ESSENTIALS OF THE FAITH

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## WERE WHO ARE YOU?

In an age where self-esteem is touted as the only means to a secure, fulfilled life, it is difficult to see ourselves as God sees us. We have all been frequently exposed to teachings on the importance of developing self-worth. God is not concerned about our self-esteem. In fact, the opposite is true. He repeatedly tells us that in our natural state there is nothing in our character to make us worthy of Him.

1. The Lord gave the man and woman, whom He created, great freedom in the Garden of Eden. What did he forbid them to do? (Gen. 2:16,17)
  
2. What consequence did God warn them would be a direct result of their disobedience? (Gen. 2:17)
  
3. What did Satan, in the form of a serpent, say to deceive Eve? (Gen. 3:4)
  
4. What *specific* sinful motivations led to Eve's outward disobedience? (Gen. 3:6)

Adam and Eve were the first humans God created. Their choice to violate God's law led to the downfall of mankind. Every succeeding generation would rebel against God and His ways.

5. In what condition were you born?
  - a. Is. 48:8d
  - b. Ps. 58:3
  - c. Ps. 51:5a
  
6. What does God say regarding your condition, as well as that of all men? (Is. 53:6; Rom. 3:10-18,23)
  
7. How have you strayed from God's commandments in Matthew 22:37 and 39?

**WERE  
WHO ARE YOU?**

8. What is God's command to you in Exodus 20:3?
  
9. Idolatry is putting other gods before the One True God. You can make a "god" out of a something evil, as greed, pornography, sexual sin and drunkenness. But you can also make "god" out of something that is not inherently evil, as a spouse, child, friend, home, job, TV, etc. Which things are more important to you than God and interfere with your obedience to Him?
  
10. How does man deceive himself? (Gal. 6:3)
  
11. Sin and rebellion separated you from God. With what words does He describe your natural condition in Romans 5:6, 8, and 10?
  
12. How does the Lord describe your heart? (Jer. 17:9)
  
13. Where does sinful behavior originate in a man? (Mark 7:15, 21-23)
  
14. Sin and corruption permeated all areas of your life. What specific sin does God address in Matthew 12:36?
  
15. What does God say about the deeds you viewed as righteous in your natural state? (Is. 64:6)
  
16. All those who transgress God's laws are declared "guilty." How does God view the number of times you sin in relation to your guilt? (James 2:10)

**WERE  
WHO ARE YOU?**

17. What is God's standard, which would make you deserving of heaven, if you could keep it? (Matt. 5:48)
  
18. What, in fact, have you earned because of your violation of God's law? (Rom. 6:23)
  
19. Some who do not understand God believe they can remain "neutral" in their relation to Him. What does Jesus say in regard to such thinking in Matthew 12:30?

The "natural man" is an unbeliever who does not understand spiritual things. (1 Cor. 2:14) Because of sin and rebellion, each one stands guilty before God, the Judge. He does not deserve God's mercy nor blessing. He cannot earn God's pleasure nor pardon. No man is capable of saving himself from eternal punishment in hell, which each one has earned as the "wages of sin." (Rom.6:23)

Man finds himself in a terrible dilemma ~ a sinner in a helpless, hopeless condition. He is caught in self-constructed trap of eternal destruction.

The natural, unrepentant man has preferred to govern his own life, be his "own boss," and in so doing, live a life separated from God, who designed man to be dependent upon Him. He may be openly wicked, or he may be a moral or religious person, as the Pharisees were. They incurred Christ's wrath (Matt. 23) because they trusted in their own righteousness to get them to heaven rather than seeing that pride and arrogance in themselves placed them in desperate need of a savior.

Those who continue to live apart from the Savior in life will receive punishment from the hand of God, which will be total separation from Him for eternity. Each will be deserving of the wrath he receives a righteous judgment begetting the offense.

***"It is a terrifying thing to fall in the hands of the living God."***  
**Hebrews 10:31**

## **GOD, THE JUDGE**

1. To be a judge one must have authority and the power to carry out decisions that are made. What role has God, the Father, given to God, the Son? (John 5:22-27)
  
2. What qualifies Christ to have authority over all creation? (Col. 1:16,17; Dan. 7:14)
  
3. How will He judge the world? (Ps. 96:13)
  
4. How will his judgments be executed? (Col. 3:25)
  
5. Since God is all-knowing (omniscient), what can man expect at the final judgment? (Heb. 4:13)
  
6. What will be the basis of God's judgment of man? (Matt. 16:27; Rev. 2:23)
  
7. Throughout the history of the Old and New Testaments God's divine justice has been exercised repeatedly in the world. Next to each event, record what justice God rendered.
  - a. The sin of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:14-24)
  - b. The sin of mankind in Noah's day (Gen. 6-8)
  - c. The sin of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18-19)
  - d. The sin of Pharaoh and the Egyptians against God's people, the Israelites (Ex. 7-12)
  - e. The sin of thievery of Achan (Joshua 7)
  - f. The sin of lying of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11)
  - g. The sin of pride in Herod (Acts 12:21-23)
  - h. The sin of opposing the gospel in Elymas (Acts 13:8-11)

