

AS HE IS SO ARE WE IN THIS WORLD

An introduction to the character of
Jesus Christ
and its influence on
The Christian

WELCOME

Welcome to Open Door's introduction to Christian discipleship. The title for this small set of notes is taken from scripture: "In this is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, that as He is, so also we are in this world" (1 John 4:17).

Rationale

The Christian life is not based on doing things so as to become something we are not. Instead it is about receiving the gift of Christ's love and life so that we grow into who He is. "As He is, so are we in this world". The Bible is not a DIY manual for self-improvement. It is a love letter of God's grace to explain what He is doing in us because of Christ. As it says elsewhere in scripture: "I am what I am by the grace of God" (1 Cor 15:10).

As Christians we tend to encounter life from three different angles. When we do anything in life we are working things through in terms of: God's requirements, our own personal perspective and the world's expectations. These notes engage with these three different perspectives and apply the gift of Christ's life as follows:

- because Jesus is who He is, He does or has done certain things
- because Jesus does these things, I am who I am, and
- because of what I now am, I too will do certain things.

Using these Notes

Each chapter looks at one aspect of the character of Christ. The chapter then offers some scriptures which expand on the implication of that attribute. If you follow the number next to the scripture you will come to a more detailed explanation concerning the applicability of that scripture. When you turn to the explanation you will find cross-references to other related explanations. You can follow these if you want to. Each section concludes with a review exercise.

It is our prayer that these note will help you receive and grow in all that Christ is and all that He has done for you, so that you will love The Lord more and so that you will have boldness in the day of judgment because you have learned ~ as He is so are we in this world.

Jesus is The Lamb of God

The next day John sees Jesus coming to him and says, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! ~ John 1:29

Because He is what He is:

Jesus is the Lamb of God because He became the sacrifice for sin which was acceptable to Father God. In the same way that Old Testament Jews would offer a lamb as atonement for their sins, Jesus was offered at Calvary for our sins. He is our sin offering.

Because He is and does these things I am:

Because Jesus is The Lamb of God who died for my sins, I am righteous. Which is to say I have right standing before the God. I do not have this right standing as a result of my own actions. I am righteous because of what Jesus did for me. He has taken my sin away.

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. ~ 2 Cor 5:21 (KJV)

Because I am as He has made me, I live the Christian life in regard to:

Intimacy/Relation	70	___	And you, who were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled ~ Col 1:21 (MKJV)
Witness	17	___	And they defeated him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life to the point of death. ~ Rev 12:11 (ALT)
Worship	61	___	And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. ~ Rev 5:13 (MKJV)
Dominion	69	___	These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them. For He is Lord of lords and King of kings. And those with Him are the called and elect and faithful ones. ~ Rev 17:14 (MKJV)
Last Things	96	___	And there shall in no way enter into it anything that defiles, or any making an abomination or a lie; but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. ~ Rev 21:27 (MKJV)

Place the letter for a summary below next to the correct number from the verses above.

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|---|--|---|---|
| A | Victory is to the meek | D | Personal testimony is the basis for witness |
| B | The Holy Spirit helps us to worship | E | We are no longer God's enemy |
| C | God ensures the perseverance of the saints | | |

Jesus is The Source of our Faith

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. ~ Heb 12:2

Because He is what He is:

Because Jesus is the creator and source of our faith, He helps us to believe in Him. Jesus supplies the Christian with the most necessary ingredient for obedience ~ faith.

Because He is and does these things I am:

Because I am learning to walk by faith in God, I can live a life pleasing to God. Because Jesus has given me saving faith, I am pleasing to God.

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. ~ Heb 11:6 (KJV)

Because I am as He has made me, I live the Christian life in regard to:

Walking Holy	36	___	For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ~ Eph 2:8 (KJV)
Dominion	75	___	For everything that has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith. ~ 1 John 5:4 (MKJV)
Prayer	56	___	But let him ask in faith, doubting nothing. For he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed. ~ James 1:6 (MKJV)
Guidance	59	___	By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out into a place which he was afterward going to receive for an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he went. ~ Heb 11:8 (MKJV)
Work & Society	90	___	Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye tithe mint and anise and cummin, and have left undone the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, and faith: these ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone. ~ Matt 23:23 (ASV)
Intimacy/Relation	41	___	Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. ~ Phil 4:6 (MKJV)

Place the letter for a summary below next to the correct number from the verses above.

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| A Faith must have works | D Prayer matters |
| B Faith means victory | E Faith grows as obedience grows |
| C Don't be double minded | F Faith is always personal but never private |

Jesus is our Burden Bearer

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. ~ Is 53:4

Because He is what He is:

Because Jesus is our Burden Bearer He carried our sins to The Cross and took them away by paying the price for them in our place. As Burden Bearer, He also carried our sicknesses to The Cross.

Because He is and does these things I am:

Because Jesus is my Burden Bearer, I am forgiven and healed by the work of Christ's Cross. Because He is my burden bearer I can cast all my cares on Him.

Casting all your anxiety onto Him, for He cares for you. ~ 1 Peter 5:7 (MKJV)

Because I am as He has made me, I live the Christian life in regard to:

Intimacy/Relation	24	___	Can a woman forget her suckling child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet I will not forget you. ~ Is 49:15 (MKJV)
Walking Holy	06	___	Then when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head and gave up the spirit. ~ John 19:30 (MKJV)
Dominion	21	___	That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses. ~ Matt 8:17 (KJV)
Prayer	47	___	Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. ~ Phil 4:6 (MKJV)
Work & Society	87	___	He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. ~ Is 53:3 (KJV)

Place the letter for a summary below next to the correct number from the verses above.

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| A | Jesus bore our punishment | D | Faith for healing prayer |
| B | Salvation is not by works | E | We pray because God is sovereign |
| C | Jesus understands rejection and can heal its influences in us | | |

Jesus is Lord

but there is to us only one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we by Him. ~ 1 Cor 8:6

Because He is what He is:

Because Jesus is Lord over all things, He has total authority. Many lords means limited authority, but One Lord means absolute, total and uncompromised authority. Jesus is Lord of all things which means that all things: things spiritual and earthly; things past and things to come; things in heaven, on the earth and under the earth. The totality of existence is subject to Him.

Because He is and does these things I am:

Because Jesus is Lord over all things, He is Lord over me as well. I am no longer master over my own life. As a child entering a new life, I am re-learning what it means to have Someone other than myself in charge.

and said, Verily I say unto you, Except you turn, and become as little children, you shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. ~ Matt 18:3 (ASV)

Because I am as He has made me, I live the Christian life in regard to:

Guidance	52	___	Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. ~ 2 Cor 10:5 (KJV)
Walking Holy	09	___	Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. ~ Acts 5:31 (KJV)
Dominion	78	___	But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ~ 1 Cor 15:57 (MKJV)
Last Things	82	___	knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus shall also raise us up by Jesus, and shall present us with you. ~ 2 Cor 4:14 (MKJV)
Work & Society	26	___	Therefore go and disciple all nations, baptizing them to the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ~ Matt 28:19 (YLT)
Worship	66	___	Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce ~ Prov 3:9 (ESV)

Place the letter for a summary below next to the correct number from the verses above.

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| A We are called to baptize/disciple nations | D The need to re-think our worldview |
| B The power of Christ's resurrection to sanctify | E Repentance is a gift |
| C Praise brings victory | F God deserves honour from all of our being |

Jesus is the Beginning and the End

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. ~ Rev 1:8

Because He is what He is:

Because Jesus is the beginning and the end, it is His plan that all things will come under the loving dominion of His sovereignty and grace.

Because He is and does these things I am:

Because Jesus is bringing all things under His sovereignty, I can be assured that there is a destiny of profound joy and security for me. Whatever may happen to me, even that which seems harmful, it will be used for Christ's purposes, dominion, glory and good.

As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. ~ Gen 50:20 (ESV)

Because I am as He has made me, I live the Christian life in regard to:

Walking Holy	03	___	Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: ~ Phil 1:6 (KJV)
Work & Society	68	___	That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him. ~ Eph 1:10 (KJV)
Worship	89	___	Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. ~ Rev 4:11 (KJV)
Intimacy/Relation	63	___	Where shall I go from Your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from Your presence? ~ Ps 139:7 (MKJV)
Last Things	53	___	Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is. ~ Rev 22:12 (ASV)

Place the letter for a summary below next to the correct number from the verses above.

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|---|--------------------------------|---|---|
| A | Worship no matter how you feel | D | There are rewards and punishments |
| B | How to mature in Christ | E | Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand |
| C | God is omnipotent | | |

Jesus is King

"Tell the daughter of Zion, Behold, your King comes to you, meek, and sitting on an ass, even a colt the foal of an ass." ~ Matt 21:5

Because He is what He is:

Because Jesus is King He is establishing a kingdom based on meekness and love, as distinct from one based on power and might. His kingdom is a 'now' kingdom and will have no end.

Because He is and does these things I am:

Because Jesus is King and rules in meekness, I have been received into His kingdom, not just as citizen, but into a position of service (priest) and authority (king).

And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. ~ Rev 1:6 (KJV)

Because I am as He has made me, I live the Christian life in regard to:

Dominion	02	___	Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. ~ Is 9:7 (KJV)
Worship	14	___	"Blessed is the King coming in the name of the Lord! Peace in Heaven and glory in the highest!" ~ Luke 19:38 (MKJV)
Intimacy/Relation	04	___	And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti. ~ Esth 2:17 (KJV)
Walking Holy	73	___	To him Abraham also gave a tenth of all. He was first by interpretation king of righteousness, and after that also king of Salem, which is king of peace. ~ Heb 7:2 (MKJV)
Guidance	35	___	Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem ~ Matt 2:1 (KJV)
Work & Society	48	___	For He has delivered us from the power of darkness and has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son ~ Col 1:13 (MKJV)

Place the letter for a summary below next to the correct number from the verses above.

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| A Demons must obey us | D Jesus has a plan for our lives |
| B It is important to forgive others | E Tithing is required |
| C We have been appointed as kings | F Worship because He is worthy |

Jesus is our High Priest

Since then we have a great High Priest who has passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. ~ Heb 4:4

Because He is what He is:

Because Jesus is our High Priest He forever stands as the representative between The Father and mankind.

Because He is and does these things I am:

Jesus is High Priest and stands before God as my priestly representative. Because I have been received into Him, I too have been given a role of service (priest) and authority (king).

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: ~ 1 Peter 2:9 (KJV)

Because I am as He has made me, I live the Christian life in regard to:

Worship	57	___	Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness, and Your saints shout for joy. ~ Ps 132:9 (MKJV)
Walking Holy	64	___	In the same way He took the cup, after having dined, saying, This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is being poured out for you. ~ Luke 22:20 (MKJV)
Dominion	51	___	And behold, I have given the sons of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, the service of the tabernacle of the congregation. ~ Num 18:21 (MKJV)
Witness	43	___	And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation. ~ 2 Cor 5:18 (KJV)
Work & Society	83	___	Even He shall build the temple of Jehovah; and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule on His throne. And He shall be a priest on His throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both. ~ Zech 6:13 (MKJV)

Place the letter for a summary below next to the correct number from the verses above.

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| A | The Cross is about reconnection to God | C | Communion should only be received after self-examination |
| B | The Church and State have separate roles but the same obligation | D | Concerning tithing |
| | | E | Worship must involve all of our hearts |

Jesus is The Head of His Body, The Church

And He is the Head of the body, the church, who is the Beginning, the First-born from the dead, that He may be pre-eminent in all things. ~ Col 1:18

Because He is what He is:

Because Jesus is the first born from the dead and has pre-eminence in all things, He is qualified to give eternal life to those who believe in Him, and He is entitled to receive all praise and honour.

Because He is and does these things I am:

Because all things have been put under Christ's feet and because He gives eternal life to those that believe in Him, I am part of His strategy to bring everything into subjection to Himself by His Word and The Church.

And He has put all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. ~ Eph 1:22 (MKJV)

Because I am as He has made me, I live the Christian life in regard to:

Walking Holy	20	___	But that you, speaking the truth in love, may in all things grow up to Him who is the Head, even Christ; ~ Eph 4:15 (MKJV)
Work & Society	18	___	Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life! ~ 1 Cor 6:3 (ESV)
Guidance	86	___	Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you. ~ Heb 13:17 (KJV)
Worship	31	___	For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. ~ 1 Cor 11:26 (ESV)
Intimacy/Relation	07	___	To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made us accepted in the Beloved. ~ Eph 1:6 (KJV)
Last Things	79	___	Whoever partakes of My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. ~ John 6:54 (MKJV)

Place the letter for a summary below next to the correct number from the verses above.

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|---|---|---|---|
| A | The Church is a place of acceptance | D | At communion we remember His death until He comes |
| B | The Church is a place to hear God's word | E | Submit to elders in The Church |
| C | Communion is about remembering Christ's love and resurrection | F | The Church ministers freedom in society |

Jesus is The Resurrection

Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: ~ John 11:25

Because He is what He is:

Because Jesus is The Resurrection we realize that the resurrection is not only an event it is a person. Since the resurrection is a person who is eternal in nature, we can expect that resurrection power will be flowing every day.

Because He is and does these things I am:

Because Christ's resurrection power and life flows to us we should expect to walk as He did. I walk as He did, able to display the wisdom, power, love and re-creative energy of Christ because of the life that now sustains me.

He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk even as He walked. ~ 1 John 2:6 (MKJV)

Because I am as He has made me, I live the Christian life in regard to:

Dominion	60	___	Since then the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise partook of the same; that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death (that is, the Devil) ~ Heb 2:14 (MKJV)
Walking Holy	39	___	Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. ~ Rom 6:4 (KJV)
Worship	80	___	Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has regenerated us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead ~ 1 Peter 1:3 (MKJV)
Witness	22	___	This Jesus has God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. ~ Acts 2:32 (KJV)
Work & Society	94	___	Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD! ~ Ps 150:6 (ESV)

Place the letter for a summary below next to the correct number from the verses above.

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|---|--|---|---|
| A | Baptism is a public confession of being dead to sin | C | Our bodies are changed and raised from the dead |
| B | True praise is from a regenerate and repentant heart | D | We have authority over Satan |
| | | E | The Holy Spirit brings conviction to hearers |

Jesus is Baptizer in the Holy Spirit

I indeed have baptized you in water, but He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit. ~ Mark 1:8

Because He is what He is:

Because Jesus is the Baptizer in the Holy Spirit, He sends His Spirit to us in order that we would receive gifts of the Holy Spirit and know the flow of His life within us.

Because He is and does these things I am:

Because I have received the Holy Spirit I can experience the flow of God's life and love from within me. This flow manifests itself as gifts and as fruit in the life of the believer.

He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. ~ John 7:38 (KJV)

Because I am as He has made me, I live the Christian life in regard to:

Walking Holy	16	___	I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: ~ Matt 3:11 (KJV)
Intimacy/Relation	29	___	He that speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but he that prophesies edifies the church. ~ 1 Cor 14:4 (ASV)
Prayer	32	___	But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit ~ Jude 1:20 (ESV)
Guidance	93	___	Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. ~ 1 Cor 14:1 (ESV)
Worship	77	___	Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; ~ Eph 5:19 (KJV)
Witness	92	___	But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. ~ Acts 1:8 (KJV)

Place the letter for a summary below next to the correct number from the verses above.

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|---|--|
| A Repentance is a change of mind to see Jesus as King | D What's meant by praying in the Holy Spirit |
| B The Holy Spirit gives boldness to witness | E The relationship between prophecy and love |
| C Praying in tongues | F Psalms and hymns to be sung in our hearts |

Jesus is Creator

For all things were created in Him, the things in the heavens, and the things on the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers, all things were created through Him and for Him. ~ Col 1:16

Because He is what He is:

Because Jesus is creator all things relate back to Him. They were created by Him and they were created for Him. The source and energy for the cosmos that we see and for the history that we encounter is a person ~ Jesus Christ.

Because He is and does these things I am:

I am not an accident. Neither is my past, even the dark and unhappy times, are not an accident. Because Jesus is creator, I have been made by Him and for Him, to find the pleasure of bringing Him pleasure.

Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb: "I am the LORD, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself, ~ Is 44:24 (ESV)

Because I am as He has made me, I live the Christian life in regard to:

Last Things	84	___	In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ~ John 1:1 (KJV)
Walking Holy	33	___	Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. ~ Heb 11:3 (KJV)
Intimacy/Relation	28	___	And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, so that where I am, you may be also. ~ John 14:3 (MKJV)
Dominion	74	___	So that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth ~ Phil 2:10 (ESV)
Prayer	62	___	But now thus says the LORD, He who created you, O Jacob, He who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine." ~ Is 43:1 (ESV)

Place the letter for a summary below next to the correct number from the verses above.

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|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| A Jesus is beautiful | D Demons exist |
| B It pays to memorize scripture | E The Word shapes our hearts |
| C God meets our needs | |

God is Love

He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. ~ 1 John 4:8

Because He is what He is:

Because God is love we find that love is not an idea or an emotion, it is a person. As such God's love for us is a personal and intimate love.

Because He is and does these things I am:

Because love is a person, love's real expression can only flow from person to person, not from person to things. Because God loves me, I am able to put love for others ahead of love for things such as; possessions or pride or self-comfort.

And we have this commandment from Him, that he who loves God should love his brother also. ~ 1 John 4:21 (MKJV)

Because I am as He has made me, I live the Christian life in regard to:

Guidance	49	___	The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee. ~ Jer 31:3 (KJV)
Dominion	40	___	Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. ~ John 18:36 (KJV)
Walking Holy	54	___	But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. ~ Ps 86:15 (ESV)
Intimacy/Relation	71	___	And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. ~ Rom 5:5 (KJV)
Witness	76	___	And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ~ 1 Cor 13:2 (ESV)
Work & Society	97	___	Give, and it shall be given to you, good measure pressed down and shaken together and running over, they shall give into your bosom. For with the same measure that you measure, it shall be measured to you again. ~ Luke 6:38 (MKJV)

Place the letter for a summary below next to the correct number from the verses above.