## GOD, THE JUDGE

8. God, at times, allows evil doers to flourish in this present world (Matt. 5:45b) but *all* sin will be judged on the final day. How is that day described? (Rom. 2:5)
9. Luke 16:19-31 describes a rich man who was evil and yet, prospered in his earthly existence. But how was God's justice rendered at his death? Describe his torment.
10. What will happen at the end of the age? (Matt. 13:49, 50)
11. Describe the final judgment. (Rev. 20:11-15) Who will escape the wrathful judgment of God?

*“Why do men want to view God as only a loving, forgiving God? They probably create a god who will overlook all transgressions to escape accountability before Him. The truth is that part of God's moral perfection is His perfection in judgment. Would a God who did not care about the difference between right and wrong be a good and admirable Being? - - - Moral indifference would be an imperfection in God, not a perfection. But to not judge the world would be to show moral indifference. The final proof that God is perfect moral Being, not indifferent to questions of right and wrong, is the fact that He has committed Himself to judge the world.”*

J. I. Packer

**A just judge cannot allow the guilty to go unpunished. (Ex. 34:7; Na. 1:3)**

## THE BLOOD: THE ATONEMENT

ATONEMENT: Satisfaction given for wrong doing, bringing about reconciliation of man to God

As you saw in the study of *God, The Judge*, you deserve to be eternally punished for your daily, repeated violations of God's law in your thoughts, words and actions. You have also sinned by not doing what you were asked to do.

These facts place you, as well as all mankind, in a deep dilemma. God who sets the terms of your judgment, gives you now way out through your own efforts. You cannot earn God's favor. You cannot do enough "good works" to compensate for your pride (putting self first) and all its manifestations which reigned supreme in your old nature. You cannot undo the fact you were an enemy of God (Rom. 5:10), self-seeking, following your own belief system. You chose to be your own god, ruling your own life.

You may have ignored the eternal God, your Creator and by doing so, you hoped He, too, would ignore you. Consciously or unconsciously you designed your own god rather than learning about the true God, as He reveals Himself in Scripture.

1. Write out Proverbs 14:12.
2. What is the spiritual and physical consequence of the one who sins?  
(Rom. 6:23a; Gen. 2:17; Ezek. 18:4)

Because of all these sins, God must declare you, along with all humanity, "guilty." But God designed a way to satisfy His perfect justice by transferring His punishment from the guilty to the innocent because of His great love for man.

3. What does God declare as the **only** means of atonement? (Lev. 17:11)
4. God decrees in Hebrews 9:22 that there is no forgiveness of sins without \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

God revealed that animal sacrifices, which required the letting of blood, would be the **only** means of atonement for sin. Shortly after Adam and Eve sinned, God gave His first prophecy concerning the coming Messiah, the Christ, who would save His people from spiritual and physical death. (Gen. 3:15)



## THE BLOOD: THE ATONEMENT

### Read Leviticus Chapter 1.

5. What animals were acceptable as a sacrifice to God, depending on the economic circumstances of the sinner?
  
6. What requirement did God give, regarding the animals, that they must have in order for them to be acceptable to God? (Lev. 1:3,10; 4:28,32)

In Old Testament times, a man laid his hand on the head of the animal, before it was sacrificed, to symbolize the transfer of guilt from the man to the innocent animal which would die in his place. Remember, death is the consequence of sin. The priest then offered the animal's blood to God as a sacrifice by placing it on the altar.

7. What did God assure His people after the sacrifice was made?
  - a. Lev. 1:3,4
  
  - b. Lev. 4:26,31,35

In the Old Testament times, God required an animal sacrifice for the atonement for sin. Interestingly, even though God commanded this form of blood sacrifice, believers who lived before Christ, were still justified by faith alone in the *coming* Messiah.

***“What does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.’ ”***

**Rom. 4:3**

**Read Romans Chapter 4** which expands on this subject.

8. Give several key points that this chapter makes about faith vs. the law.

The animal sacrifices of the Old Testament pointed to the once-for-all sacrifice that would be made by the Perfect Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. (Heb. 9:11-14)

## THE BLOOD: THE SACRIFICIAL LAMB

Blood not only atoned for sin, but also brought salvation from death. After the Israelites spent 400 years in bondage in Egypt, God was ready to pour out His wrath on the hardened Pharaoh and the Egyptians because they would not free the Israelites from slavery.

### Read Exodus Chapter 12.

1. How did God plan to punish the Egyptians? (Ex. 12:12)
2. God set forth a plan to protect His own people from harm while He was destroying the Egyptians. How did God promise to protect the Israelites when He saw the blood of the goat or sheep on the doorway of His people? (Ex. 12:13)
3. What characteristics were required by God for the animals? (Ex. 12:5)
4. What were the Israelites instructed to do with the animals' blood? (Ex. 12:7)
5. What did He specifically mean by escaping the plague?
6. In verses 21-23, Moses relays God's instructions to his elders. He refers to the lamb that is sacrificed to save God's people as the \_\_\_\_\_ . (v. 21b)
7. How did God command the Jews to remember this great event?

Just as the animals offered for sacrifice were to be unblemished (Lev. 1:3) and the Passover lamb was to be perfect (Ex. 12:5), so also Christ was the perfect, innocent sacrifice, incapable of sin because He was God.

8. How do these passages describe Christ's perfection and His innocence
  - a. Hebrews 4:15?
  - b. Hebrews 7:26?
  - c. Hebrews 9:14?

## THE BLOOD: THE SACRIFICIAL LAMB

9. What three words does God use to describe your relationship to Him at the time Christ died for you? (Rom. 5:7,10)
  
10. How does God compare Christ's death with that of a lamb being led to slaughter? (Is. 53:7)
  
11. Write the meaning of "redemption" using a dictionary.

To die for a friend would be an immense sacrifice, but to die for those who want nothing to do with you, reject you, defy you and oppose you is a far greater sacrifice. This was the ultimate sacrifice, both for the Father who purposely gave His Son as such an offering, as well as for Jesus who had to endure the agony for those who had proved by their actions and attitudes that they hated Him and all for which He stood. The Creator died for the ones He created who in their former pride declared, "I have no need for You!" He died for others who once said, "I will make You into a person with whom I can be comfortable, regardless of what You say about Yourself in Scripture."

12. You were not redeemed with "perishable things like silver or gold" but with

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(finish the verse, 1 Pet. 1:19)

1,440 years were to pass after the exodus of the Jews from Egypt before God would come to earth in the form of a man. His name was Jesus which means savior. As He walked down the dusty path to the Jordan River to be baptized, John, known as the Baptist, beheld His glory as He approached.

13. With what words did John acknowledge Christ and His mission? (John 1:29)

## THE CROSS

Seven hundred years before Christ's death Isaiah, the prophet, predicted many of the details of His death. Only a man, through whom God spoke, could foretell accurately events long generations yet to come. Only the God of History could bring what He prophesied to pass.

### Read Isaiah Chapter 53.

1. What did it "please" the Father to do to His precious Son? (v.10)
2. Why would it please Him to do this?
3. What was Christ, the Suffering Servant, willing to do for you? (v.4)
4. Describe His sacrifice on the cross. (v.5)
5. Describe your condition. (v.6)
6. Describe His sacrifice for you. (v. 6b)
7. Read John 1:1. In this verse Jesus is given the name, the Word, meaning "to explain" in the Greek, the language in which the New Testament was first written. Jesus came to explain through His life, death, resurrection and teachings who God is. John 1:1 says "the Word was *with* God", He was intimately involved with His heavenly Father. In the Greek "with" means "face to face." Also, you can see in this verse that the Word *was* God.
8. What does John 1:14 tell us that Christ became and where did He choose to dwell?
9. What is another name given to Jesus and what does it mean? (Matt. 1:23)

## THE CROSS

### Read Matthew 26:36-46.

10. Write out Jesus' prayer to His heavenly Father. (v. 39)
11. How many times did He make this plea?
12. With what words do the scripture describe Christ's emotional pain?
13. What was His physical response to His agony? (Luke 22:44)
14. What did He actually bear upon His own holy body? (1 Pet 2:24)
15. Write out 2 Corinthians 5:21.

Because God, the Father, was unable to look upon sin, He rejected His own Son who became sin on your behalf, at the time of Christ's greatest need. The perfect spiritual and emotional bond they had enjoyed for eternity was totally severed as God's wrath was poured out upon His innocent Child, the wrath you deserved.

16. What was Jesus' response to this separation as He hung in utter humiliation? (Matt. 27:46)

### Read Matthew 27:28-50.

17. List the events surrounding Christ's death.
  - a. They stripped Him.
  - b.
  - c.

## THE CROSS

18. Why didn't Christ come down from the cross?

19. How does His decision affect you personally?

Jesus was the perfect King of Glory. He could have come to earth claiming possession of all the riches He created and already owned. "For the world and all it contains is Mine." (Ps. 50:12b) Jesus could have ridden around in a Rolls Royce, clad in jewels, silks and furs. He had the power to cause the men He created to bow down and worship Him. Or with a flick of His hand He could have eliminated His enemies, including Satan and his legions of demons. Such is the power He possesses but chose not to use.