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|------------------------------------|---|
| A God is transcendent and imminent | D The Holy Spirit spreads love in our hearts |
| B We are forgiven | E Acts of love are the best way to witness |
| C Love your enemies | F Giving should be done in obedience not in expectation of gain |

Jesus is the Good Shepherd

I am the Good Shepherd, and I know those that are Mine, and I am known by those who are Mine. ~ John 10:14

Because He is what He is:

Because Jesus is the good shepherd, He cares for His sheep in many ways. He lays down His life for the sheep. He leads them in the way that they should go.

Because He is and does these things I am:

Because Jesus is the good shepherd and leads His sheep, I am able to hear His Voice as He speaks into every area of my life.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ~ John 10:27 (ASV)

Because I am as He has made me, I live the Christian life in regard to:

Walking Holy	88	_____	He restores my soul: he leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. ~ Ps 23:3 (KJV)
Guidance	25	_____	Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. ~ Ps 23:4 (MKJV)
Intimacy/Relation	50	_____	For you were as sheep going astray, but now you are turned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. ~ 1 Peter 2:25 (MKJV)
Worship	38	_____	I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. ~ John 10:11 (MKJV)
Dominion	44	_____	You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. ~ Ps 23:5 (ESV)

Place the letter for a summary below next to the correct number from the verses above.

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|-----------------------------|
| A | We belong to His Name | E | God brings correction to us |
| B | Satan hates us but we are safe in Jesus | F | Jesus died for His Church |
| C | God grants faith for guidance in life | | |

Jesus is our Peace

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. ~ Is 9:6

Because He is what He is:

Because Jesus is the Prince of Peace He rules so as to bring a peace to the earth and individuals which is based on justice, wisdom and truth. He is the author, prince, promoter, and keeper of peace.

Because He is and does these things I am:

Because Jesus is ruling in peace my trust in Him will mean peace ruling in my heart, even when I am in difficult circumstances and my faith is stretched.

And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace. ~ Luke 7:50 (KJV)

Because I am as He has made me, I live the Christian life in regard to:

Walking Holy	11	___	Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. ~ 1 Cor 1:3 (KJV)
Work & Society	37	___	Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. ~ John 14:27 (MKJV)
Dominion	95	___	And He awakened and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, Peace! Be still! And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. ~ Mark 4:39 (MKJV)
Guidance	10	___	For to you it is given on behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake ~ Phil 1:29 (MKJV)
Witness	46	___	And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. ~ Acts 16:25 (MKJV)

Place the letter for a summary below next to the correct number from the verses above.

- | | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|---|--|
| A | Jesus is the Prince of Peace | D | Suffering can be part of God's plan for us |
| B | God has promised to protect us | E | Worship God in all circumstances |
| C | Jesus is God's answer to injustice | | |

Jesus is The Prophet

For Moses truly said to the fathers, "The Lord your God shall raise up a Prophet to you from your brothers, One like me. You shall hear Him in all things, whatever He may say to you. ~ Acts 3:22

Because He is what He is:

Because Jesus is God's ultimate prophet He receives The Father's words and then in turn speaks acts upon them and speaks them out to the whole world.

Because He is and does these things I am:

Because Jesus is God's prophet, I too can expect to be used of God to speak in a way which reveals God's heart to others.

But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!" ~ Num 11:29 (ESV)

Because I am as He has made me, I live the Christian life in regard to:

Last Things	13	___	Therefore watch, for you do not know either the day or the hour in which the Son of Man comes. ~ Matt 25:13 (MKJV)
Witness	12	___	Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, 'Of a truth this is The Prophet'. ~ John 7:40 (KJV)
Dominion	42	___	For I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, lest you should be wise within yourselves; that blindness in part has happened to Israel, until the fullness of the nations has come in. ~ Rom 11:25 (MKJV)
Walking Holy	34	___	For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. ~ Matt 24:24 (KJV)
Guidance	19	___	Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. ~ Matt 5:17 (KJV)

Place the letter for a summary below next to the correct number from the verses above.

- | | |
|---|--|
| A By their fruit you will know them | D Jesus is the absent king, Satan is the usurper |
| B God's law remains relevant | E Salvation comes via the Holy Spirit |
| C God chose Israel but that nation failed | |

Jesus is God and Man

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

Because He is what He is:

Because Jesus is God He has looked with compassion on His creation coming in the flesh to redeem it back to Himself. Because Jesus is man, He identifies fully with the everyday challenges and difficulties which we face.

Because He is and does these things I am:

Because Jesus is both God and man, being born again into His kingdom, means that we have become a son of God.

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. ~ Rom 8:15 (KJV)

Because I am as He has made me, I live the Christian life in regard to:

Prayer	15	___	For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus ~ 1 Tim 2:5 (KJV)
Dominion	65	___	Looking for the blessed hope, and the appearance of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ ~ Titus 2:13 (MKJV)
Last Things	85	___	For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. ~ 1 Cor 15:22 (KJV)
Witness	08	___	Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God. ~ Phil 2:6 (KJV)
Work & Society	30	___	And He said to them, Why did you look for Me? Do you not know that I must be about My Father's business? ~ Luke 2:49 (MKJV)

Place the letter for a summary below next to the correct number from the verses above.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| A The battle is won via meekness | D Sometimes following Jesus leads to conflict |
| B We are to be life givers | E Jesus has abolished death |
| C Jesus a man is our mediator | |

Jesus is Life and Truth

Jesus said to him, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father but by Me. ~ John 14:6

Because He is what He is:

Because Jesus is truth and life, He presents the gospel to us, not so much as a list of things to do but as a way of living. Because truth and life are not concepts but a person, Jesus comes to develop in us the "personhood" that God meant mankind to have when first we were created.

Because He is and does these things I am:

Because Jesus presents the gospel as a "way" of life, I am now being lead into living differently. Whereas I used to live according to my own values and ideas, I am now living according to The Truth which abides in me.

The Spirit of the truth, whom the world is not able to receive, because it does not look for Him, nor know Him. But you know Him, because He dwells with you and will be in you. ~ John 14:17 (ALT)

Because I am as He has made me, I live the Christian life in regard to:

Intimacy/Relation	45	___	For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. ~ Rom 5:10 (MKJV)
Walking Holy	05	___	But that no one is justified by the Law in the sight of God is clear, for, "The just shall live by faith." ~ Gal 3:11 (KJV)
Guidance	91	___	But this I confess to you, that according to The Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets, ~ Acts 24:14 (ESV)
Worship	55	___	I am the Bread of life. ~ John 6:48 (MKJV)
Last Things	81	___	And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ~ 1 Thess 5:23 (KJV)

Place the letter for a summary below next to the correct number from the verses above.

- | | |
|---|---|
| A The difference between justification and sanctification | C Faith about living in obedience to |
| B Jesus as The Way helps us internalize God's values | D Four things that we should do regularly |
| | E Jesus is our peace in eternity |

Jesus is The Word

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

Because He is what He is:

Because Jesus is The Word, He has used and continues to use the Bible as the means by which He reveals Himself to mankind.

Because He is and does these things I am:

Because Jesus is The Word He is writing His character and ways on my heart by His Spirit, so that I become like Him. In this way, I too am becoming a living letter to the world.

And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. ~ 2 Cor 3:3 (ESV)

Because I am as He has made me, I live the Christian life in regard to:

Dominion	01	___	The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. ~ Ps 19:7 (KJV)
Worship	27	___	The heaven and the earth shall pass away, but My Words shall not pass away. ~ Matt 24:35 (KJV)
Intimacy/Relation	72	___	Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. ~ Ps 119:18 (KJV)
Guidance	23	___	Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. ~ Ps 119:105 (KJV)
Work & Society	67	___	All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. ~ 2 Tim 3:16 (KJV)
Walking Holy	58	___	But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. ~ Jer 31:33 (KJV)

Place the letter for a summary below next to the correct number from the verses above.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| A The Word is our guide | D The 10 commandments |
| B Hypocrisy is unacceptable to God | E God is a covenant maker and covenant keeper |
| C Baptism and Communion are important | |

Dominion

The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. ~ Ps 19:7

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - Sin has impacted mankind in a number of ways. One of the main ways is that we are happy to live with a gap between character and concept. We can see that a certain virtue such as forgiveness, is desirable in concept but we do not have the moral capacity to routinely forgive. So we live in hypocrisy saying one thing and doing something other.

God does not have this gap. There is no virtuous or moral excellence as an idea to which God attains. God does not act virtuously because He sees it as a good idea. God acts virtuously because He is virtuous in His character. There is no good thing outside of the God. That is why scripture tells us that goodness is a person (Matt 19:17), love is a person (1 John 4:8), wisdom is a person (1 Cor 1:30), justice is a person (Rom 3:26), truth is a person (John 14:26), even life is a person (John 11:25). And in every case that person is God.

So God's law is perfect (Ps 19:7), not because it is a good idea but because it is the outworking, display or expression of His character.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - God's law converts the soul (Ps 19:7). As we read our Bibles and see its precepts and ways we realize that there are aspects of our lives which differ markedly and sinfully from God's character. In this way God uses the law to make us realize where we need to change (Rom 7:7).

In the same way that holiness is not a concept but a person (Is 6:3, Matt 1:18), we are to walk as people whose holiness flows from out of who we are, rather than what we do. This can only happen as the 'Holy' Spirit invests our lives with the character of God as revealed in His law (Jer 31:33). It can only happen as we are converted from "thinking" about what holiness should be to "being" what holiness is.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - It has been said that we judge others by their behaviours and ourselves by our intentions. Which is to say that people criticize the gap between concept and character in others but overlook it in themselves. In as much as this is true of the human heart, it also indicates that we are happy to live as hypocrites.

Such hypocrisy is contrary to the character of God. So on that day when the whole human race stands before God's judgement throne (Rev 20:11-12) each person will first be judged by the standards which they themselves set for themselves and others (Matt 12:36), and thereafter they will be judged against the law standard of God. A person's inability to adhere to their own standards will be enough to tell them that they needed a Saviour.

Dominion

Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. ~ Is 9:7

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - The promise of God is that His dominion will bring peace. But this scripture (Is 9:7) also tells us that the peace is dependent on His judgement and justice. His peace is a just peace established in grace, wisdom and mercy, not by force.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - We have been born again into a kingdom. It is a kingdom of peace, joy and righteousness (Rom 14:7) and so we are to exercise authority in that kingdom as an ambassador of Christ, the Prince of Peace (Acts 10:36). This is why meekness (Matt 5:5) and forgiveness (Matt 6:12) are foundational characteristics of the Christian character. The King did not come in wrath and anger to condemn the world (John 3:18) but in meekness and forgiveness to rule via peace. True peace and real victory comes as we learn gratitude for the forgiveness we have received from Him and as we learn to serve in the same way that He did.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - People today are arrested by the police for "disturbing the peace". This is an old legal term which pertains to the fact that the king of the land was responsible for maintaining the peace. Any "disturbance of the peace" was an offence against the king, for it was "The King's Peace". This is a Biblical concept which relates to the fact that Jesus is King and "of the increase of His peace and government there will be no end" (Is 9:7).

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Walking Holy

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: ~ Phil 1:6

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - Because Jesus is both the beginning and the end, it is in His nature that if He starts something He will most certainly finish it. Because He is the beginning and the end, the whole of what He commences will bear the imprint of His character all the way through as He works it according to His will unto that conclusions which best reflects His glory. It is contrary to God's nature for Him to abandon what He has created.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - We are in God's hands. What He has commenced in us by bringing the love and life of Christ to us, He will most assuredly finish. God is not some old woman who commences to knit a garment, puts her knitting down and then forgets where she left it. Because God has promised to bring us to maturity in Christ we can be confident that He will assist us to complete the tasks which He gives us to do.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - People of the world make a project of themselves. They set goals. They identify the resources necessary to achieve those goals and then work toward the achievement of those goals. They improve themselves. The Bible is not a DIY manual. The Christian is saved by God's grace and relies on that same grace to instruct, guide and mature them in Christ.

But how do we know if we are maturing? What is the difference between resting in Christ (Matt 11:28) and just being slack? There are two ways to know:

FIRST - The effective work of the Holy Spirit should be adjusting our desires so that worldliness and sin become displeasing and unattractive to us (2 Cor 3:18). Our inner desires and motivations change; sometimes markedly, but most times gradually.

SECOND - Because God has begun and is perfecting a "work" in us (Phil 1:6), we should find ourselves more and more involved in transforming the world via "works" of justice, kindness, witness or worship. As James wrote; "faith without works is dead" (James 2:17)

Intimacy/Relationship

And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti. ~ Esth 2:17

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - God uses men and women for His purposes. He orders the steps of all, even very powerful and very important people (Prov 21:1). The Persian king (Ahasuerus) fell in love with the Jewess Esther and made her queen (Esth 2:17). This was part of God's plan because years later Esther would protect God's people from genocide.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - In the same way that Ahasuerus exalted Esther to royalty because of his love for her, God has exalted us to the status of king because of His love for us. God was motivated by love when He brought the reality of Christ's Cross to us.

That same love that called us to Him and raised us to rule with Him, flows to us all day every day regardless of whether we feel it or deserve it.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - God rules in His love. Love toward His creation is a core principle in His dealings with the world. For this reason we are to extend His kingdom of love throughout the world by showing forth that love. In the same way that love between Ahasuerus and Esther brought peace to the nation, we are to establish peaceable rule in all circumstances by having a life of loving friendship with God and with others.

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Walking Holy

But that no one is justified by the Law in the sight of God is clear, for, "The just shall live by faith." ~ Gal 3:11

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - It is a truism or axiom to say: "God is love" (1 John 4:8). It is also a truism to say that "God is holy" (Ps 99:9). The danger is that our natural self-centeredness causes us to get our wires crossed when we try to apply both these ideas at once.

We expect that God will relate to us in love because God is love. And we expect that in return for this love He will be pleased with our holiness. God offers love and we respond with holiness?

If God is love then to fail to love is ungodly. So if God offers love and we respond in holiness rather than love we are in a sense being ungodly. This is the reason that no one is justified by the law. It was God's love that gave us Jesus at Calvary as our means of holiness (2 Cor 5:21). We must therefore respond in kind, not in the self effort of law keeping but in gratitude, faith and love.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - The person who tries to justify themselves by their own achievements, their own keeping of the law is acting in independence and selfishness. They are acting out of self-love and self-confidence.

Faith in God is about resting in His love and His ability. Jesus came not to do His own will but to do The Father's will. Jesus, the very Son of God did not live (or die) for Himself. His obedience, life, death and resurrection was an act of selfless commitment to The Father's strategy for getting mankind out of the sin prison we had made for ourselves. Jesus lived a life of faith in The Father's plan. To be Christian means to live as He did, which is to live by faith.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - Scripture says: "Let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts" (Is 55:7). A man's ways may be wicked before God not because they are sinful or immoral, but because they are 'his' ways. Again scripture says: "There is a way that seems good to a man but the end thereof is death" (Prov 16:25). Every person who sets their own rules is walking in 'his' ways, every person who determines their own way to God is actually walking away from Him toward a dead end.

Faith means reliance on someone else and someone else's way. Much of the world is afflicted with the arrogance of believing that their way is right because it is their way, when it is actually wrong for exactly that reason.

Walking Holy

Then when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head and gave up the spirit. ~ John 19:30

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - The corruption in the world because of sin has been so great that the only remedy was for God Himself to deal with the problem. Therefore Jesus bore the sin of the human race when He went to The Cross and paid the full price for our sin (2 Cor 5:21). There is only one sacrifice which is fully comprehensive and acceptable to God - Jesus. That's why Christ's last words on the cross were "It is finished" (John 19:30), meaning that our redemption was completely complete and perfectly perfect.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - I am righteous before God because of what Jesus has done for me. I do not live a holy life in order to be acceptable to God. I am already acceptable because of what Jesus has done. In fact trying to save myself via my own efforts is offensive to God. Jesus' sacrifice was perfectly perfect. To add my own efforts is to indicate that His sacrifice was insufficient!

Instead, the Christian chooses to live a righteous life out of gratitude to the One who bore their sin away at Calvary. The desire to live holy is evidence of a saving faith which motivates us to gratitude, expressed in obedience.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - John's gospel records that Jesus is The Lamb of God "who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Whereas Jews, each year, would sacrifice a lamb for their nation, the work of Christ's sin-bearing is so vast that it has the capability to act as the remedy for every sinner. Jesus' sacrifice on The Cross has the capacity to cleanse every person in the whole world for all time.

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Intimacy/Relationship

To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made us accepted in the Beloved. ~ Eph 1:6

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - God loves us with a great fervour. The work of The Cross is to make us acceptable to Himself. His grace has come to us because of His love for us. He is our beloved (SofS 6:3). And Christ, because of His great sacrifice is The Father's beloved.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - We are accepted in Christ. We have been received into Him whom scripture calls; The Beloved. Being accepted into Christ means that we are also accepted into the Body of Christ.

Church is a place for us to feel comfortable and loved. It is in church that the Christian joins with others to worship and to hear God's Word explained and to share communion. These are all good reasons to go to church. But church is also meant to be a place of acceptance. It is at church that we can share our joys or burdens and be loved and prayed for.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - Jesus said that the world would be able to identify Christians by the way that they love and care for each other (John 13:35). It is important to belong in a church because it helps sustain us in our faith, grow us in Christ's character and because it offers a witness to those outside of Christ.

Witness

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God. ~ Phil 2:6

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - Robbery is a sin that commences in the heart. It is motivated by the desire to own something that the thief doesn't have or, in the cruellest of cases, by the desire to deny someone else the joy of ownership merely because the thief resents the owner having that joy. Robbery is an expression of envy.