20. What act demonstrated the powerful control over the hundreds who were present at his arrest? (John 18:6)

Instead, He was born in a stable where cattle fed and bedded down, His parents having been rejected from even a room in an inn. He voluntarily chose a life of servanthood, filled with rejection and pain. His earthly existence was committed to one central purpose - to die for the ungodly. He permitted the creatures He created to revile, ridicule, humiliate and reject Him.

21. Write Colossians 1:16 below.

And in His final hours, He permitted the people to whom He had given life to nail Him to a cross. And He, the Giver of all life, chose to die as a despised criminal, hated by the very ones He came to save. Why? To save *you* from the wrath of God, to pluck you from the brink of eternal damnation. Such glorious sacrificial love has never before nor since been witnessed by this sin-ridden world.

22. Some of Christ's final words were, "It is finished." (John 19:30) What significance do these words have in relationship to your salvation?

23. What did Jesus say regarding His authority to lay down His life? (John 10:17,18)

24. Who predestined this evil to occur? (Acts 4:27,28)

## THE CROSS

25. In Hebrews 7:26,27, how does God reveal to us that Jesus has fulfilled the Old Testament sacrificial system so that it is no longer needed?

*When I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of glory died,  
My riches gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.*

*See from His head, His hands, His feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?*

*Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.*

Isaac Watts

## THE RESURRECTION

The hideous death by crucifixion was caused by suffocation because one could no longer use his legs to push himself up on the rough wooden beam to gasp another breath. The legs of one who hung on a cross were often broken to hasten the hour of death, as were the legs of the men who were crucified on either side of Jesus.

1. What prophecy did King David make in Psalm 34:20?
2. In Exodus 12:46, what is one of the rules concerning the preparation of the lamb to be served at the Jewish Passover?
3. How was the prophecy of David concerning this detail of Christ's death and the symbolism of the Passover lamb, fulfilled according to John 19:31-36?
4. In what event did Jesus participate the night before His death? (Matt. 26:17-19)
5. To confirm Christ's death one soldier pierced His side with a spear, thus releasing His body fluids. (John 19:34) What did the prophet Zechariah predict about this event over 500 years before Christ's death? (Zech. 12:10)
6. What was Jesus' prophecy concerning His own resurrection? (Matt. 17:22,23)
7. How does God describe Joseph of Arimathea? (Matt. 27:57 and Luke 23:50,51)
8. What did he offer Jesus in death as an expression of his devotion? (Matt. 27:58-60)
9. Why did the guards secure the grave? (Matt. 27:62-66)



## THE RESURRECTION

Only God, performing the miraculous, is able to transcend His own established laws of nature by breathing life into a dead body. He alone is the Lifegiver. The key element needed to bring life from death is *power*.

Peter Marshall, once the chaplain of the United States Senate, has written, “*Strong, immeasurable forces poured life back into the dead body they had laid upon the cold slab; and the dead man rose up, came out of the grave clothes, walked to the threshold of His tomb, stood swaying on His wounded feet, and walked into the moonlit garden.*” The limitless power of God released the tortured body, bearing the weight of the sins of mankind, from death’s prison.

**Read Matthew 28:1-11; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-10.**

10. List the events surrounding the resurrection of our Lord.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. With what words does Ephesians 1:19,20 describe this resurrection power?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
12. Job lived 1000 years before Christ. Record his words from Job 19:25.

The predicted resurrection, of which Satan was well aware, was to be the cataclysmic event upon which the history of mankind pivoted. A dead savior has no power to save. A dead leader has no power to lead. A dead god is no god. Thus, we can well imagine that the Devil, his legions of demons and all the power their forces could muster converged at the tomb to prevent the Almighty God from pouring life into the broken body of His precious Son. Defying the principalities and powers of the Evil One, the Hand of God stretched forth!

The greatest spectacle of power ever unleashed ripped the Son of God from Satan’s clutches! The adversary was defeated just when he believed he had won eternal victory through the destruction of the Messiah, whose purpose was to forever free His people from Satan’s bondage. Satan was defeated by a power far greater than his own to kill and destroy. All the forces of evil sent forth in battle could not keep Him in His grave!! **The same power that raised Christ from the dead lives inside you!**

## ETERNAL INTIMACY ESTABLISHED

The resurrection! The most spectacular event in the history of mankind was not heralded by trumpet calls nor choruses of angels. Nor did Christ rush to a mountaintop to proclaim the miracle of miracles to the multitudes. Instead, His first recorded communication when He stepped from the tomb was gentle, intimate and profoundly personal.

**Read the account in John 20:1-18.** Picture the scene in your mind.

1. Why was Mary in turmoil?
2. What questions did Jesus ask her?
3. With what word did Jesus address His distraught friend to bring her spirit to rest?
4. Record Mary's response.