Jesus came to earth full of God's glory (John 1:14) and yet there was no envy in Him (Phil 2:6). There was no ambition or striving in His obedience, just joy and love. Jesus did not need to prove anything by enacting the plan of redemption. It added nothing to His glory or to His self-image or to His standing as God. It was because of God's love for lost humanity that Jesus came in human form (John 3:16).

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Humility and meekness are not the most popular of virtues today. Instead, our culture values self-fulfilment and personal achievement. This can be so even in the church because there are times when the gospel is presented as a product which if taken on, will ensure the attainment of one's potential and destiny. In short it is offered as the path to the completion of one's envy.

And yet scripture suggests that Christians are those who know what it is to suffer for Christ's sake (Phil 1:29, 1 Peter 3:14). More importantly it would seem that the Christian's capacity to rejoice in the face of injustice acts as a witness which will draw the unjust to Christ (1 Peter 3:15). It is definitely not the most attractive way to share one's faith and yet it was the unfair, unjust punishment of Jesus at Calvary which is the source of our hope and faith (1 Peter 2:24).

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - The world is insistent on its rights. Justice is defined in terms of the assurance which each person has to exercise their own liberty. This appeals to mankind's sense of self-importance.

A godly society does not emphasise rights but obligations. God's Law says "You will not murder". So under God's system, a person's 'right' to walk the street in safety is expressed as all other persons' obligation not to cause harm. God's Law says "You will not steal". So under God's system, a person's 'right' to property is expressed as all other persons' obligation not to steal. A society's 'rights' are only as strong as its humility and meekness to walk in love for others.

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Walking Holy

Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. ~ Acts 5:31

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - God contrasts Himself to the human race when He says; "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways" (Is 55:8). The result is that whilst we can know some of God's ways, since we are made in His image (Gen 1:27), there is much about Him which eludes us. In particular the fact that we have all sinned means that no one can really understand the holiness of God's character without Him revealing it to us via the gift of repentance (Acts 5:31).

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - God's holiness is so infinitely vast that our sinfulness becomes infinitely sinful by comparison. As such we do not understand the depth of our need for a saviour unless God grants us the gift of repentance (2 Tim 2:25).

Scripture records that mankind's first sin was when Adam and Eve decided that they would choose for themselves what was right and what was wrong (Gen 3:4-6). We continue this same error if we allow our pride to tell us that we know how to repent without Christ's help. Until Jesus "gives repentance" (Acts 5:31) we are acting as lord of our own ideas. Jesus is Lord and so it is His privilege and right to grant insight into our sinfulness.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - It offends the world's pride that God should require repentance in order for His forgiveness to flow. It is all the more offensive to our pride when we realise that we are unable to repent without His help (John 16:8). Yet if the choice of Christ as saviour is entirely one of our own making, then in effect we remain lord of our own destiny. If we chose Him then we can just as well "unchose" Him. It is an act of sovereignty and love that Jesus grants repentance.

Guidance

For to you it is given on behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake ~ Phil 1:29

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - Behold the generosity of God. Not only has He granted us faith (Eph 2:8) but when it was given to us it came gift wrapped with the promise of suffering (Phil 1:29)! What is God thinking? Doesn't He realize how unappealing that makes the gospel sound? How will He ever fill the churches if He speaks so as to frighten people away?

There is a promise in Christ, that by Him we can have an abundant or full life (John 10:10), yet how can a life be full if it doesn't know suffering. Scripture says that Jesus grew in wisdom (Luke 2:52) and because of the things that He suffered grew in obedience (Heb 5:8).

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Jesus' love for us was real, as was the price that He paid for us. If love meant pain for Jesus then we can expect that sometimes it will be the same for us.

We shouldn't be surprised if following Jesus places us in difficult circumstances. We ought not go looking for such circumstances but neither should we shirk them when they come.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - Pop-star John Lennon wrote a song which he called "Imagine" (1971). In the song he invited the listener to imagine a world where there was "nothing to kill and die for". On the face of it this sounds like a wonderful place to live.

The trouble is; if there's nothing worth dying for, then there's nothing worth living for either. A life worth living has to be a life worth dying for. A husband who wouldn't die to protect his wife or a mother who wouldn't suffer to protect her child seem unworthy of their calling and role. John Lennon's imagined world is a very selfish and morally bankrupt existence.

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Walking Holy

Grace be unto you,
and peace, from
God our Father, and
from the Lord Jesus
Christ. ~ 1 Cor 1:3

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - The Bible includes 13 letters written by the apostle Paul. Five of these letters open with exactly this (1 Cor 1:13) greeting. Paul wanted his readers to know grace and peace.

More than that, he wanted them to know the very source of grace and peace. They come from The Father via Jesus Christ.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - It has been said that the human heart reacts to adversity in one of two ways. We respond either with fight or flight. We face the circumstance and weigh up our prospects of success and depending on the odds, we either stay and fight or we run away. Either response calls for effort.

For the Christian there is a third option. Imagine we knew that no matter what the circumstance, there was someone who loved us so much and was so powerful that they'd help us overcome. In this case we would neither have to run away nor fight. We would be at peace in the knowledge of our safekeeping. This is how the Christian is supposed to live. We are not to run away. We are to face life's challenges. We are not to fight in self-effort either. We are to obey Jesus and look to Him to be our strength.

Prayer is an important part of this process. It is the time we take each day to ground ourselves and our thinking in Christ.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - Many people strive to be at peace. Yet there is a logical inconsistency in this. To be at peace means to be free of effort. So if we are striving to be at peace, then we are probably pursuing peace via the wrong strategy.

Grace may be defined as God's unmerited kind favour. The person who knows God's grace also knows that they have done nothing to deserve it or earn it. Grace which is dependent on self-effort, by definition, ceases to be grace. This is why grace and peace are linked. The knowledge of God's determination to love, bless and protect us because He is God (and not because of our efforts) means that we can possess a peace which is not dependent on inner self-effort. Peoples' failure to understand grace is one of the reasons why peace is so elusive in the world.

Witness

Many of the people
therefore, when
they heard this
saying, said, 'Of a
truth this is The
Prophet'. ~ John
7:40

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - It was known to the people of Christ's day that God would send Israel a prophet who was greater than Moses had been (Acts 3:22). It was also known that this prophet would come approximately 490 years after Israel's return from exile in Babylon (Dan 9:25). And it was also known that this prophet would be born in Bethlehem (Matt 2:4-6) and be of the line of David (John 7:42).

These and many many more prophecies concerning God's Prophet and Messiah were all fulfilled by Jesus Christ.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Jesus came to earth at a time and in a manner entirely foretold by scripture. The number of prophecies concerning His life, death and resurrection which He fulfilled in His 33 years on earth is said to number over 100. We can testify confidently of the truth of Christ's existence and the centrality of His message of redemption because scripture presents a vast array of objective evidence and fulfilled prophecy concerning Him.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - Some have thought that Jesus would have had more impact and His messages have received wider coverage if He had be born in today's world of modern mass media. Imagine what great television viewing His miracles would have made!

Jesus appeared on earth at precisely that time which suited Him. The fullness of His message is not diminished because it lacks the presentation techniques of today's technology. There has been, and only ever will be, one media/means for communicating the gospel - God's Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who makes the truth of Christ evident and real to the human heart (John 16:7-11).

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Last Things

Therefore watch, for you do not know either the day or the hour in which the Son of Man comes.
~ Matt 25:13

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - Jesus is coming again (Matt 25:13). At the time of His ascension God The Father gave Jesus a kingdom (Dan 7:13-14) and with it, all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt 28:19). Christ rules in power and even now is exercising a plan that will bring all things even His enemies under His control (Heb 10:12-13).

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Despite Christ's clear warning (Matt 25:13) the attempts by godly men throughout church history to assay the timing of Christ's return are legion. Every generation has this one responsibility: to be ready when He comes.

The readiness and endurance that Jesus expects on His return is that we will be living in faith (Luke 18:8) and that we will be loving others (Matt 24:12-13). It is a sad indicator of our true motives if it requires the prospect of Christ's soon return to cause us to live faithful loving lives.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - The story of Robin Hood offers an allegory or comparison with the prospect of Christ's return. Robin and the people of Nottingham had to choose. They could have peace and acceptance by seeking the favour of the usurping king, Prince John. This would mean appeasing Prince John's evil disposition and accepting his unjust laws. Or they could live disjointed and non-conformist lives in anticipation of the return of the rightful sovereign, King Richard.

Robin and his men chose to live in anticipation of Richard's return. They lived according to the law of the rightful sovereign and they worked so as to minimize the impact of the wicked thieving usurper. It was not until the rightful king returned that judgement appeared and true justice and rewards flowed.

So too the Christian. We must decide whether we will live according to the world, as based on the lies of the thief Satan, or whether we will stand out from his kingdom by living according to the love and law of Jesus Christ, the returning King (Rev 11:15).

Worship

"Blessed is the King coming in the name of the Lord! Peace in Heaven and glory in the highest!" ~ Luke 19:38

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - It is God's right to receive praise. He is Sovereign King, creator and ruler of the universe. Scripture says "Let everything that has breath praise The Lord" (Ps 150:6). There is peace in heaven (Luke 19:38) therefore we know that God does not receive His praises as some cruel and demanding tyrant. On this basis we can further know that God's expectation of worship is due not only to His might and sovereignty but to the blessedness and beauty of His character.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Jesus is King and Sovereign. We are to worship Him because He is creator and victor. We are to worship Him because He is worthy and because we have been created according to His good plan and purposes (Rev 4:11). Therefore we give thanks in all situations because He is in control (1 Thess 5:18).

In worshipping Christ The King we are to find peace and joy because the kingdom of God "is peace, joy and righteousness in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14:7) and because in His love He responds to our praises by enthroning Himself in our worshipful hearts (Ps 22:3).

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - The people of Jerusalem who declared "Blessed is the King coming in the name of the Lord!" (Luke 19:38) are the same people who a few days later cried "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" (Mark 15:13) Thus we see that the praises of men one for another are fickle. We are not to set our hearts on pleasing men but on pleasing God (Acts 5:29). Furthermore we must understand that the only praises which please God are the praises of a repentant and grateful heart.

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Prayer

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus ~ 1 Tim 2:5

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - A mediator is someone who facilitates an agreement between two parties because he/she is trusted by both parties and because he/she understands the interests and limitations of both parties. Jesus Christ is both God and Man. For this reason He is well equipped to understand and broker the relationship between God and Man (1 Tim 2:5).

In fact the apostle Paul tells us that Jesus Christ is the only mediator possible between God and mankind (1 Tim 2:5).

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Because it is mankind who damages God's creation by our sin, it is necessary that it should be one from amongst our kind who makes restitution. Thus it is necessary that our saviour should be a man. Because God is infinite in all He does, He is infinitely offended at our sinfulness. The only sacrifice which could appease an infinite offence is an infinite sacrifice. Thus it is necessary that our saviour should be as infinite as God.

Jesus Christ is the only one who is both God and Man.

It is because Jesus is our intermediary that the New Testament says that God The Father does things "by Christ" or "in Christ". For example: "God shall judge the secrets of men 'by' Christ" (Rom 2:16), or "We have peace with God 'through' Our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 5:1), or "my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory 'by' Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:19). It is because Jesus is our intermediary that our prayers are prayed in His Name (John 16:23-24).

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - It can be hard to understand how Jesus can be both God and Man. For this reason the world has harboured many false teachings about the divinity of Jesus. It is an error that first arose in the time of the apostles.

Scripture makes clear that Jesus is worshipped in heaven (Rev 4:10-11) yet Jesus Himself said that only God was to be worshipped (Mat 4:10). So either Jesus has changed His mind after He arose from the dead, or He was, is and always will be God.

Walking Holy

I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: ~ Matt 3:11

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - Jesus baptizes in the Holy Spirit. That is to say, He pours out the Holy Spirit on all believers. Many times this outpouring will lead to a manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the most common of which is tongues (Acts 2:3-4, Acts 19:1-6).

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - It is important to note that baptism in the Holy Spirit came after the ministry of repentance. Repentance is the doorway through which people enter Christ's kingdom (Matt 4:17).

Repentance means "a change of mind". To repent means to let go of how we used to see life and to learn to see it as God intended it to be. Repentance is about ceasing to pretend that we can be god of our own lives. It is about acknowledging that Jesus, and Jesus only, is sovereign, ruler and king. It is the recognition that all opposition to Him and His Word is sin.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit but warned that those in the world cannot receive Him (John 14:17). The world looks at the promise of the Holy Spirit without understanding. They see Christians being lead by the Holy Spirit or exhibiting spiritual gifts and don't understand. The reason for this is that there is no repentance. There has been no change of mind, no acknowledgement of the sovereignty of Christ, as will permit the Holy Spirit's actions to make sense.

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Witness

And they defeated him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life to the point of death. ~ Rev 12:11

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - This scripture (Rev 12:11) refers to a battle between Satan (him) and Christ's followers (they). It is worth noting that Satan's hatred of God extends to God's creation. But the victory has been won for God and for us by The Lamb's sacrificial blood on Calvary.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - It is important not only to believe in Christ but to act on that belief. The joy of entering His kingdom means that the new Christian is often inclined to act on the experience of their salvation by telling others. This is good. It is also what God expects, since we are to "believe in our hearts and confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord" (Rom 10:9).

As a Christian we have a new citizenship in a new kingdom of peace and joy, however our abode is still in the old kingdom of fear and darkness. We can find it hard to witness to Christ's Lordship. Because of this we are hesitant to start a conversation about Christ because we don't know what the other person's reaction will be and we don't know whether we can respond to all of the arguments which they may have. These matters can be resolved by two strategies.

Firstly ~ Stick to your testimony (i.e. What you know to be true in your own life). People come to faith because of the reality of the life of Christ. Your life and experience are the best things to share.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - Not everyone is thoroughly opposed to the gospel. Some are just indifferent. Friends and workmates will often make allowance for someone who is "religious". There are some people who will respect your stand and adjust their expectations of how you will behave or fit in according to their notion of what a Christian is meant to be.

So secondly ~ Get in first. Make your stand for Christ as early in a friendship as seems sensible. Don't leave it up to circumstances to lead you into awkward situations. Make your faith known early and fear won't have space and time to play havoc in your heart.

Work & Society

Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life! ~ 1 Cor 6:3

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - God has delegated to mankind His authority to form justice on the earth (Gen 1:28, Ps 82:1, Ps 149:9). This scripture (1 Cor 6:3) is part of a correction which Paul wrote to the church in Corinth. The church had called on outsiders or non-Christians to adjudicate in a dispute between two church members. Paul was disappointed that they did not feel that there was sufficient love and wisdom within the Corinthian church to resolve the matter among themselves. So he reminds them that ultimately, the church, as part of Christ's Body, will be involved in God's eternal judgements, even the judgement of angels.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - All things are being placed under Christ's feet. There is a place for Godly wisdom and truth in every area of life. The wisdom of Christ is relevant to all of life not just to spiritual matters. The life, institutions and history of Western nations have been strongly influence by the wisdom and righteousness of God as ministered by Christ's church.

The Christian can be proud of the legacy of liberty which the Body of Christ has contributed over the ages.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - Western society has a tendency to be short-sighted in its history. We have forgotten that it was Pope Gregory who turned back Islam from Europe, that it was the Christian pastor, Lazlo Tokes, who brought down the corrupt Rumanian government and that it was a prayer meeting in East Berlin which gathered the crowds which tore down the Berlin wall. The world loses much when it abandons Christian principles and when the Church becomes weak.

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Guidance

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. ~ Matt 5:17

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - God's Law was received by Moses at Mt Sinai (Deut 5:1). That Law became the basis for all prophecies by Israel's Old Testament prophets. They could declare Israel's safety or culpability depending on how closely the nation had maintained The Law. Jesus, The Prophet, continued that practice by His constant use of The Law (Matt 23:23).

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - As a prophet greater than Moses, Jesus might have given new rules for us to follow (Deut 18:15). But instead we find that He declares the ongoing applicability of The Law as first given to Moses (Matt 5:17, Matt 23:23).

This is not to say that a person can be made acceptable to God by keeping The Law. Faith in Christ's atoning sacrifice on The Cross is the only thing which makes us acceptable to God (Gal 2:16). And yet New Testament scripture expresses the firm requirement that we will be keepers of The Law (Rom 8:3-4). Knowing The Law and how it applies can be a daunting thing for the new Christian, this is why God gave the promise that He would use His Spirit to write His law on our hearts (Jer 31:33).

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - The first sin occurred when Adam and Eve took to themselves the capacity to determine right from wrong (Gen 3:5). Ever since that time mankind has been afflicted with the desire to frame right from wrong according to our own thinking. If the Christian does not live in reverence and obedience to what God has defined as right and wrong (The Law) how can we expect the non-Christian to see the need for repenting from setting their own standards (Rom 6:1-2)?

Walking Holy

But that you, speaking the truth in love, may in all things grow up to Him who is the Head, even Christ; ~ Eph 4:15

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - It is natural that God speaks the truth in love because scripture tells us that God is love (1 John 4:8) and that Jesus is truth (John 14:6). Thus when God speaks, He speaks in a manner entirely consistent with His own character. He never deceives. He is never anything other than loving, even in His justice and judgements or corrections to His saints (Job 5:17).

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - In attending church we should expect to hear the Scriptures preached in truth and love (Eph 4:15). Preaching which is all "love and grace" will not challenge or correct our sin habits or wrong attitudes. The truth of God must both caution and inspire us to be like Him (Ps 17:15) and to live so as to conform ourselves and our society to His image. If preaching is weak we will be weak. If preaching is "self" focussed then we will be self-focussed. And if preaching is loveless, we will be critical and loveless.

The truth must be preached in love so that we will grow up in Christ.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - Truth-speaking should not be confined to church. It should be part of our everyday character. There are certain times in our day when everyone around us seems intent on gossip or smutty conversation. The Christian life is not about being prudish but it is a life which seeks to honour Christ at all times. It can be hard, but there may be occasions when a Christian has to refrain from joining a conversation because it is smutty or because it is gossip and not about matters of a truthful or loving nature (Eph 4:22). It is not a conversation which Jesus would be pleased to join.

Dominion

That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses. ~ Matt 8:17

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - Because Jesus took sickness to The Cross to defeat it's impact, we can know that God is not the author of sickness. Even so He can use sickness for His purposes.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - I can look to God for good health since sickness has been taken out of the way at Calvary.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - I can pray for those that are sick and expect that Jesus will bring healing to them. I can pray for those who are in difficult circumstances and expect that Jesus will bring assistance to them.

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Witness

This Jesus has God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.
~ Acts 2:32

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - These words (Acts 2:32) come from the first public sermon preached following Christ's resurrection. The apostle Peter was the preacher and his sermon was a testimony of what he had seen and knew to be true. He gave an eyewitness account that Christ's grave was empty.

The apostle Peter gave this firsthand witness many times. On one of the later occasion he added comment concerning the Holy Spirit saying: "And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God has given to them that obey him." (Acts 5:32). In this way Peter indicated that the presence of God's Holy Spirit was an integral element of his witness because he had learned that it is the Holy Spirit who ministers the truth of The Cross to the hearts of men and women.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Every Christian is a witness to Christ's resurrection. This witness is based on two things. It is based on the objective historic truth of Christ's resurrection as spoken of by the apostles and as recorded in the scriptures. Further it is based on the personal experience of being born again and having the Holy Spirit dwelling within us.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - It is interesting how people believe what they read in newspapers. They are confident they have the truth because a man or woman wrote it or because a certain editor approved it. Yet these same people will dispute the historic accuracy of the Bible. Editors seldom give their lives in defence of what they have written. Yet nearly everyone of the 12 apostles were martyred because they would not change their testimony about Christ being risen.

We can live certain and witness confidently because the gospel speaks of a real historic figure, Jesus Christ, whose life and works were known not only to the apostles but to ancient historians as well.

Guidance

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.
~ Ps 119:105

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - God's word is a gift to mankind. There is no holy book anything like it because there is no god anything like the God of the Bible. It is a measure of the extent to which God is a personal God that He should offer His word to us in a way that it provides guidance. It is a lamp to our path through life (Ps 119:105).

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - It is the Christian's joy to find the Holy Spirit using the scriptures from their daily Bible reading to speak into the most ordinary of circumstances. Expect God to guide via His Word.

However it should be noted that The Word is a lamp not a floodlight. Faith is the thing which pleases God, so sometimes His guidance is sufficient to show us the direction to travel but not everything which lies ahead. If God's guidance seems a little obscure then obey as much of it as you have. A more full light will grow as your obedience bears fruit.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - There is a tendency for the atheist to see religion as a crutch for the weak minded or as social cement which is useful for building cohesive communities. By this reasoning, the guidance provided by The Gospel is a matter of pragmatism or convenience. The Gospel's only real value is in making believers feel good about themselves and helping them with an explanation for why life is the way that it is.

Thus to the atheist, the only really important thing in life is "what works". There is very little which is noble about a mindset which places functionality as the prime reason for everything.

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Intimacy/Relationship

Can a woman forget her suckling child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet I will not forget you. ~ Is 49:15

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - God forgets nothing. God has not forgotten His creation. In particular God has not forgotten us. In the same way that a mother can't forget the child to whom she gave birth, God can't forget the creation which He made.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - A loving mother protects her young child from harm (Is 49:15). In a crisis she will use her own body as a shield to keep a child from shock or tragedy. She will bear the blows and knocks that would assault her child. With the same tenderness and courage, Jesus is the Burden Bearer for our sins. He took the blows of the punishment for sin that was due to us.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - There is a tendency in the heart of man to walk away from a problem. It takes courage and compassion to stay committed to someone when they are constantly neglecting you or insulting you. Yet this is what Jesus did by bearing our sins. He became the world's sin bearer because God would not and could not forget His creation (John 3:16).

Guidance

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. ~ Ps 23:4

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - As Good Shepherd, God carries both rod and staff (Ps 23:4). The one is for protection against attacks from animals. The other is used as a stick to prod or nudge us in the correct direction. God is a God of comfort and a God of correction.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - If we are troubled or endangered by a person or an enemy, we look to Jesus who has promised to keep us safe and protected no matter what the nature of the conflict. If we are in trouble or endangered because of our own sinful stupidity, God will bring correction to our lives. Correction is unpleasant while it lasts, but it yields the beneficial fruit of righteousness if heeded (Heb 12:7).

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - We need not worry about what others will do to us or say about us because we enjoy the protection and guidance of the Good Shepherd.

Work & Society

Therefore go and disciple all nations, baptizing them to the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ~ Matt 28:19

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - All authority in heaven has been given to Jesus Christ (Matt 28:18). He is Lord of all. Because Christ's authority is over both heaven and earth, the whole of the earth will eventually come to acknowledge His Lordship, even as heaven now does. Christ's kingdom is on the increase (Is 9:7). It is a kingdom based on the Trinitarian nature of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Christ's commandment (Matt 28:19) was not just that individuals would become disciples, but that whole nations would be disciplined according to His word and ways.

This means that the Christian's job is to act as an ambassador for the kingdom which we represent. We are to display the power, love and justice of that kingdom in a way that others will want to receive the same thing. This is a task of enormous scope. It means that we are to live in a way which anticipates the transformation of whole families, communities, societies and institutions. Jesus is Lord of all not just men's souls.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - The Christian's role is to be salt and light to the world (Matt 5:13-14). The gospel is not about heaven only it is about the world as well. Jesus taught us to pray "Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt 6:10).

It is our duty to emulate Christ's service and wisdom so that the places where we live, study, work and play are transformed into places of grace, power and justice. It is God who causes the transformation but it is the Christian who acts as the example and catalyst for such transformation.

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Worship

The heaven and the earth shall pass away, but My Words shall not pass away. ~ Matt 24:35

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - It is amazing to think that God's word is eternal. One scripture says that God has even exalted His Word above His Name (Ps 138:2). The reason for this relates to God's integrity. God is not a man that he should lie or make an error (Num 23:19). Jesus Christ is unchangeable and so He, being The Word, means that the scriptures also are unchangeable.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Because Jesus' word stands forever we can be assured that the promises He has given us stand forever. He will forever love. He will forever forgive. He will be forever close to us. Not only do His promises stand forever but so too do His commandments. Old Testament law is based around the ten commandments as given by God to Moses at Mt Sinai. The moral requirements of these commandments are eternal and apply in full today. To these commandments Jesus added two further rules. He told us that every Christian should:

- 1) be baptized, (Mark 16:16), and
- 2) participate in communion (John 6:53).

Neither of these activities replace the need for faith. They are of themselves acts of obedience which expresses our faith in Christ's saving work and our union with Him via The Church.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - The world does not treat God's word as eternal. Instead every person does what seems right in their own eyes. Our culture urges that each of us are entitled to decide for ourselves what is true and right. It is very hard to build a cohesive society on this basis because one person thinks that it is OK to resolve a dispute by violence but the other doesn't? Ultimately the prevailing view will not be one of principle (since all truth is a personal choice) but of power.

It seems tolerant to argue that there is no absolute truth but tyranny lies at the base of this assumption.

Intimacy/Relationship

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, so that where I am, you may be also. ~ John 14:3

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - God's heart of love for His creation can be summed up by Jesus' words: "I will . . . receive you to Myself, so that where I am, you may be also" (John 14:3). It is true that God is far far above us and transcends His creation. But we worship a God who is also imminent, meaning that He is close to us.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Jesus desires that we will ever be with Him and yet it is a good question for the Christian to ask themselves: "If there were no promise of heaven, would I still be a Christian?"

Salvation is not fire-insurance which ensures that we escape hell. Our Saviour Jesus Christ is not some spare tyre that we can take out from our car-boot if we become stalled on the journey of our lives. The thing which makes heaven beautiful is the excellence of Christ's character. If we do not find His character enthralling and beautiful now, such that we aspire to be like Him and fully live that character today, then it will be pointless for us to go where He is for eternity. If the prospect of Christ's character is not what truly motivates us then it is a simple matter to pray and ask Jesus to draw closer to us in a way wherein this happens.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - Some people imagine heaven as being one vast holiday or recreation facility. They expect that they will spend eternity indulging their laziness and sloth. The bliss that heaven offers is the very presence of the living God. The intensity of God's holiness is so vast that the sinner would be more uncomfortable in heaven than he would be in hell.

Intimacy/Relationship

He that speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but he that prophesies edifies the church. ~ 1 Cor 14:4

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - God loves the Church. It is the material/physical extension of Himself on the earth and in time. For this reason He edifies or builds up the Church via diverse ministry gifts (Eph 4:11-12) and a diversity of spiritual gifts such as tongues and prophecy (1 Cor 14:4). A strong prayer life is the way that God builds up individuals in the Church. Strong individuals are then able to combine to constitute a strong church.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - To be edified means to grow in the awareness of God's presence. Praying in tongues does that because it builds up our hearts with a sense of God's love (1 Cor 14:4).

It is a gift which God is pleased to give. Whilst tongues can come with great emotion and ecstasy, in most cases it bubbles up quietly from within the Christian and flows out of their heart as living waters (John 7:38). Tongues are not a measure of spirituality. Jesus told us that the mark of a mature Christian is the fruit of love, joy, peace, righteousness, faithfulness and temperance in their lives (Gal 5:22-23 & Matt 7:16)

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - Persons who have not known the experience of praying in tongues imagine that charismatic Christians are weird or flakey. They imagine that the person praying has lost their mind to some out-of-body experience.

Praying in tongues does not always lead to a heart-warming experience of God's presence. Sometimes such prayer will feel quite matter-of-fact, non-ecstatic and unemotional. There are varying degrees of Holy Spirit prayer in this realm. What is clear is that the Holy Spirit has released the person into a new language and into a realm of being able to hear/sense His leading more clearly.

Work & Society

And He said to them, Why did you look for Me? Do you not know that I must be about My Father's business? ~ Luke 2:49

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - When Jesus was a young boy He remained in Jerusalem to discuss the scriptures with the religious leaders but He didn't tell His parents what He was doing. So His parents came looking for Him. Not even Christ's own mother, Mary, or father, Joseph, appreciated the true nature of their son's business. It is understandable that, as a mother, Mary should be grieved that Jesus had not travelled back to Nazareth as an obedient son should have done. But Jesus served a higher authority (Luke 2:49).

Jesus came as a man to fulfil His Father's plan. God The Father entrusted Jesus with the most serious project in the whole of eternity. Jesus was required to walk as a human but not sin in any way at anytime during His entire life (1 John 3:5) so that He would be a satisfactory offering for sinful man at Calvary.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Jesus did His Father's work (John 5:36). We too should understand that work can be an offering to God. There are times when obeying The Father may cause confusion or disappointment to our friends and family. Yet we must be obedient. Jesus has experienced the difficulty of having to obey the heavenly Father in a way that offends or hurts earthly friends and family.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - Most people view their work as their own. The Christian thinks differently. God created us. Our work and the fruit of our labour belong to Him. Our work is worship toward God.

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Worship

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. ~ 1 Cor 11:26

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - Jesus is coming again. The New Testament records His birth, ministry, death and resurrection, all of which had been prophesied many hundreds of years beforehand. But the risen Christ will come again. He is coming to receive a kingdom replete with His glory and resurrection power.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - The communion service is a time when the Church looks back at what Jesus did and looks forward to His second coming. This second coming will include a time of judgement in which men and women will be judged, in the first instance according to the extent of their faith in Christ (Rev 21:27), and in the second instance according to the deeds which they have done on this earth (John 20:12-13).

The Christian takes communion to remember a) that Christ's death for us has delivered us from sin and judgement and b) that He will come again.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - The world scoffs at the promise of Christ's second coming. They say that things have not changed in the thousands of years since he was first on earth, why should anyone believe that He is reigning so as to ready the earth for His return? ~ They are wrong.

Prayer

But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit ~ Jude 1:20

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - The Christian life begins and ends with God. It is God who gives us the faith that we need in order to become saved (Eph 2:8-10). And when it comes to nurturing that faith, it is God who gives us of His Holy Spirit to help us to pray (Jude 1:20). In all things Jesus is the beginning and the end. He is the author and the finisher of our faith (Heb 12:2).

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - It is good to pray in tongues (1 Cor 14:4) but not everyone has the gift of tongues. This doesn't mean that only some can pray in the Spirit. Praying in the Spirit is not the same as praying in tongues. Every Christian who is prepared to quieten their hearts before they pray can be lead by The Spirit.

God is all knowing so when it comes to prayer, don't think that He has to be told all of what we know about the problem. Prior to praying about a matter ask God how or what to pray. If an idea comes to you and it seems to comply with scripture then step out in faith and pray that way. Sometimes you will find that a real flow develops. This flow is the Holy Spirit aiding you in the prayer (Rom 8:26-27).

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - Jesus tells the parable of two men who went to the temple to pray (Luke 18:10-14). One man prayed a long prayer that made him seem very spiritual. The other man prayed a simple prayer, asking for God to forgive him. Selfish people pray selfish prayers. The world wants to be impressed by appearances, even when it comes to prayer and the one saying it. God looks on the heart and responds to that.

Walking Holy

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. ~ Heb 11:3

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - God spoke the world into existence. There was no universe or time until He created them (Gen 1:1). As such God lives outside of time. He is eternal.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - The cosmos was "framed by the Word of God" (Heb 11:3). The same authority and power that existed in God's word as He spoke the cosmos into being is the same authority and power that we partake of as we read and recite His word. It important therefore that we make a habit of memorizing scriptures. It important too that we speak God's word back to Him when we are in a circumstance which requires His help.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - The world prefers to think that the starting point for the universe is the fact of its existence. It sees no creating personal God who formed the cosmos. Matter, not a Person, is the start of all things. In this way the world sees no need for any sense of obligation to God. But whereas the Christian is bound to other people by the fact that all things started in the person of God, the atheist is bound to others only by chance. There is no starting point and there are no absolutes to morals or ethics in a materialist worldview. All is relative to itself.

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Walking Holy

For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. ~ Matt 24:24

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - God is powerful, very powerful and yet the measure of godliness is not a person's spiritual power but the character of their lives. This is why Jesus said that the way to identify a true prophet is: "By their fruits you shall know them" (Matt 7:15-16). God is happy to be known by His might and power but it is the intimacy of His love and character which His greatest attribute.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - We ought not mistake miracle working power and prophetic ability for godliness (Matt 24:24). Jesus tells us that on the judgement day there will be people present themselves as having done marvellous works, miracles and prophecies in His Name and yet He will reject them as sinners (Matt 7:22-23). The reason is simple. These people have valued power ahead of character. They have abandoned God's Law as revealed in the Old Testament.

God uses His Law to shape a love for Christ in us (Rom 7:22-25). God is much more interested in what He is doing in our lives than what He can do through our lives.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - The world continues to offer many false prophets. The list of philosophers, seers and prophets who have established followings, religions and laws after their own thinking or revelation is enormous. Some have been miracle workers, others have been wise men but all fall short of Jesus Christ. The world likes to think that all religions are the same but there is only one ultimate Prophet of God, Jesus Christ who told us "no one comes to The Father but by Me" (John 14:6).

Guidance

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem ~ Matt 2:1

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - Three men came from Persia to worship Jesus because they knew when and where He was to be born. Christ's arrival in Jerusalem some 2000 years ago was the result of God's careful planning. His guidance of the three wise men to Christ's place of birth was part of God's intention to have heaven and earth worship Jesus Christ. This honour to Jesus the King commenced at His birth and will continue throughout eternity.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - We worship a King who has a plan for the world and for our lives. Therefore His guidance for us comes from His authority in order that we might learn to exercise authority in meekness and service.

There are times in our Christian life that God will place us at the head of what He is doing. God will guide us into a position of responsibility or leadership in order that we learn what it means to grow in His humility and authority.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - Because Jesus is King, the affairs of the world are at His command. He guides all things, even the affairs of nations to the achievement of His purposes. As scripture says: "Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance (Is 40:15).

Walking Holy

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ~ Eph 2:8

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - It is God's pleasure to give us faith. Faith comes to us from Him by His grace to us. We don't earn it. It is His gift to us. We are saved from sin, death and hell because we believe in Him but we believe in Him because He came looking for us to give us the faith that we need (Eph 2:8). Thus God is sovereign and ruler. He causes and helps us to walk holy lives before Him.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Having begun in faith, we are to continue in that way (Gal 3:3). Having begun by virtue of a gift given to us we are to continue in that way. Thus true holiness starts with who God is rather than with a list of rules about what we think is important. This Christ given faith leads us to live productive and loving lives, because faith without works is meaningless (James 2:14).

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - Every person who has ever taken the medicine that a doctor has prescribed has walked in faith. They believe that the medicine will help even though they won't know for certain until the treatment has been fully implemented. The non-Christian walks by trusting in facts revealed to them by their senses. The Christian walks by trusting in facts revealed to them by God's Holy Spirit.

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Work & Society

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. ~ John 14:27

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - It is true that Jesus came to save souls but He also came to set right sin's impact. He said of His ministry: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bound" (Luke 4:18).

God the Holy Spirit will not rest until all evil has been both vanquished and remedied.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Jesus offers peace but distinguishes it from the world's peace (John 14:27). What is the difference?

In God's economy and cosmos, there can be no peace where there is oppression. Most men and women can sleep at night even though a vast number of the world's children are poor, have no clean drinking water, are exploited and are without education or hope. This is the world's peace. It sleeps comfortably in the face of such injustice.