Peter Marshall spoke of that poignant moment. *“There were two names spoken, ‘Mary’ and ‘Rabboni.’ She heard her own name spoken as only one Voice could speak it...gently echoing in the garden. And there was her ‘Rabboni’...the breathless ‘Master!’ as she saw His face. Christ had spoken her name, and all heaven was in it. She uttered only one word and all earth was in it.”*

The depth of compassion and intimacy conveyed in the risen Lord softly speaking, “Mary,” abolishes the agnostic’s lie that God does not know His children in a personal way. All-powerful, all-knowing though God is, He also is the Creator of intimacy, which He chooses to establish with those whom He adopts as His children. **God desires to communicate with you in a loving, vulnerable, continuous way.**

5. How does Jesus call His own sheep? (John 10:3)
6. When did God choose those individually who would become His own? (Eph. 1:4)
7. Who hears the voice of Jesus, the shepherd? (John 10:27)

## ETERNAL INTIMACY ESTABLISHED

8. **Read Isaiah 49:15, 16a.**

Record Isaiah 49:16a below, which is a testimony of your preciousness to God.

9. In Ephesians 2:1, how does God describe your spiritual condition before salvation?

A physically dead man is *incapable* of doing anything to bring himself to life. In the same way, a spiritually dead person is incapable of doing anything to bring forth life in the spirit. Thus, God has to be the One who pours spiritual life into the man who has no ability nor inclination to know or follow Him. (Rom 3:11)

When you were your own god, trying to please God in your own way or having no regard for Him at all, He sought you to establish an irrevocable, eternal relationship.

***“Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love;  
Therefore with loving kindness I have drawn you.”  
Jeremiah 31:3 NKJV***

You do not have to perform to win His favor because He chose to love and accept you as you are. The unfathomable love that reached across time, declaring you to be His own, will never let you go! God will not reject you when you disobey Him because unconditional love is always based on the character of the GIVER rather than the character of the receiver.

***“I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish;  
neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.”  
John 10:28 NKJV***

Because you were once spiritually dead, God initiated all the outreach toward you. Your belief in Him is simply a *response* to His initiatives.

Next to each Scripture reference, write what those initiatives are. (Use personal pronouns). As the Lord speaks to you personally through His own words, you will have a growing understanding of how precious you are to Him. Meditate on these verses:

a. John 6:44 - He drew **me** when **I** was unable to come to Him.

b. John 6:29 -

c. John 15:16, 19 -

## ETERNAL INTIMACY ESTABLISHED

d. John 17:5 -

e. John 17:9 -

f. 2 Cor. 7:9,10 -

g. Eph. 2:4,5 -

h. Eph. 1:5 -

i. Eph. 2:6 -

j. Eph. 2:8,9 -

k. Titus 3:5 -

l. 1 Peter 1:4 -

m. 1 John 4:19 -

*O Love that wilt not let me go,  
I rest my weary soul in thee - - -  
George Matheson*

## THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

1. Why does God have just claim to ownership of your life and personal authority over it?

Jer. 10:16

Eph. 1:4-6

The following italicized quotes in this study are taken from *A Sheperd Looks at Psalm 23* by W. Phillip Keller.

*“I belong to Him simply because He deliberately chose to create me as an object of His own affection.”*

2. God chose you to live eternally with Him. That choice required a great cost to God, Himself. What was the price that had to be paid to purchase you for eternity? (Acts 20:28)

God is not only your Maker, which gives Him ownership over your life, but He has also chosen you to be His precious possession. That fact makes you uniquely HIS. Since He chose you to be His, He is the one who can satisfy and fill the voids in your life through deep union with Him.

*“O, God! Thou hast made us for Thyself and our souls are restless,  
searching, till they find their rest in Thee.”*  
St. Augustine of Africa

### Read John Chapter 10.

3. God addresses Himself as the shepherd of your life. For what valid reason can He claim that authority over you? (v. 11)

*“It is a tragic truth that many people who really have never come under His direction or management claim that ‘The Lord is my Shepherd.’ They seem to hope that by merely admitting that He is their Shepherd somehow they will enjoy the benefits of His care and management without paying the price of forfeiting their own fickle and foolish way of life.*

*One cannot have it both ways. Either we belong or we don’t. Jesus Himself warned us that there would come a day when many would say, ‘Lord, in Your name we did many wonderful things,’ but He will retort that He never knew us as His own.”*

4. Why does God label believers, “sheep?” (Is. 53:6)

*“Sheep do not ‘just take care of themselves’ as some might suppose. They require, more than any other class of livestock, endless attention and meticulous care.*

*It is no accident that God has chosen to call us sheep. The behavior of sheep and human beings is similar in many ways... Our mass mind (mob instincts), our fears, and timidity, our stubbornness and stupidity, our perverse habits are all parallels of profound importance.*

## THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

*Yet despite these adverse characteristics Christ chooses us, buys us, calls us by name, makes us His own and delights in caring for us."*