Not so Jesus. The peace of Christ is not lassitude and laziness in the face of sickness, inequity and injustice. It is the peace of seeing Him change things as He uses the Christian in the midst of the struggle between Christ's kingdom and the powers of darkness.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - Peace is a rare commodity in the world. Gil Elliot's "Twentieth Century Book of the Dead" was published in 1972, only three quarters into that Century. In it the author calculated that the deaths attributable to wars, man-made famines, political aggression and ideologically driven terrorism totalled over 150 million, making it the bloodiest century in world history! This assessment cannot pass without the related observation that the 20th Century was a period of decreasing influence for the gospel and increasing influence of humanism in its various forms.

Worship

I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. ~ John 10:11

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - See what love Jesus has toward us. See what care He promises to show us. Jesus is so committed to His sheep that He has laid down His life for us (John 10:11). Surely there is no greater love than this, than that a man lay down his life for a friend (John 15:13).

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - The things that bind friends are the loves that they share. Friendships are built around all manner of common interest; from shared fondness for sport or music through to shared fondness of the same people.

If Jesus loves His sheep enough to die for them then we too must stand ready to love His sheep. The Church is not perfect but it is Christ's sheepfold, therefore we should do our best to love those that He loves even if they are fractious or rude. There are many reasons for staying away from church, but none of them are good ones. As scripture says we should not forsake gathering together as church (Heb 10:25).

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - One might ask whether Jesus died for the whole world or whether He died only for those that He knew would become His sheep? The full answer to this question entails an understanding of God's foreknowledge and sovereignty. Such things are beyond us! It is sufficient for us to realize that Jesus knows the end from the beginning, therefore whilst He bore the sin of the whole world (John 1:29), His sacrifice was specifically effective for those that He knew He would draw to Himself (John 15:16).

Walking Holy

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. ~ Rom 6:4

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - God The Father and God The Son co-operated in the resurrection (Acts 2:32). It is to the glory of God the Father that through the Son, Jesus, He would first create the earth and then defeat the impact of sin by re-creating it in the power of Christ's resurrection.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Christian baptism is an act of obedience to Christ's teachings. Jesus was baptized (Matt 3:13-17), so we too are baptized. More than that, going into the waters of baptism is an act of identification with Christ's death. Emerging from the waters of baptism is an identification with Christ's resurrection from the grave. Thus baptism is a public confession that the Christian is dead to sin but alive to Christ and therefore desiring and able to walk in newness of life.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - There are few things which cause the Christian as much trouble as baptism. It seems that the step of baptism signals a commitment to Christ which can agitate family and friends. Sometimes opposition, and in some countries outright persecution, comes at the time of baptism. The reason is simple, by baptism we make open testimony that we have left the kingdom of darkness, and that kingdom treats its departing citizens with the pride, anger and lovelessness that is characteristic of it.

Dominion

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. ~ John 18:36

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - At the time of His crucifixion, Jesus stood before a Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. Pilate had asked Jesus whether He was a king. Jesus replied that He was but that His kingdom was not based on fighting and power. His kingdom is "not of this world" (John 18:36) and its ways.

God is glorious and powerful and terrible in might. He could easily have sent angels to deliver Christ from being crucified (Matt 26:43). But He didn't because God's victory was to be won through Jesus' loving act of dying in our place.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - To live like Christ means to be victorious in the same manner. Because He defeated hatred and injustice via love, we too must be ready love our enemies and leave any sense of vengeance to God (Rom 12:19).

But remember Jesus is not only our example He is also our ability. We do not have to face the task of loving our enemies in our own strength. Jesus has been through the same trial. He will help us to do what love requires, even when it's difficult.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - Hatred and unforgiveness become prisons in our lives. Such bitterness can poison hearts and lives to the extent of causing physical and mental illness, even death. The damage of unforgiveness for the hurt in one relationship can flow into other relationships so that we become unable to trust and even unable to love.

The world's ways of power and revenge may seem attractive but they are counter-productive.

Intimacy/Relationship

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. ~ Phil 4:6

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - It is a measure of the infinite capacity of God's knowledge that He can receive the millions of prayers that are put before Him each day (Is 55:9). The capacity of His knowledge to receive such a volume of prayer is no less than the capacity of His love to intimately and individually respond to them!

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Our faith and confidence in God's love for us should lead us into a place of prayerfulness where we are anxious about nothing (Phil 4:6).

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - It has been said that there are no atheists amongst the soldiers in a foxhole. There is a deep tendency in all people to look to God in a crisis.

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Dominion

For I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, lest you should be wise within yourselves; that blindness in part has happened to Israel, until the fullness of the nations has come in. ~ Rom 11:25

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - The nation of Israel was appointed by God, that through Abraham, they would be a blessing to all nations of the earth (Gen 18:18). This occurred at a time in the earth's history when all people had forsaken The Creator God and fallen into the worship of false gods (Josh 24:2). Israel was set aside by God to be the prophets of God's law and redemption (Deut 4:5-8). Even though the nation was not entirely faithful to its call, God's providence ensured that Israel did give rise to The Prophet, Jesus Christ.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - It was God who chose Israel (Deut 7:6) not the other way around. In the same manner, Jesus tells us: "You have not chosen me but I have chosen you" (John 15:16).

The Holy Spirit moves where He wills (John 3:8) not where men decide He should go. We are brought to Christ and born again by the will of God (James 1:18) not by our own determination. It is true that each person who comes to faith in Christ has to make a choice to follow Him but that choice flows from the recognition of the beauty of The Cross, and at root the realization of the wonder of Calvary is a ministry or gift from God's Holy Spirit.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - Even though God used Israel as the nation and location for the birth of Christ, many of the Jews rejected Jesus. Even today many Jews continue to reject Him as their Messiah. The Jewish authorities that crucified Christ, their Prophet, were the same ones who set about persecuting the early Christians (Acts 8:1). Alas in later centuries, Christians too, have a history of persecuting Jews.

For all of this it is God's intention that all will come together as one new man (Eph 2:15). Christian and Jew share in the Old Testament, but the division between these two religions will continue until God, in His own timing, dissolves the hardness of heart which has come upon the Jews (Rom 11:25) and they are lead by The Spirit beyond Moses to Christ.

Witness

And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation. ~ 2 Cor 5:18

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - A priest acts as intermediary or point of contact between God and man. The priest represents the human to the divine and the divine to the human. Because Jesus is both God and man, He is the perfect High Priest of our faith.

God has reconciled us to Himself. It was in Christ that God reached out to us and brought us back to Himself (Jer 31:3). It is God who, in His love for us and in His desire to honour Christ's sacrifice, ensures that we remain reconciled (or connected) to Himself.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Because the Christian knows of the forgiveness of Christ and the joy of His love, it is natural for us to live life and to speak in a way which points to Jesus as the means of right connection to God. At one time the apostle Peter preached so as to urge those that crucified Christ to be reconciled to Him (Acts 2:32). We too today continue that ministry of reconciliation.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - "If you haven't got it, you can't give it away". Because the non-Christian does not understand the extent of God's love in Christ they find it hard to forgive. How often do we see disagreements between friends and family become more bitter and intractable because neither is able to make the first step of forgiving the other.

In the same way as Christ is the source of our forgiveness, the Christian is meant to be an example of forgiveness to those around them. They are ministers of reconciliation in a way and to a degree that the world can't muster.

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Dominion

You prepare a table
before me in the
presence of my
enemies; you anoint
my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
~ Ps 23:5

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - Satan is God's enemy. Satan is also an enemy to the souls of men (John 8:44). It is an act of victory to prepare a meal in the presence of one's enemies. For someone to sit at table while having those who had formerly opposed them watching on, is the mark of a very confident victor. Jesus, our Good Shepherd, is a very confident victor.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Life as a Christian would be a lot easier if we didn't have to wrestle with an enemy who hates us (Eph 6:11-13). It is tempting to think that a loving God would be one who would keep the enemy away rather than pause to eat a meal in the midst of the enemy's domain (Ps 23:5).

But God is confident in His ability to see us through every situation and temptation. He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can deal with (1 Cor 10:13). Satan is a real and disgusting foe, but we are not to be afraid of him.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - Most non-Christians view the occult world as mere superstition. The Christian knows Satan to be a roaring lion seeking to devour whomever he can (1 Peter 5:8). It is important to understand The Devil's devices, but it is unwise to go looking for him.

Intimacy/Relationship

For if, when we were
enemies, we were
reconciled to God
by the death of His
Son, much more,
being reconciled, we
shall be saved by His
life. ~ Rom 5:10

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - Jesus taught that we are to love our enemies (Matt 5:44). He did not teach this as mere theory. He lived this out in actuality, forgiving those that crucified Him (Luke 23:34). More than that, He laid down His life for us when we as sinners were His enemies opposed to His dominion and reign.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - The life of the Christian is marked by two steps. Firstly we are justified by Christ's death. Secondly we are saved or sanctified by His life.

The distinction between justification and sanctification can be hard to grasp. The distinction is the same as that between title and process. Consider the young woman who has just given birth to her first child. She now has the title of "mother". It doesn't matter whether she has one or a dozen children, with the first child she attained the status of mother and nothing can change that. Even so with each passing year, each additional mother's day, each subsequent child and each stage of caring for her child(ren), the woman grows in motherhood. After several children and several decades she is a much wiser, more experienced mum, but she is no more a mother in title than she was than at the birth of her first child.

The Christian is justified and holy, once and for all by Christ's death at Calvary. We are sanctified, and grow in holiness as life and the Holy Spirit instruct them in what it means to belong to Jesus. Because of Calvary we have the title of 'holy' and because of life in The Spirit we are in the process of becoming 'holy'.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - When man thinks about God, he tends to create Him in his image. The non-Christian imagines that God is a lot like himself but bigger or wiser or more loving. At root the non-believer imagines that God is as careless about sin as all sinners are. That's why scripture says of the non-Christian "you thought that I was like yourself", but then in the next breath cautions "but I will rebuke you" (Ps 50:21).

Because the non-believer doesn't know or care about God, he/she imagines that the carelessness is reciprocal. They imagine that God doesn't care about their sins and their insults to His glory and divine order. All the while they are God's enemies. Yet Jesus died for such enemies.

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Witness

And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. ~ Acts 16:25

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - God lives outside of time, therefore He is always ready to hear our prayers and to receive our praises. Paul and Silas did not wait until daytime to pray and praise. Neither did they wait until things got better or improved before praising God (Acts 16:25).

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - At the time of this verse Paul and Silas had been put in jail because their preaching of Christ had upset devotees of other gods. Not everyone is happy to hear that Christ died for them. The good news of Calvary upsets people because it reminds them that we are all sinners and that sin must be dealt with. Sometimes it upsets them because it challenges the assumption that our own efforts are sufficient to get us to heaven. In the case of Paul and Silas it challenged the people that their gods were not really sovereign.

We must learn to praise God in all circumstances; even when we are ill, or when things go wrong, or we are being challenged by others for our faith and obedience.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - As a result of Paul and Silas praising God, the jailer who imprisoned them became a baptized believer.

People will sometimes make things difficult for the Christian because they want to know whether the message of Christ's love is real. Often our love, faith and praise in times of difficulty are a real witness to the world.

Prayer

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. ~ Phil 4:6

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - Why should God who has all knowledge expect us to ask for His help (Phil 4:6)? Why wouldn't the all-knowing, all-loving God save us the bother of explaining our needs to Him? Prayer is not for God's benefit but for ours. Prayer and petition and thanksgiving are our daily reminder that God is sovereign.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - If we forget prayer, we forget that God is sovereign. To forget that God's sovereignty is to assert ourselves as sovereign in one of two ways. Either we try to fix things and live life in our own strength without reference to God, or we expect God to act as our servant by meeting every need at our whim, without our even asking in reverential fear. Jesus is our burden bearer but He is not our slave.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - Jesus gladly lifts the burden of our anxieties. Scripture tells us "Caste your cares on Him" (1Peter 5:7) and "be anxious for nothing" (Phil 4:6). Even so it is wise to consider the reason for our anxieties. Sometimes we are anxious because we have sinned. Our adverse circumstances may be the result of our rebellion against proper authority or our selfishness or the cost and guilt of secret sin habits. Jesus will lift these burdens but we too must repent lest we return to the weight of such sins (Prov 26:11).

Work & Society

For He has delivered us from the power of darkness and has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son ~ Col 1:13

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - The kingdom of God is a kingdom of light. The kingdom of Satan is a kingdom of darkness. Whereas Christ rules in generosity and love, the enemy of our souls is a murder, liar and thief (John 8:44). It is the work of Christ to defeat Satan in all of his realms, works and devices (1 John 3:8).

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - We live in a cosmos which is both material and spiritual. Jesus is King of both realms. Demons know Him and tremble at His power (James 2:19). They are compelled to obey instructions that are given in His name (Mark 16:17). It is a certain and sure legacy of Christ's Cross that we can displace demons and their evil influence (Acts 5:16 & 16:18) for He has made an open shame of them at Calvary (Col 2:15).

The Christian doesn't have to look for a fight in the spiritual realm. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit to know when we have to grapple with an evil spirit (1 Cor 12:10). Spiritual warfare is in part a matter of experience and training but it is mostly the result of being lead by the Holy Spirit.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - Satan is a deceiver those that promote his kingdom may at first seem successful, but inevitably they become untrustworthy, joyless and deeply troubled.

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Guidance

The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee. ~ Jer 31:3

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - God's love is everlasting (Jer 31:3). It reaches from before the beginning of time, since there was not time until God created it (Gen 1:1), to beyond the end of this age and the next. God's love is everlasting.

Not only is it everlasting in a universal or cosmic sense. It is everlasting in a personal sense, since we are told that "I have loved YOU with an everlasting love". God's love for US reaches from before the beginning of time, to beyond the end of this age and the next.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - God's love being eternal means that He has loved us, does love us and will ever love us, And because He has loved us, does love us and ever will love us, He has ordered our steps in lovingkindness so that we have been, are being and will be, drawn closer and closer and closer into Him.

The end and focus of God's guidance is Himself. We experience certain joys in life. We struggle through certain difficulties. We walk through different challenges of faith. But the eternal purpose of all of God's guidance is not just our happiness or victory or our personal fulfilment, it is Himself. For in Him is all joy, victory and fulfilment.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - Scripture tells us "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). Given that we are being drawn to God, it should be expected that we are being drawn away from the world. On this basis we might assume that the world is evil.

This is not so. When God made the heavens and the earth He declared them to be good (Gen 1:31). Being drawn closer to God does not mean that we are to escape the world. It means that we are to leave off the way that the world does things. The world's methods are characterised by things such as selfishness, lovelessness, isolation, control, gossip, theft and envy. It is these things that we are to avoid.

Intimacy/Relationship

For you were as sheep going astray, but now you are turned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. ~ 1 Peter 2:25

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - Sheep have an amazing capacity for stupidity. There are times when they are entirely unaware of the dangers which their wanderings have led them into. So a caring shepherd keeps careful watch over his sheep to keep them from the stupidity of their own ways. God is more concerned with our souls (1 Peter 2:25) than we are. There are times when we blindly go after things that He knows will harm us in the long run. In His sovereignty He guides and protects us from our own folly.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - The apostle Peter writes "you are now turned" (1 Peter 2:25) as if we, the sheep, have guided ourselves back to God? We return to the Shepherd of our souls not because of our own wisdom but because our Shepherd and Overseer knows how to draw us back to Himself in a way that we are happy to return. This is why Jesus says "My sheep know My voice" (John 10:27).

It is a strange fact in the majesty and goodness of God that He is always sovereign, ever getting the glory for helping us to be holy, and yet we are always accountable (and rewarded!) for our actions and desires.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - It is an odd thing that people will often blame God when things go wrong. "If there is a God why does He allow"

Such attitudes betray a certain inconsistency. Ask such people whether God should allow tragedy and they will give an emphatic 'no'. Ask them whether they are willing that God should guide their souls and every aspect of their lives and they will also give the same emphatic 'no'. It seems that God the Good Shepherd is allowed only limited authority. He is to be Overseer of events and the lives of others, but not the life and soul of non-believers as individuals?

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Dominion

And behold, I have given the sons of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, the service of the tabernacle of the congregation. ~ Num 18:21

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - God is eternal. Therefore if the human race is to praise Him according to His character then we should praise Him unceasingly. However this is not very practical because if we all spent all day in church or reading the scriptures, then there'd be no one to grow the food that we need or manufacture the products that make life more liveable.

For this reason God appoints certain people to be priests or pastors or ministers before Him. It is their job to lead in worship. And yet they too need to eat. So God has further determined that there should be an income for them from those that are not called to be in the ministry. Scripture calls this income to the church; "the tithe" because it was set by God as being one-tenth of the persons income. Ministers also have to pay a tithe on their income.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Money is often very close to our hearts. In the same way as Jesus gave His all to redeem us, He invites us to give our all in grateful obedience. The tithe (or participation in church offerings) can be a test of our affections. God doesn't need our money. He created all things and they already belong to Him (Ps 24:1). The tithe is an act of God's grace which allows us to participate in what He is doing on the face of the earth.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - The non-Christian views church finances and property with suspicion. Because Christ is a High Priest over everyone forever, those that do not honour Him with their tithe, even the non-Christian, will have to give account at the last judgement for their theft.

Even so there are many times through out history when the church has brought shame on itself by the imprudent or self-indulgent use of the tithe. Those that fail to give God His tithe will answer for theft but those that have abused the use of God's tithe will also have to answer for waste and neglect.

Guidance

Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. ~ 2 Cor 10:5

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - God is eternal and infinite. For this reason He thinks all of His thoughts at once. God doesn't have to 'think' about being loving. He doesn't 'think' about doing loving things for us. He "IS" love (1 John 4:8). Neither does God have to think of what it means to be Lord and Sovereign. He just "IS"! God is the ultimate and eternal being.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Humans are not so. We are finite therefore we tend to think one thought at a time (except perhaps for mothers ~ who seem to know all things at once). Humans need a logical framework or model within which to understand things and live life.

Before becoming a Christian our model was based on man's wisdom and this is a wisdom that has been damaged by the impact of sin. Jesus Christ is the sum and totality of the expressed revealed wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:24). Being Christian means learning to re-think in a way that children have to learn (Matt 18:3).

The word of God is the means by which we bring all thoughts into captivity to Christ. As we read The Bible each day we learn more of the character of God. This becomes our guide. The apostle Paul writes that we are to bring every thought and philosophy and worldview into captivity to a person (2 Cor 10:5), the Lord Jesus Christ. As we read the Bible, we think about what it says and then we reason as to its meaning. But in the final analysis the wisdom of God will reflect His character. And He is a personal God. The Bible is not a book of rules but a handbook or guide to defining life's relationships.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - The Christian differs from the non-Christian because their confidence is not in what they know but who they know. An ancient Greek philosopher (Protagoras) coined the phrase "Man is the measure of all things".

Because the Holy Spirit has brought the life of Christ to us, the Christian is able to "know" in a manner which is outside the thinking of the world. Whereas all human philosophy is man-based because it starts and ends with man, the Christian approach to life and thought is birthed from outside man. It begins and ends with God.

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Last Things

Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is. ~ Rev 22:12

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - God is just. It is in His eternal nature to be just. This means that it is not possible for Him to let wickedness go unpunished. In fact, it was in His justice that He sent Jesus to The Cross to pay the price for our sins (Rom 3:26). We could not pay the price so Jesus did. The Cross was an act of love but it was also the means to satisfy God's justice. Those who do not avail themselves of God's free gift of love and justice in Christ's Cross retain their sins (John 3:18).

But being just there remains in God, the necessity for the punishment of the wicked. When Jesus comes at the end of time to judge the earth, He will bring reward for the righteous in Christ and the recompense of punishment for those outside Christ (Rev 22:11-12).

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - It is astounding that Jesus should come with rewards for those whom He saved. Were it not for His mercy we would have remained in sin, and yet He comes with rewards as though the righteousness that we have shown was something of our own doing!

Scripture tells us: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Cor 2:9)! How truly gracious is our God.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - The non-Christian resents that God will judge in justice at the end of the age. Yet even the world itself is not without a strong sense of justice. There are many stories of war criminals being pursued and prosecuted 40 and 50 years after they have committed their crimes. If people in the world, being sinful, continue to pursue justice across such a long time, how much more ought God who is eternal in His holiness also pursue an eternal justice?

Walking Holy

But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. ~ Ps 86:15

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - Love is such an integral part of God's make up, for Him to stop loving He would have to deny the essence of His Being and Self. (That is to say that He would have to stop being God?) Patience, mercy and grace are the measure and hallmarks of God's love (Ps 86:15). He never ceases to be gracious and merciful to His creation because He never ceases to be God.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Because the prime aspect of God's love is His mercy and forgiveness toward us we can be confident that God is ready to forgive us, no matter what we've done in the past or what mistakes we may make in the future.

Because He first loved us (1 John 4:19), the Christian is expected to love others and be the first to show mercy and forgiveness in a relationship.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - The world's definition of love often has a sense of self-gratification to it. We love a friend, on account of some qualities which give us pleasure whilst in their company. Or we might love someone who has done us a favour. In either case our own self lies at the bottom of the love.

God's love is different. He does not love in order to gain something. What can God be given that He doesn't already have? God's love is about sharing Himself as a person with the persons whom He has created. But sin stands as a barrier between ourselves and God. God's desire to share Himself with the world in the face of our sin means that the foremost aspect of God's love is His mercy toward us and forgiveness of us (Ps 86:15). God loves us too much to leave us in our sin.

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Worship

I am the Bread of life. ~ John 6:48

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - All people need food in order to stay alive. Jesus offers Himself as that food which not only sustains life, but is life. He is "the Bread of life" (John 6:48). Jesus is eternal, so the life that He gives is eternal.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Jesus referred to Himself as the source of living water (John 4:10). Yet a person cannot live on water alone. Jesus referred to Himself as the bread of life (John 6:48). Yet even bread and water are insufficient to sustain life for a long time. The human diet needs protein, which in most cultures, it gets from meat. Indeed Jesus offered Himself to us meat (John 6:53), by which He meant that we should partake of the same obedience to God that He lived (John 4:34).

How is the Christian to make practical use of all these spiritual foods? In the same way that our bodies require a diversity and combination of foods, our spiritual walk requires a range of activities. Like the spokes in a wheel there are four things that will keep our lives centred on Jesus:

- * Prayer (talking to Jesus about our needs and asking Him how we can follow Him better),
- * Fellowship (spending time with other Christians, especially by attending church and partaking of communion),
- * The Word (reading the Bible each day and hearing the scriptures preached), and
- * Witness (living life with others in a way which shares the words and demonstrates the values of Christ).

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - The common sandwich is said to have been invented by John Montagu, the 4th Earl of Sandwich (1718-1792). Folklore has it that Montagu ordered his valet to bring him the uncomplicated combination of meat tucked between two pieces of bread because he didn't want to leave the gambling table.

The 4th Earl may have popularized the simple sandwich but he was not its inventor. In fact far from being an addicted gambler, John Montagu was a very industrious man. During his life he held various military and political offices in Britain, including Postmaster General, First Lord of the Admiralty (twice) and Secretary of State. He was a patron of the arts and sponsored many performers and performances.

Alas he is most remembered not for what he did but for what he ate. So too the Christian's desire to serve God should result in us being known not for what we do but for the nature of our diet - a simple uncomplicated, bread and meat, obedience to God.

Prayer

But let him ask in faith, doubting nothing. For he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed. ~ James 1:6

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - Faith is not just the mental assent that something can or will happen. Faith is the basis on which we live. We may not think that the act of turning on a light-switch involves faith but we wouldn't do it if we didn't believe that electric current will run and the light globe will work. Similarly faith in God leads to an action based on Him and His promises. Faith and obedience are linked.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Let us not be double-minded. We won't receive anything from God if we are. We are to believe Him in a way that leads to obedience. If we find ourselves in a situation that seems impossible then we ought to pray. Having prayed we must then trust God that He will give us the help or understanding that we need in order to be obedient. The life of faith has to two steps; pray and act.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - There are some things in the world that we would like to pray about and see fixed immediately but change doesn't always occur straight away. We must continue to believe that God is working out His plan and dominion through us even if it seems that the world and its circumstances are not changing in the light of our prayers.

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Worship

Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness, and Your saints shout for joy. ~ Ps 132:9

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - God's priests are His priests. God's saints are His saints. We have been bought with a price and we belong to Him. That price is the Blood of Christ, paid for us in agony as He died on The Cross. We belong to Him entirely and exclusively, therefore we are to glorify God in our bodies and spirits (1 Cor 6:20) and we serve Him only. We are not slaves to the ideas and customs of men (1 Cor 7:23), nor to the dictates of sinful flesh (Rom 6:22-23).

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - "God's priests are clothed in righteousness" (Ps 132:9). This instructs us that the praises we offer must come from hearts that are holy. The Old Testament nation of Israel was called by God to be His priests. In this they were forbidden to worship false gods. Sadly they often fell away into idolatry and sin. Yet they continued to maintain the external practices of worshipping God.

God despised such hypocrisy and criticised them for their worship. He said: "This people worship me with their lips but their heart is far from me" (Is 29:13).

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - The Christian's walk is a walk of faith. The Christian relies entirely on Christ for their holiness. For this reason there will be times when we enter into praise even though we are keenly aware of our failings. We are clothed in God's righteousness not our own. We praise God because He is worthy, not because we feel worthy to praise Him. We do not have to be perfect in order to pray or worship, only repentant.

The world does not understand grace. It operates on the power of "self". Therefore the non-Christian will take delight in pointing out the Christian's faults to them. We do not worship God because we are perfectly holy. We worship Him because He is perfectly holy.

Walking Holy

But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. ~ Jer 31:33

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - God is a covenant making God (Jer 31:33). We understand a contract as being an arms length agreement between equals. Covenants are not the same as contracts. Covenants are an act of grace wherein the covenant maker indicates what they themselves will do under various circumstances. In history past conquering kings would make a covenant with a vanquished nation. The covenant advised the conquered people that the new king would protect them for which they had to pay their taxes. If they did what was required they would be blessed. If they failed on their part they would be punished. There was no equality in the relationship, only the grace of clear guidelines as to the terms of interaction between king and people.

There is no equality between God and mankind. God's covenant is one of blessing. It flows to us as a "new covenant" in His Blood (Mark 14:24, Heb 12:24) because of Christ having conquered the whole of creation at Calvary.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - A covenant is an act of grace to the ones receiving it because it tells them how they may relate to a mighty, victorious and terrible king. The new covenant between God and mankind in Christ is better than the old covenant between God and Israel in Moses (Heb 8:6).

The difference lies both in the nature of requirements and in the method of adherence. Whereas Israel had to remember The Law for themselves and then struggle to keep it in themselves, the Christian has The Law written on our hearts by the Holy Spirit and is assisted by that same Holy Spirit in the keeping of it (Ezek 36:25-27). It is He who sanctifies us by stirring our conscience to repentance (John 16:7-8) and then helps us to do what He has shown us (1 Cor 6:11).

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - There is a folly in the world that all religions are substantially the same. It is noteworthy that the founders of all non-Christian religions are dead. Mohammed is dead. Buddha is dead. Confucius is dead. Moses is dead. But Jesus is alive and reigns even today.

Yet this is not the major difference. All of the world's religions are based on what men and women must do to access God. The Christian religion is based entirely on what God has done for us in Christ.

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Guidance

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out into a place which he was afterward going to receive for an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he went. ~ Heb 11:8

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - Because faith is the thing that pleases God and because God wants us to increase in our love for Him, there will be many times when doing the will of God will involve a step of faith. Abraham took faith in God's promise to him that he would possess a land (Gen 12:7). Abraham travelled from his home through the land of Palestine but never fully received all of what God had promised him. Abraham's faith led to obedience, which in turn blessed God so much that he called Abraham - friend.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - When faced with a choice it often happens that there is an easy way or a hard way. In many instances the hard way is hard because it's new or unknown. Because Jesus is author and finisher of our faith, He will often initiate us into a new level of faith by bringing us into circumstances which are new and which call for faith. Sometimes it is hard because it challenges a sin habit or attitude.

But as we obey, He proves faithful by helping us to complete the obedience He has drawn us into. Don't be afraid of obeying Jesus (Is 43:1).

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - The way of the world is to maintain control at all times. People will seek guidance from astrology or tarot cards or other occult means. But these sources of information don't have to be obeyed. Thus the non-Christian remains their own god. They are turning to these guides for the sake of power and success, not for growth in righteous character. The world avoids faith because it doesn't want to lose control. Real faith is about submission and obedience.

Dominion

Since then the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise partook of the same; that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death (that is, the Devil) ~ Heb 2:14

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - It is important to note that Jesus was both man and God. He took on the same flesh and blood as we inhabit in order that He might live as we live and be tempted as we are. Yet Jesus did not sin. Having come in our form and yet being without sin, Jesus was the perfect substitute for us. What the Devil did through sin, Jesus undid through selfless obedience and love.

His death and resurrection won the victory over the Devil.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - The Devil is the enemy of the souls of mankind. It is his delight to trap us in sin and hold us in wrong attitudes and evil habits. But in Christ, even death has been defeated!

The Devil's grip has been broken. Jesus died to render the Devil's works ineffective (1 John 3:8). In the same way as light overcomes darkness, Christ's resurrection life overcomes death. We are not to live fearful of the Devil. Neither are we to live trapped in his snare and wickedness. The Christian has authority over the power of the devil.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - The United States of America entered World War II after Japan bombed Pearl Harbour. Many lives were lost because the US Navy was not prepared for the attack. They had taken their enemy for granted. The world tends not to be interested in Christ's victory because it too has taken the Devil for granted.

One of the Devil's best weapons is to lull people into assuming that he is a fictitious idea. No book or film has ever depicted the full extent of The Devil's hatred of mankind. Horror films portraying Satanic stories depict evil as being controllable by garlic or enchantments or the prudent placement of a silver cross. Only one thing can and has routed the enemy of our souls ~ The death and resurrection life of Jesus Christ!

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Worship

And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.
~ Rev 5:13

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - Jesus is the Lamb who bore our sins away. This act of righteous love means that blessing, and honour, and glory, and power are Christ's entitlements. The whole of creation worships Him. God expects, and is entitled to, worship from every creature. This is His right not only because He made us but also because of the beauty of His character, as revealed in His The Lamb-like self sacrifice for us.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - God is real therefore our praises must be real too. They must be praises from the heart and not mere formality. There are times when we don't feel like praising God because we are tired or annoyed with Him or because we are feeling defeated. In fact these are the very times that we should lift ourselves in obedience, and praise Him. As we do God's Holy Spirit comes to us to help us (Rom 5:5).

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - There is a very famous temple in Tirupathi, India. Devotees of that god make pilgrimage from all around India and Sri Lanka to worship there. People will wait in line for hours to visit and see their idol. This god is popular because it has the reputation of blessing its devotees with much wealth. Thus the people worship because of what the god can do for them, not because of who he is. Visitors to the Tirupathi are actually worshipping out of self-interest.

This is not the motivation behind Christian worship. We do not worship in expectation of blessings to come. We worship because of the excellence of who God is. We do not worship in expectation of blessings to come, we worship in thanks for what He has already done.

Prayer

But now thus says the LORD, He who created you, O Jacob, He who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine." ~ Is 43:1

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - The intimate and detailed knowledge which God has of His creation is astounding. Think of the billions of people upon the earth today and He knows each one by name. Each and everyone is the work of His divine hand and authority.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Life can be full of fears. We worry and stress about lots of things. There are even people who worry if they don't have anything to worry about?

The God who created us is committed to us to the extent of having redeemed us to Himself (Is 43:1). Given such commitment we should not allow things to make us fearful; "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom 8:31). Given such commitment we can feel confident when we make our needs known to Him in prayer.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - Life has more to it than wealth, prestige and possessions (Matt 6:30-33). God knows our needs even before we ask Him. Ask almost any Christian and they will have at least several stories of how God has provided for them of life's necessities and at times of life's luxuries. The world chases after material wealth, but we are not to be stressed or fearful about such things.

Intimacy/Relationship

Where shall I go from Your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from Your presence? ~ Ps 139:7

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - Because Jesus is the beginning and the end it is impossible to escape the comfort of His presence. There is no part of God's creation which is a secret to Him. Neither is there any part where His understanding does not abide.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Because Jesus is the beginning and end I cannot forsake Him. There are times when we fail and we want to run away from God. This is an impossible hope. Whatever shame we may feel at our performance we cannot avoid Him, for His loving arms are always stretched out to us no matter how we feel or where we would try and hide.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - Scripture says that men and women will be judged by the secrets of their hearts (Rom 2:16). There is no secret thought or covert action which is hidden from God.

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Walking Holy

In the same way He took the cup, after having dined, saying, This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is being poured out for you. ~ Luke 22:20

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - It is a long standing principle in scripture that without the shedding of blood there can be no sending away of sin. Therefore when God wanted to establish an eternal covenant (a defined system of relationship) based on forgiveness, He found it necessary to use eternal blood. Being our High Priest, Jesus presented His own blood as the basis of covenant (Heb 9:11-12). That is the new covenant in Christ's Blood ensures the permanent remission (sending away) of sin.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Jesus is our High Priest. He presents His own blood as the eternal atoning sacrifice for our sins. The Church recalls that sacrifice each time we celebrate communion (1 Cor 11:24-26). Jesus chose His last meal with the apostles as the time to speak most clearly of His Blood being poured out for us (Luke 22:20). So the Church continues this meal setting when it gathers at the communion table to recall and celebrate His sacrifice for us.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - When the apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth about communion, he urged that they should take this ordinance seriously, least they should partake of the bread and the cup with sin in their hearts. He told them that they should examine themselves before receiving communion and repent of anything in their lives which would be displeasing to God (1 Cor 11:27-29).

Because scripture urges that communion should be taken with reverence and understanding, some churches restrict participation in communion to church members. Non-Christians are excluded, not because the church wants to seem exclusive, but because the church wants to honour the communion table with reverence and holy fear.

Dominion

Looking for the blessed hope, and the appearance of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ ~ Titus 2:13

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - Jesus is God (Titus 2:13). Jesus Himself made the same claim (John 10:30-34) and at the time the religious leaders of His day were so affronted that they tried to stone Him. The author C S Lewis reminds us that the claims of Jesus Christ are so outrageous that either He must be treated as an insane and devious liar or He must be worshipped as God. He cannot be dismissed or appeased as a wise teacher. Either Jesus is God or a ratbag of the first order!

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Because Jesus is God it must be acknowledged that He existed eternally before the world was created and before He took on human form. Indeed His plan to call us to Himself existed before we were created and before time itself. For this reason the apostle Paul writes that Jesus: "saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal". But now that Jesus has come in the flesh and died for us this plan "has now been manifested by the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim 1:9-10).

We can rest in the assurance that Jesus knew us before time began and was resolved to be our Saviour before time began (Rev 13:8).

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - In 1742 Fredrick Handel conducted the first performance of the oratorio "Messiah". Each and every year since then this work has been sung somewhere in the world. In it the choir sings "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ" (Rev 11:15). For nearly 300 years thousands of people have been declaring the truth of Christ's return. And yet not every chorister or audience member believes what is being sung?

Christ's appearance at the end of time means that all dominions and all kingdoms will be His. The Psalmist cautions the leaders of nations to: "Kiss the Son lest He be angry" (Ps 2:12). All nations shall come and worship before Jesus. His judgements and mercy will be made apparent (Rev 15:4).