5. In what personal way does the Shepherd address His sheep? (v. 3)

6. How will the sheep respond to the Shepherd? (vv. 4, 27)

*"He never hesitated to make it quite clear that when an individual once came under His management and control there would be a certain new and unique relationship between Him and them. There would be something very special about belonging to this particular Shepherd. There would be a distinct mark upon the man or woman that differentiated them from the rest of the crowd."*

7. How must the sheep be saved? (vv. 9 & John 14:6)

8. Who gave the sheep to Christ, the Shepherd? (v. 29)

9. What guarantees does God give to every one of His sheep? (vv. 28, 29)

*"...we are under obligation to recognize His ownership of us. He literally lays Himself out for us continually. He is ever interceding for us; He is ever guiding us by His gracious Spirit; He is ever working on our behalf to ensure that we will benefit from His care."*

10. How does God refer to those who try to be saved by a means that does not meet God's terms? (v. 1)

11. How does God describe the relationship between the sheep and the Shepherd? (vv. 14, 15a)

12. Why will some people not believe? (vv. 26 & Rom. 9:18)

13. How will a "hireling" respond to the sheep? (v. 12) (The Greek word for "hireling," in this passage means not only one who has no real interest in his duty, but one who is unfaithful in his discharge of it).

## THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

14. Why was God, the Father, pleased with His Son, the Shepherd of the sheep? (vv. 17, 18)
  
15. How does a good shepherd respond to a lost sheep? (Luke 15:3-7)

### Read Psalm 23.

16. List the ways the Good Shepherd guides, protects and cares for you. Please note the many ways He is capable of serving you in a deep, fulfilling way.
  
17. How can meditating on and developing a deep understanding of the attributes of your Good Shepherd lead to a more obedient life?

*“And the greater, the wider, the more majestic my concept is of the Christ ... the more vital will be my relationship to Him.”*

The following questions are excerpted from *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23* by W. Phillip Keller. Please use these questions as a means to honestly evaluate your relationship with God.

- Do I really belong to Him?
- Do I recognize His right to me?
- Do I respond to His authority and acknowledge His ownership?
- Do I find freedom and complete fulfillment in this arrangement?
- Do I sense a purpose and deep contentment because I am under His direction?
- Do I know rest and repose, besides a definite sense of exciting adventure, in belonging to Him?

*“If so, then with genuine gratitude and exaltation I can exclaim proudly, just as David did, ‘The Lord is my Shepherd!’ And I’m thrilled to belong to Him, for it is thus that I shall flourish and thrive no matter what life will bring me.”*

## GOD ALONE IS WORTHY

***“... the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.  
For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being double-minded,  
unstable in all his ways.”***

**James 1:6-8**

The root of all sin is pride. One manifestation of pride is doubting. At its core, doubting raises “self” over God by choosing to believe, “I have a better way of running my life than God does.” We then turn from trusting in the infinite mind of God, who has carefully designed commands and promises to nurture and sustain us, and instead trust in ourselves and Satan’s convincing message, “I have a better way than God.” The doubter often spends much of his time questioning God’s character, purposes, plans, commands and promises. The doubter is very self-serving. The doubter is a fool.

Vine’s Expository Dictionary’s definition of a “fool” is, “without reason, want of mental sanity and sobriety, a reckless inconsiderate habit of mind.” The fool’s mind opposes God’s mind which then leads to further disobedience.

1. What does God say about the way disobedient man (the fool) thinks? (Prov. 14:9; 12:15)

Hannah Whitall Smith in her profound book, *The Christian’s Secret of a Happy Life* wrote a chapter on doubting. The Christians in her era (1870) who had a problem with doubting struggled with feeling so unworthy that they questioned how a Holy God could receive them unto Himself. They doubted that God could truly love “such a wretch as I.”

The central message of the gospel is that Christ chose to die for the unworthy. Only He is worthy. The Perfect One was sacrificed for His imperfect ones. The Deserving One died for the undeserving ones. The Perfect Friend laid down His life for those who were yet His enemies. (Rom. 5:10)

But alas, over a century later, we may find a different type of doubting. Our 20th century society has transformed our thinking from, “I am *unworthy* of God’s love and devotion” to “I am *worthy* of God’s love and devotion.” The incessant bombardment of the “Me Generation” has convinced us that it is we who are deserving a ceaseless parade of grand and wonderful gifts from God. This thinking begins the “role-reversal” with God!

2. In what condition were you born? (Ps. 51:5)
  
3. What does God say that you deserve and for what reason? (Rom. 6:23;3:23)



## GOD ALONE IS WORTHY

4. Romans 3:10-18 describes man's natural condition, apart from the saving work of God in our lives. List the ways God describes unregenerate man.

In other words, everyone is born in total rebellion against God. We had one common condition, we were anti-God. As natural men, we were dead in our trespasses and sin. (Eph. 2:1) and had no desire to submit to our Creator.

5. With what two words does God summarize the condition of your life at the time Christ chose to die for you? (Rom. 5:8,10)

6. How does Isaiah 53:6a describe your sin?

Had Jesus gone to the cross for His friends, that would have been a gift given through tremendous sacrifice. But Jesus, the Perfect One, the Living God, Ruler of the Universe, suffered the agony of Calvary for His enemies! The mind short circuits on such an incomprehensible act! We have rejected Him over and over, we have forsaken Him, we have denied His ways and substituted our own. And in the midst of our open defiance, He humbly laid down His life and accepted the wrath that we deserved in order that we might become His own possession and live eternally with Him.

7. Do you deserve the gift of your salvation? Are you worthy to receive it?

Once Christians have received the gift of salvation, the "role reversal" often begins. We lose sight of the tremendous cost of Calvary, and we begin to play the role of God in our own lives.

8. Satan had the same role reversal with God. Whom did he aspire to be? (Isa. 14:14)

Little by little, lie upon lie, we may begin to view ourselves as the "worthy" ones. Forgetting that we deserve only hell, we begin pleading and then demanding, that God give us what we "feel" we deserve - a good life, a happy marriage and family, a trouble-free and painless existence, health, pleasure, etc., etc., etc. When we fail to receive what we want, we claim the "right" to quarrel with God, "Why don't you give me what I want?" The answer is often silence, which in turn, angers us further. The cycle escalates with a judgment of God, "If you love me, you will give me what I want! Now prove your love to me!"

9. Have you judged God in this way? If so, what did you say to Him when you felt He failed you?

## GOD ALONE IS WORTHY

The “roles” are reversed in our minds. We believe Satan’s lie that we are worthy ones, deserving of good and beautiful gifts. And when God fails to produce them, we seize the right to judge Him undeserving of our love, obedience and devotion. We exalt ourselves while devaluating and discrediting God.

These are common responses when we view ourselves as worthy. We condemn the Perfect One. We condemn His Infinite Mind as ridiculous, stupid and out of touch with our “needs.” We judge His Infinite Love as uncaring, unfeeling and “out to get us.” We judge the One who is infinitely faithful, as forsaking us, deserting us, destroying us. We judge the eternally Victorious One as defeated, incompetent, incapable of “running the show.” We call God a “liar” and in so doing, we blaspheme the Infinite God.

10. Has your twisted thinking discredited God? If so how has this thinking excused your sin?

Ultimately, in creating this “role reversal”, our minds are opposing God’s mind and our wills are opposing God’s will. We are choosing to believe what we want to believe about God rather than what God says about Himself. We are choosing to demand our will be accomplished rather than His. The interesting thing is no matter how distorted our view of God is, it does not affect the truth of who God is in any way. God remains the same “yesterday, today, and forever” (Heb. 13:8) regardless of how we, His creatures, view Him. He is not swayed by our opinion. His response to our perverted thinking has echoed down through the ages, “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?” (Job 38:4)

When Christ walked the face of the earth, He was not accepted for who He was, He was rejected as the Worthy One.

*“Holiness was in their midst, the presence of God Himself,  
yet their response was a challenge and an objection, ‘Isn’t this Joseph’s son?’  
How like the rest of us: Instead of confronting the truth directly,  
we attack the one who speaks it and seek to undermine his credentials.”*  
Elisabeth Elliot

11. If your life is characterized by doubting, what does God say will be His response? (James 1:7)

That is quite a message for one who chooses to doubt God’s goodness, faithfulness, love and devotion and then responds accordingly! The very one who is demanding of God is told he should expect nothing because he is unwilling to trust God.

Doubters, you need to return to your rightful position at the foot of the cross! You need to confess your pride and arrogance in the face of the Cross and the One who was crucified because of His infinite unconditional love for you. You need to be humbled by the tremendous cost of Calvary. You need to renew your mind with thoughts of your Suffering Savior - His agony in Gethsemane, His torturous death and separation from His Heavenly Father, His glorious resurrection, His giving all of Himself to redeem *you* from the pit. (Matt. Chaps. 26-28)

## CHRIST'S RADICAL CALL

God has not deceived his followers! The Scriptures tell us that our salvation rests on Christ's finished work on our behalf. We cannot work our way to heaven. (Eph. 2:8,9) This is the essence of the Gospel. But many professing Christians have chosen to overlook Christ's own words as to what a Christian, who is regenerated by the Holy Spirit, should do and be as an outflow of his salvation.

Christ does not paint an easy, painless path to glory. God does not portray Himself as the "Great Sugar-Daddy in the Sky" who dispenses lovely, carefree lives to His followers. How shallow we may be in our understanding of the radical call to every disciple of Christ!