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Worship

Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce ~ Prov 3:9

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - The giving of honour is not just an action, it is also a matter of attitude. So God invites us to honour Him with that which is closest to our hearts ~ money (Prov 3:9). Because He is Lord of all He invites us to trust that He can also be lord of our finances.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Money is very close to our hearts because by it we can satisfy our wants and desires. Being wealthy grants us freedom and protection over circumstance. It provides us with the illusion that we can be secure against misfortune. In short, allows us to see ourselves as lord of our own lives. Scripture commands that we give God of our substance and wealth so that we are reminded as to who is Lord.

Yet the same scripture which gives the commandment also makes a promise. For whilst at first it says: "Honour the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce", it goes on to say "then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine" (Prov 3:9-10). Honouring The Lord with our substance is an important step toward having Him bless us, because He sees how much we depend on Him to be the real source of our wealth and security (Deut 8:18).

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - People tend not to value what they don't pay for. One only has to consider the 12 baskets of left-overs when Jesus fed the 5,000 to understand this. Had people paid for that meal then they wouldn't have left the scraps for the apostles to pick up (Matt 14:19-21).

Salvation is free. It come to us because of what Jesus did and not because of anything that we did or can do. It cannot be bought with money. And yet God wants us to learn to value the gift. The world views giving to the church as exploitation but God calls for it in order that we may have a tangible way to show what worth we ascribed to it.

Work & Society

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. ~ 2 Tim 3:16

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - God chose to use His prophets, kings, shepherds, musicians, physicians, fishermen, tentmakers and priests to write the different books of The Bible. It was a project which took place over many hundreds of years. The writings of these men were guided by God and preserved by Him until collated into what we now call the Bible.

Even though each contributor wrote from out of their own time, experience and style they were inspired by God (2 Tim 3:16) so that the final document speaks of God's truth in Christ with a cohesive integrity which is faultless! In this way we see that God uses people, ordinary often flawed people, for His purposes.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - The heroes presented in The Bible often appear as very flawed characters. They include murderers, adulterers, liars, thieves, tyrants, cowards and prostitutes. The story of The Bible is of sinful men and women being changed by their dealings with God. Although each one had much to be ashamed of, God not only changed them but gave them a part in history as agents of His power, grace and dominion.

We read our Bible and see what poor material God has at hand to transform a sin-sick world. And yet God has not changed His method. If God can make heroes out of sinners in Bible times, He will do the same with us.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - The story of the world's attitude to The Bible is, in part, a story of repression. The most violent opposition to the Bible has come from kings and governments. Still today there are countries where a citizen can be killed for owning a Bible. Even England saw persecution over the Bible when King Henry VII (1491-1547) had William Tyndale (1494-1536) burned at the stake for translating the Bible into English.

There is a simple reason why governments and kings may hate The Bible; it declares openly that Jesus is King of kings and requires all governments to submit to His rule (Ps 2:10-12).

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Work & Society

That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him. ~ Eph 1:10

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - Because Jesus is the beginning and the end, because He is the all in all, there is a sense in which all things are being brought under His dominion. This is an immense project and, in God's wisdom, seems to be taking a long time to achieve. But the certainty of its accomplishment is declared by Christ's resurrection and victory over death.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - "All things" means all things. We can somewhat imagine that sinful man, rebellious Satan and fallen earth are being brought under Jesus Christ. But "all things" means "all" things, not just "some" things. So we can expect to find that economics, history, philosophy, engineering, chemistry and all man's studies will be brought under Him.

All fields of human endeavour have been impacted by men and women of Christian faith. Mathematics (Kepler, Newton, Pascal), science (Boyle, Faraday, Kelvin), music (Bach, Mendelssohn, Bruckner), economics (Malthus, Acton, Senior) and more have been enhanced by those who looked at life through a Christian perspective.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - Scripture says "The earth is the Lord's and all its fullness too" (Ps 24:1). To gain knowledge by studying the world which God has placed around us, without honouring Him as its creator and owner is nothing less than theft. Adam and Eve took from the Tree of Knowledge without God's permission (Gen 3:17). To continue to do so is no less an act of theft now than it was then. All things, all philosophies and all ideas of government are being (and will be) brought into subjection to Christ.

Dominion

These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them. For He is Lord of lords and King of kings. And those with Him are the called and elect and faithful ones. ~ Rev 17:14

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - God might have chosen many images for Jesus as victor. He might have depicted Jesus as the lion of Judah (Rev 5:5) or a mighty warrior (Rev 19:11-12) or a conquering king (Rev 19:16). Jesus is all of these things, but the most frequent image of our victorious king is that of lamb. The image is the most apt because, whereas the world establishes kingdom by use of power, Christ's kingdom reigns because of His sacrificial, humble love.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - We have a victory over the powers of darkness and evil because Jesus has already won the victory. His supreme act of love has broken the power of evil, sickness and sin (Ps 103:1-4). The slain Lamb is both our hope and our example. So often we want to get victory by taking things into our own hands and forcing change. Yet The Lamb's humility tells us that our victory comes from obedience to The Father and from resting in the victory that His love for us has already won.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - The rulers of this world, the generals, the captains of industry and the heads of government seize or build their authority on the basis of their own strength and resources. Thus their kingdom is built by struggle, effort and war. Their kingdom is "of this world" (John 18:36). Jesus' kingdom is not built on fighting but on principle ~ in particular the principle of love.

Intimacy/Relationship

And you, who were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled ~ Col 1:21

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - It is an indicator of the extent of God's loving nature that He would send Jesus to die for us. When Jesus told His disciples to "love your enemies" (Matt 5:43-44), He wasn't talking mere theory. Jesus demonstrated love by dying for us.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - It is hard to imagine that prior to believing in Jesus we were God's enemies. Yet we were! God sent Jesus to die for us even though as sinners we were at war with God (Col 1:21, James 4:4, Acts 13:10). The punishment that was due to us for our sin has been borne by Jesus. Instead of being at war, we are now God's friends.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - To live according to the world's way of life is to be opposed to (or at war with) the way that God does things (James 4:4). Calvary stands as an act of divine love. It is an invitation, written in blood, extended to the whole world to stop being enemies with God and to step into close relationship with Him.

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Intimacy/Relationship

And hope maketh
not ashamed;
because the love of
God is shed abroad
in our hearts by the
Holy Ghost which is
given unto us. ~
Rom 5:5

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - God is love (1 John 4:8). Therefore love is a person. God is a person, therefore when He comes to us in the person of the Holy Spirit, it is inevitable that He manifests Himself as love. Also God is real. Therefore He comes to us in a way that speaks the reality of the experience of His love to our hearts.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - It is the Christian's joy to know and experience the reality of God's love in our hearts. We should not be surprised that our hearts are warmed or encouraged when we sense God's presence.

Knowing the reality of God's love is an important part of being a Christian. Because God is sovereign we can't make Him turn up with His encouraging in-filling whenever we want. In fact there are times when we will be wanting God to speak to us or draw close to us and He will seem miles and miles away. These are the times when faith must operate.

Yet there are other times when we can anticipate God's loving presence. These will be in times of prayer, (especially when praying in tongues), or times of worship or as we read our Bibles. Expect a relationship of intimacy as you grow in Christ.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - Many friendships and marriages break down because one person has become cold toward the other. The men and women need affection and ardour in their marriages and friendships. It is a human attribute to desire intimacy because, being created in God's image (Gen 1:27), we desire the warmth of real love. This need and desire doesn't change once we become Christian. God designed us for heartfelt communion so He gives of His Spirit to fill that need.

Intimacy/Relationship

Open thou mine
eyes, that I may
behold wondrous
things out of thy
law. ~ Ps 119:18

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - Scriptures tells us that God dwells in unapproachable light (Ps 84:11). He is so holy that not even the sinless angels of heaven can look upon Him (Is 6:2). It is not possible for us to look at Him, who is the Father of light (James 1:17), without assistance or covering for the eyes. In a similar but obverse way, it is not possible to understand the law of God without assistance or opening of our eyes (Ps 119:18). God does not set out to be mysterious. It is the vast difference between Himself and ourselves which makes Him seem that way.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - The Law of God is both wondrous and important. The basis of The Law is set down as ten commandments (Deut 5:7-21). These ten commandments can be summed up in twenty words:

- * One God
- * No idols
- * Holy Name
- * Holy Day
- * Honour Parents
- * Don't Kill
- * Stay married
- * Don't Steal
- * Don't Lie
- * Don't Envy.

The apostle Paul tells us that the law is good if a person uses it lawfully (1 Tim 1:8). It takes time and maturity in Christ to grasp the extent to which these commandments remain applicable. But it is a necessary starting point to become familiar with the law and to look to God for help in how to understand it.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - The world is loathe to move by faith. It prefers reason to faith (as if these two things were opposites one to the other?) and therefore finds God's law unreasonable because it is based on the higher wisdom of an unseen super-natural being.

The French Revolution started with the quest for the law of reason. It came with great hope in the perfectibility of man but ended in great slaughter and tragedy. It is an irony but instructive that, Maximilien Robespierre (1758-1749) an architect of the Revolution and the one most responsible for the sending people to the guillotine without a just trial, was himself guillotined without trial. Tyranny is the constant threat of law systems which do not originate in God.

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Walking Holy

To him Abraham also gave a tenth of all. He was first by interpretation king of righteousness, and after that also king of Salem, which is king of peace. ~ Heb 7:2

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - We have been made kings and priests (Rev 1:6) in Christ's kingdom because Jesus is both king (Luke 23:3) and priest (Heb 4:4). His priesthood follows in the order of a priestly king called Melchizedek, whom scripture calls king of righteousness and peace (Heb 7:2).

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - When Abraham had won a great victory he was greeted by a king and priest whose name was Melchizedek (Gen 14:18-20). Abraham respected the authority of this man because he knew the man to be a minister of God's word and authority. For this reason Abraham gave a tenth of his earnings to Melchizedek as God's representative.

Since all authority comes from God, Christians are expected to give to those whom God has placed over them. We are to pay our taxes (earthly authorities) and we are to contribute to the church (priestly realm). To neglect our responsibility in giving of our income is to rob God of His tithe.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - The world looks with suspicion when the church calls for its tithe or offering. The non-Christian is a "self-made" person. Therefore wealth is viewed as a personal right. It never occurs to the non-Christian that the opportunity, ability or health which allows them to make money has actually been granted to them by their creator. Worldly governments look unfavourably on its citizens who don't pay their taxes. How much more is the King of kings entitled to His tithe?

Dominion

So that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth ~ Phil 2:10

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - God made all things; things in heaven, on earth and under the earth. All things were made through Jesus and owe their existence to Him. For this reason all things, including the unseen realm of angels and demons are subject to Him.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Because I was created for a God-given purpose I can expect God to assist me when things seem to be preventing me from achieving that purpose. This is especially true of His help against the unseen realm. There are fallen angels (demons) who have rebelled against God. They continue that rebellion by trying to harm His plan in the lives of those that He loves. Demons may have temporary influence but they can never have total success. We have Christ's promise that at the Name of Jesus demons must flee (Mark 16:17).

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - People are often inquisitive concerning the unseen realm. Films and books about devils, demons and dark spectres amuse them. God did not create evil but He uses all things for His own purposes. It is foolish in the extreme for people to develop a fascination with the occult because they are fostering a relationship with rebellious spirits. Such people place themselves outside God's protection and under evil influences.

Dominion

For everything that has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith. ~ 1 John 5:4

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - The world is God's creation. He made it and it belongs to Him. In love and generosity He shared it with mankind that we should exercise His dominion in it (Gen 1:28) but sin and death entered in when we acted independent of His will. The creation became corrupted by our faithlessness. There is still much which is beautiful in the world, but the sin and death which it now harbours need to be defeated.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - The victory which overcomes the world is faith. By believing we return to the trust and faithfulness by which the creation was meant to be ruled. It is by believing that we are made one with Jesus, the Son of God, and partake of His victory over the world's way of doing things.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - The world exercises dominion by power. The non-Christian is always using people or influence or weapons to rule. The non-Christian may seem to succeed for a time, even as the Jews and Romans seemed to succeed in killing Jesus. But Jesus couldn't be defeated. Jesus trusted that The Father would raise Him from the dead (Acts 2:32). Faith, not power, is the first principle of the victory.

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Witness

And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ~ 1 Cor 13:2

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - The Bible tells us that Adam and Eve lived in a garden called Eden. God placed many trees in that garden but named two in particular. One was called "The Tree of Life". The other was called "The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil". Adam and Eve ate of this second tree even though God told them not to.

This desire for knowledge ahead of life was what released sin and death into the creation. In this scripture (1 Cor 13:2) the apostle makes clear that having an understanding of all mysteries is not to be compared with having love.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Because the world operates on the basis of knowledge, Christian witnessing can often become confined to arguments about philosophy or reason.

This is not always a bad thing because the Christian faith is actually a rational/thinking/logical way of life. It has a coherent worldview which is in fact more sustainable than that of any other way of life. But Christian witness does not rest primarily on argument. It rests on the essence of God's character as revealed in Christ's Cross - love.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - The Christian faith is built on a miracle. It is founded on the miracle of Christ having come back from the dead. Still the world chooses not to believe the truth and power of that miracle. Similarly Christians have been seeing miraculous answers to prayer for hundreds of years. The history of the church is full of astounding stories of protection, healing, deliverance, provision and guidance. And still the world does not believe.

And yet many sinful rebellious hearts have been brought to faith by acts of candid and unconditional love. Faith to move mountains is valuable but love is inestimable.

Worship

Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; ~ Eph 5:19

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - God has chosen to make of us a dwelling place for Himself. Scripture reminds the Christian "that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit in you" (1 Cor 6:19). Old Testament Israel had only one location, the Jerusalem temple, where the presence of God could be found. On the other hand the Christian has the presence of God constantly abiding with us in our hearts.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - In the same way that Old Testament priests would conduct worship in the former temple, we as priests in Christ's kingdom, are expected to conduct worship in God's New Testament temple ~ our hearts.

The Holy Spirit helps us to worship. Sometimes He brings to mind a song or chorus or hymn. Sometimes the Holy Spirit will co-operate with us to create a new song, a uniquely personal 'spiritual song'. The Spirit's willingness to help us means that we can make melody to God in our hearts at anytime. He is pleased to assist us develop the habit of constant worship.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - Personal worship is very important but scripture also requires Christians to gather as a church for combined worship. Western musical tradition has been much enriched by the church music of the Christian tradition. Much of this music is very formal and displays a studied craft which is meant to reflect on the beauties of the Christ for whom it has been written. When the church declines in the priority and care it gives to its worship, culture in society also declines.

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Dominion

But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ~ 1 Cor 15:57

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - God The Father gives the victory through Jesus, God The Son. This arrangement exists because The Father wants the Son to have the glory and reward for having been a faithful son (Dan 7:13-14). Victory is for our sake because it alleviates a problem or deals with a situation, but victory is also for Christ's sake for Jesus is Lord and will be glorified in all things.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - God always gives us victory therefore we thank Him. Sometimes the key to victory is to thank Him even before we see the victory. The Christian walks by faith and not by sight. Therefore victory starts in faith.

Because we have to believe that God exists before we can worship Him, worship itself is an act of faith. Now if victory starts in faith and faith leads to worship, we should not be surprised if victory comes when we worship. ~ "Thanks be unto God who always gives us the victory!" (1 Cor 15:57)

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - The question needs to be asked: What does 'victory' for the Christian mean?

The world sees the moment of victory when the victor has been able to fully impose their will on to the enemy. For the Christian 'victory' is not a matter of the imposition of our desires over circumstances. Neither is it a matter of reversing adversity. Nor is it a matter of defeating The Devil.

The Devil is only a problem and circumstances are only a problem for as long as they prevent us from adhering to the will of God. Since Jesus is Lord, victory is not to be understood as the imposition of our will over the enemy, but as the achievement of His will in our lives. On this basis 'victory' might express itself in the faithful endurance of character-forming adversity or illness.

Last Things

Whoever partakes of My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. ~ John 6:54

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - Jesus is the source of eternal life. He offered His flesh and blood for us on The Cross. He continues to extend that offer in symbolic form in the ordinance of communion.

The invitation to eat Christ's body and drink His blood (John 6:54) was a revolting prospect to the people of Christ's day. Many ceased to follow Him at that time because they did not understand that He would later institute the tokens of bread and wine as the means of doing this.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - The communion service is a time when the Church, Christ's Body, reminds itself of the new covenant in Christ's Blood. It is a service or ordinance which looks back not just to Christ's death but to His resurrection as well. It is an acknowledgement that Jesus is the first one to have been raised from the dead never to die again! It is a reminder that we too will be raised from the dead at the last day.

Communion is a reminder of Jesus' love for us. It is an opportunity to share in His love with others who love Him.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - Whereas Christians will be raised to an eternal life of loving union in Christ, unbelievers will also be raised but to a life of separation from Christ. Scripture calls this place of separation hell and indicates that hell is real and has actual physical torments. In fact there are few that spoke as clearly about these as did Jesus (Matt 9:43-48)! In the same way as people of Christ's day left Him because they didn't understand His words "eat my flesh", people today abandon Jesus because they can't believe He would be serious about hell. - But He is!

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Worship

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has regenerated us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead ~ 1 Peter 1:3

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - Jesus rose from the dead so that we could be lifted out of the death-trap of sin. Herein we see God's amazing mercy. God has regenerated us by sending us the Holy Spirit (John 3:6-8), the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead (Rom 8:11). The life source of the universe has come into us to inspire and enable us to live godly lives. - This is mercy and this is why God is to be blessed (1 Peter 1:3).

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - The Bible tells us that "the dead do not praise God" (Ps 115:17). We are able to worship God for one reason and one reason only, it is because He raised us up from being dead in our sins to being alive in Christ. True praise is more than words or singing. True praise comes from a repentant heart. As the scripture (1 Peter 1:3) says we are to bless God because we are alive in Christ.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - The non-Christian imagines that they are doing God some kind of favour by worshipping Him. They think that God is pleased with them when they remember Him. They do not understand that the whole of their life has been given to them by God, therefore the whole of their life is to be lived in praise and thankful worship of Him.