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who died in a Nazi concentration camp for his faith, had no illusions about Christ's demands upon his life. *"When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die."*

1. What must you do with your life to find a deeply fulfilled life in Him? (Luke 9:23)
2. Jesus' followers in His time, had the same selfish attitudes that we have today. In Mark 10:35, what demand did they present to Christ?

Is this your conscious or unconscious demand of Christ?

3. Jesus' response to their request to serve and exalt themselves was interesting: they must be ready to suffer as He would suffer. What must they also be? (Mark 10:43,44)
4. God clearly states in **Exodus 20**, *"You shall have no other gods before Me."* That encompasses no divided loyalties between God and others. In Matthew 10:37, whom does that include?
5. What does Jesus say may be the result of following Him as it affects our family relationships? (Matt. 10:34-36)

An uncompromising stand for Christ in our family relationships may cause great division and discord. We may suffer rejection as He suffered rejection. Jesus said we are in deep trouble *"... when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets."* (Luke 6:26)

6. What does Jesus say about making money (mammon) our god? (Matt. 6:24)

## CHRIST'S RADICAL CALL

7. What does Christ say about making possessions our god? (Luke 14:33)
  
8. The radical call on every believer includes the treatment of our enemies. How are we to respond to their cunning, their evil, their selfishness? (Luke 6:27-36; Rom. 12:17-21)
  
9. **Read Luke 9:57-62.**
  - a. What does Christ infer that the first man may have to deny himself in order to follow Him?
  
  - b. What human priority had to be relinquished by the second man in order to follow Christ?
  
  - c. What relationships had to be made secondary to following Jesus by the last man?

There is no indication that any of these three eager prospects became Jesus' followers when His heavy demands were placed on their lives. Notice Christ did not paint a rosy picture in order to get them to follow Him.

10. There is a similar story in Luke 18:18-23 in which a good moral man seeks to follow Christ.
  - a. What demand did He make of the man?
  
  - b. Did Christ compromise His original statement in order to gain Him as a follower?
  
  - c. Do these vital, radical commands sound like the sweet promises of an indulgent Father who seeks to give His children nothing but what they desire?
  
  - d. Does Christ ever make it easy to be His follower by saying that we can start following with tiny steps or by giving just a little of ourselves?
  
  - e. Does Christ's call in any way pamper or indulge us?

## CHRIST'S RADICAL CALL

11. What can we expect from the world as Christ's followers? (John 15:18-21)
  
12. What does He require of all His disciples? (Mark 8:34; 1 Pet. 2:21)
  
13. When does God say He will reveal Himself, in an experiential way, to the believer? (John 14:21)
  
14. Is obedience required to be His disciple? Write a brief statement about each set of verses.

Luke 13:23-27

Matthew 7:21-23

John 3:36 NASB

1 John 2:3-6

Many who say they are Christians are not. Some may not be aware of the call upon their lives, and thus, have a very superficial view of what a Christian is. Some do not care what the Scriptures say. They are content with doing their own thing. Or some may be aware of the radical call and excuse themselves from it.

Obedience is the result of a life regenerated by the Holy Spirit. He who gave His all for us, demands our all in return. There is no "middle ground" in which we can be His follower and be free of His demands upon us. Certainly the view that God exists to please, pamper, and indulge His children with the good things of life cannot be supported by Scripture.

We are not following a weak, self-serving leader. Jesus asks no more of His followers than He gave Himself. He, in no way, compromises or makes easy the call to His disciples. Only by God's grace can we harken to such a radical call, and only by God's grace can our lives be characterized by surrender to such a dramatic call. His demands are uncompromising, "Give all to follow Me" or "Stay behind."

## CHRIST'S RADICAL CALL

Kefa Sempangi, a pastor in Uganda during the Idi Amin regime, which slaughtered thousands of Christians, understood the call to die to self. Not only Kefa's life, but those of his family and flock, were in constant danger. Many of his friends were killed because they were Christ's followers. With his life in constant jeopardy, Kefa penned these words:

*"We were learning to live in the everlasting now, to let Scripture alone form our expectations and to pray without complaining. It was no longer the days themselves that we desired, but the forgiveness and the love of God. In the uncertainty of our day-to-day existence, we were being delivered from our reliance on methods, from the idols of self-trust and self-pity. We could no longer ask converts, 'Do you believe?' We asked, 'Are you ready to die for Jesus Christ?'"*

In Elisabeth Elliot's book, *The Mark of a Man*, she speaks of her husband, Jim, who gave his life on the mission field. "He who is fully a man has relinquished his right to himself. 'Have my blood,' Jim wrote in his college journal. 'Have it all. Let it be poured out for the life of the world.' When the chance came to take a big risk in obedience to God, he took it at once - he went 'gaily!' I doubt that he remembered the words of that prayer, but the matter had been settled long before. The route to Life had to be the way of Death."