Such commitment is impossible to achieve in our own strength (Rom 8:8). That is why God sends Christ's resurrection life, His Holy Spirit, to us that we will be alive in Christ (Rom 8:9-11) and therefore able to praise God in a fitting manner.

Last Things

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ~ 1 Thess 5:23

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - The word 'sacred' means "proceeding from god or pertaining to god". On this basis it is true to say that life is sacred. God is the author and giver of life (John 5:26).

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Life is not confined to things that we see such as our bodies. Life includes our souls as well. In preserving us until Jesus' return, God promises that the eternal life which first comes to us at Christ's Word will stay with our souls even though for a time our bodies will cease to exhibit life (Col 3:4).

Furthermore the promise of God is that the life in us which He sustains, will be a life of peace (1 Thess 5:23). In this life and in the next we can know the comfort of His care.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - It is a common desire in many cultures that the dead should "rest-in-peace". Different people have different ways of trying to ensure this, but in acknowledging the hope that the dead will rest-in-peace, people also acknowledge that there is some form of life after death.

In the same way that not one of us ever decided for themselves that they would be born, none of us can decide what happens to us after we are dead. The illusion of independence and autonomy exists only for the duration of our days on earth.

Last Things

knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus shall also raise us up by Jesus, and shall present us with you. ~ 2 Cor 4:14

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - Jesus is God but He is also man. He never ceased being God for any of the time that He walked the earth. He ate and slept and prayed as a man does. Yet all the while He never ceased being God the all powerful? This is a mystery and hard to understand. Christ's life of obedience to The Father is demonstrated by the fact that He relied on God to raise Him from the dead (2 Cor 4:14).

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - We are destined to be raised by The Lord. The Christian has this hope; that the Jesus who rose from the dead, demonstrated His authority over death. The Christian does not fear death because Jesus has already defeated death and has promised that those who believe on Him will have eternal life (John 3:15). He is LORD.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - Many people think that after death comes a vast nothingness. They have no hope of resurrection and they have no fear of judgement. Some are persuaded of this because they see no evidence of life after death. Yet the for the last 2,000 years the gospels have offered the historic record of life after death because they tell of Christ's resurrection.

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Work & Society

Even He shall build the temple of Jehovah; and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule on His throne. And He shall be a priest on His throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both. ~ Zech 6:13

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - When God established the Old Testament nation of Israel as His ambassadors, He set clear distinction between the role of priest and the role of king. Priests were from one tribe (Levi) and kings from another (Judah). In this way the king was subject to God's law and could not become tyrant by telling the people that his laws were divine. Neither could the priests become king and use the authority of the state to compel the people in worship.

Yet here (Zech 6:13) we see an Old Testament priest called Joshua being given a crown? This is because Zechariah prophesies that there is a High Priest coming who will be crowned as King? It is Jesus Who is both King and High Priest. He has also made His followers kings and priests (Rev 1:6, 1 Peter 2:9).

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - The distinction between church and state is important. Church and state each have different functions but they both have the same moral obligation. God has given them different areas of authority, but they both have the same responsibility to be obedient to God and to act according to His moral law.

For the Christian this means that we should acknowledge the state's authority to the extent that it does not lead the nation into sin. As Jesus said we are to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's" (Matt 22:21). We must pay our taxes and lead peaceable lives. But because the state is morally obligated to God for its authority (Matt 28:18) the Christian is also bound to speak out against, and act to change, any government laws which are unGodly.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - Western society has developed on the basis of a functional separation between church and state. The government is not God. It does not have the right to make laws contrary to God as though it were God. One need only remember the tyranny of Rome's Caesars to see what happens when the state considers itself to be divine.

Yet citizens of Western nations forget that the functional separation between church and state has been built on Christian tradition and divine precedent. It is a Biblical concept. Some people try to use the necessity of this separation to silence the church from criticism or policy contribution, forgetting that they are actually hobbling the source of their own freedom.

Last Things

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

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - Jesus, The Word, existed before the creation of the world (John 1:1). In fact it was by The Word that all things were spoken into existence (John 1:3) since the creation account in Genesis tells us that the world was spoken into existence (Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24 & 26).

Not only that but when He created it, was created entirely good (Genesis 1:10, 12, 18, 21 & 24). The same Jesus who first created the world good is today renewing it in His resurrection power and Word so as to rid it of the impact of sin. Jesus, the risen Christ, says of Himself "Behold I make all things new" (Rev 21:5).

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Jesus tells us that the words which He speaks are spirit and life (John 6:63). This was because in Him dwelled life (John 1:4). When He spoke, the life and light that He spoke was not manufactured or pretence, it was what flowed naturally from His heart.

Scripture says of every person that "out of the abundance of a man's heart will he speak" (Luke 6:45). The best way to guard our speech is to guard our heart and the best way to guard our heart is to meditate on God's Word so that it soaks into our inner being and forms His character in us (Ps 119:11).

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - Scripture stills confers the power of life and death to the tongue (Prov 18:21) and cautions us that a soft answer turns away anger whereas a harsh words stir up strife (Prov 15:1).

For these reasons we must learn to yield our hearts and thinking to Christ so that grace and wisdom proceed from our mouths (Eph 4:29). Sometimes it is hard to control our tongues but in the same way that God created the world by speaking it into existence, we can create our world or environment by what we say. We can win friends or create enemies depending on our words.

Last Things

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. ~ 1 Cor 15:22

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - It is Father God's plan that Jesus should have the pre-eminence. Whereas sin entered in because of Adam, the promise of God is that life has entered in because of Jesus (1 Cor 15:22). Because of the sin of Adam many were made dead "much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, has abounded to many" (Rom 5:15).

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Scripture gives Jesus many titles. In one place He is referred to as the Last Adam (1 Cor 15:45). This unusual title is set in the context of a contrast, saying "The first man, Adam, became a living soul, the Last Adam was a life-giving Spirit". Because Jesus is God, He holds the power to give life (John 1:4).

The Christian is called to walk in Christ's kingdom and ways. We too are called to bring life. In the early church and across church history, this "life-giving" has occurred in miracles of raising the dead (Acts 20:9-12). Not all Christians get to see such answers to prayer, even though Jesus today still responds to prayer for the raising of the dead! Yet we are all called to minister life to the people and institutions around us.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - Death entered into the world via Adam because he wanted to be as God, and determine for himself what was good and what was evil (Gen 3:5). To continue in that arrogance is to continue in death.

The Christian brings life to the world by participating with Christ as He returns all institutions and relationships to their God-designed, God-oriented purpose. Thus the Christian ministers life when their prayers or counsel have contributed to the restoration of a marriage, or the injection of godly values into a school curriculum, or the development of a business which honours God as it serves the market.

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Guidance

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you. ~ Heb 13:17

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - Jesus' entire life was one of perfect obedience. He said of Himself that He had come "to do the will of The Father" (John 5:30). For Jesus to do The Father's will meant that He was obedient or submitted to those people and institutions that The Father had placed over Him whilst on earth. Jesus was obedient to His earthly father (Luke 2:41-51) and to the government (Matt 22:16-21). He even honoured the religious authorities of His day reminding the people to heed them when they offered Biblical teaching (Matt 23:2-3).

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Pastors and elders in the church have a God-given responsibility to watch over the souls of the people in the church (Heb 13:17). They are to pray for them and advise them in godliness. Pastors, ministers and elders must give an account to God on the day of judgement as to whether they have cared for the saints properly.

The office of elder or leader in the Body of Christ is taken seriously by God. Leaders must be worthy examples of Christ, who rules in wisdom, love and mercy. Christians should view their church leaders with respect (1Tim 5:17) and heed carefully the advice and guidance given by them (1Thess 5:12-14).

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - The apostle Paul had a great passion for The Church. It upset him greatly when He saw The Church following after worldly things instead of Godly things. His letters are full of corrections for the early Church. Not everyone heeded his guidance even though he only ever instructed them according to The Bible's requirements. The ways of the world are often for self-gratification. Submission to God-appointed authority, especially church authority, seems strange to the independent spirit of our day.

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He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.
~ Is 53:3

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - Whilst on earth Jesus enjoyed the company of a number of close disciples. It is also true that He was intensely popular, with crowds following Him everywhere to hear Him and to see what He would do. And yet scripture records that His own family thought He was mad (Mark 3:21), that many of His followers left Him (John 6:66) and that He was for the most part rejected and despised (Is 53:3). Jesus knows what it is to experience rejection.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - All of us experience rejection at some stage. There are times when it feels that we have been rejected by family, friends or society even though we've done nothing wrong. We feel rejected merely because of who we are! This is exactly the type of rejection that Jesus experienced. He is able to identify with such pain. Scripture refers to Jesus as The Beloved (SofS 2:16, Matt 3:17) and tells us that we are "accepted in The Beloved" (Eph 1:6). Christ stands ready to love and comfort us in all areas of life because as our Burden Bearer, He is familiar with every aspect of the human condition.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - There is a tendency in all of us to reject what we don't understand. This is especially so when it comes to the gospel. The non-Christian often sees The Bible in terms of rules and constraint. They are not acquainted with the depth of God's love as revealed in Jesus Christ. Being misunderstood, the Bible and those who follow it get rejected. Don't be surprised if being a Christian results in persecution.

Walking Holy

He restores my soul: he leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. ~ Ps 23:3

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - Scripture records in many places that God does things for His own Name's sake. To the human heart this seems an outrageous act of self-importance. It would be to our liking that He does things for our sake. Yet it is both a necessity and a joy that God should be God and not we ourselves. The wonder of God's character is not that He does things for His own Name's sake, but that He chooses to bless mankind in the process.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Because we belong to the Good Shepherd's flock we carry His Name. We are known as 'Christian'. Therefore we must walk righteously because of the Name that we represent. The majesty of God's Name lies in the fact that by it He shares His love, authority and salvation with mankind. Jesus is the only Name by which a person can be saved (Acts 4:12). Walking in His Name means being exalted and empowered by His Name for obedience to His Name.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - Being lead in paths of righteousness and being part of God's flock, means that we may need to have a different relationship with some people. Christians are not called to escape the world, we have been commissioned by God to co-operate with Him as He changes the world. Even so there will be times when being a Christian will mean that we have to revise the extent to which we join with non-Christian friends in worldly activities.

Worship

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.
~ Rev 4:11

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - All things have been created for God's glory and good pleasure. Jesus created the heavens and the earth. When sin entered in it seemed that the creation had got away from its Creator. As in the story of Dr Frankenstein, it seemed possible that sin would make a train wreck of God's sovereignty (and thus of God Himself - for should God cease to be Lord of all, then He would cease to be God). Yet the plan of The Cross existed before the cosmos was made.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - In ways that are hard to understand God uses all things for His glory. Jesus is the beginning and end. For this reason we should worship Him in reverence and fear.

We worship because He is worthy. This means that despite how holy we may feel we worship Christ. We worship because He is worthy, not because we are worthy.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - We should expect that our work will be brought under Christ. The Christian lives a life of work as an act of worship and as an act of faith, because the Christian believes that all things, even our day to day work are being used by God to expand the kingdom of Christ (Col 3:22).

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Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye tithe mint and anise and cummin, and have left undone the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, and faith: these ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone. ~ Matt 23:23

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - Jesus spoke these words of correction (Matt 23:23) to the religious experts of His day. They had become focussed on minor matters of how to appear holy. They didn't need faith because they had mastered the externals of holiness. Consequently they had lost sight of the weightier matters of God's character ~ justice, mercy and faith (Micah 6:8).

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Faith is always personal but never private. A Christian should be recognizable to the world not just because they avoid participation in sinful activities but also by the fact that they will move in faith and obedience to see God's justice and mercy become displayed in the whole of life and society. The Cross is God's ultimate display of justice and mercy. To have faith in Christ's Cross means to bring justice and mercy to society.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - The world is happy to concede heaven to the Christian but not earth. The world views heaven as irrelevant and so is happy to permit the gospel to rule there. In this way earthly governments pass unjust and hateful laws such as those which foster abortion. The Christian is not to concede earth to the unrighteous, but in love we are to work so as to change society's oppression of innocent infants (justice) as well as work with those mothers who labour under the guilt that often comes with an abortion (mercy). This and other causes are the legitimate focus of the faith filled life.

Guidance

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

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - Jesus spoke of Himself as being "The Way" (John 14:6). Interestingly, the first believers were commonly known as those of "The Way" (Acts 24:14) prior being called Christians (Acts 11:26). But Jesus did not only present Himself as The Way. He came as Truth and as Life. In saying this He was telling the world that the way to gain real truth and real life will not be found in man's own ideas (philosophy) or in one's ownership of things (materialism). Truth and life lie outside of us and in the person of Christ alone.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - The efficient person keeps a list of things to do. Life is achieved and fulfilled when the items on the list are ticked as completed. Some Christians function as though the holy person also keeps a list of things to do (often a list a lot shorter than the list of things 'not to do'). It seems that holiness is fulfilled and achieved when all of the required things are done.

If this were God's intention for us, then Jesus would have said: "I am the List, the Reminder and the Achiever" instead of saying "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6). Life as a Christian is not lived by doing things on a God-list. The Christian life is the abandonment of self-effort in favour of the absorption or infiltration of Christ's truth and life into our being. This takes time since it necessitates the re-wiring or amendment of all our inner desires and thoughts. It also takes practice as the new truth and the new life source express themselves in our behaviours. Effort is involved but it is effort which starts with, and emanates from, God's favour and life.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - The gospel is not the only worldview to be known as "The Way". The Chinese have given the world Tao (aka Taoism or Daoism), which also means "The Way". Its founder Lao Tzu (about 600BC) lived in contemplation of the natural order and felt that it was man and his selfish activities which constituted a blight on the otherwise perfect way of things. So he counselled people to reject the folly of human pursuits and to return to one's inner wellspring. He said: "At the centre of your being you have the answer; you know who you are and you know what you want." Taoism's orientation to inner wisdom and its criticism of the human's disruption to natural order is becoming increasingly attractive to many in previously Christianized nations.

The Christian starts with the recognition that our 'way' has been polluted by sin and death. It is a humble commitment to the offer of truth and life from outside ourselves. Jesus is the resurrection life and the revealed truth of God. The Taoist way appears to be humble and self abasing in that it urges the abandonment of human achievement, but at root it relies on human achievement since it urges self-effort and self-knowledge as the source of life. Taoism speaks of spiritual power but draws on the power of a sin-blighted world.

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Witness

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. ~ Acts 1:8

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to the disciples so that they would receive power. Jesus knew from His own firsthand experience how important it was to have Holy Spirit power, because the Holy Spirit came on Him when He was baptized (Matt 3:13-17). God's passion for helping us to conform to His image means that He shares this most powerful, yet most intimate, aspect of His make-up.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Even though the disciples had seen Jesus' empty grave, they still did not immediately speak publicly about it. Instead they waited until God sent the Holy Spirit in power upon them (Acts 1:8). This power gave them great boldness in their witness and it also enabled them to see amazing answers to prayer.

We too can expect that the Holy Spirit will give us help and boldness in the sharing of our faith in Christ. We too can expect that the Spirit's power will result in amazing answers to prayer. Therefore one of the best ways to witness is to offer to pray for people's needs.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - It is important to note that Jesus' instruction to the apostles was that they would witness to the uttermost parts of the world. It is Christ's plan and dominion that the whole world should come under the influence of the gospel.

For this reason the Christian church has a long tradition of missions work which involves taking the gospel to far off nations. It is an important part of the life of the church to be of service in other nations and communities.

Guidance

Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. ~ 1 Cor 14:1

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - Mankind is made in the image of God (Gen 1:26) but sin damaged that image. It is God's desire to re-form the image of Himself in us. For this reason He gives us gifts and enablements to help us walk in a spiritual manner. Spiritual gifts such as tongues, prophecy or wisdom have various benefits and uses. But the main thing to be pursued is love since God is love (1 John 4:8), to pursue love is to pursue God.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - One can travel the Christian life without ever having given or received the guidance of a prophetic word, but no-one can call themselves a Christian who does not pursue and follow after love. The principle of love is our best guide because love is the essence of God's character.

Read the gospels and you will find that there are many times when Jesus was "moved with compassion" (Matt 9:36, 2 14:14, 15:32, 20:34, Mark 1:41, 6:34, 8:32 and Luke 7:13). It is a simple criteria but very beneficial. When making a decision all of our thinking is to be guided by the love of God and the precepts of His love.

Christians (even non-charismatic Christians) often speak a word of guidance or wisdom or encouragement to another person because they have allowed themselves to be moved by compassion or concern for that person. The Holy Spirit has taken opportunity to embellish the act of love with prophetic inspiration and all the while the concerned Christian merely thought that they were being loving.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - It is a measure of the self-centredness of our sinful hearts that men and women will seek guidance from seers, psychics or clairvoyants for the purposes of self advancement. The non-Christian wants to know their future so that they can be happy or prosperous. Their attitude to the prophetic is based almost entirely on self-interest. They do not pursue love. They pursue self.

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Work & Society

Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD! ~ Ps 150:6

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - The whole of creation was created for God's praise. Yet the whole of creation was subject to the consequences of sin and death. So Christ's Cross and resurrection was a remedy for the whole of creation and not just mankind. On one occasion the apostle Peter is told by God that even the animals have been made clean by Christ's Cross (Acts 10:15).

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - Jesus' life in us is meant to change our life so that we walk in the newness of His creative power. Jesus rose from the dead to save our souls but also to save our bodies, since it is God's intention to raise these same bodies in which we now live (1 Cor 15:52). He cares for the spiritual and the physical realm. For this reason we too are to care for the physical realm. The Christian seeks to protect and re-invigorate the world's environment and resources because Jesus' resurrection impacts the physical world as well as the material world.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - People who do not know God often have difficulty distinguishing between God and His creation. There is a tendency to worship the creation rather than the Creator (Rom 1:25). The problems of ecology and the environment are moral problems before they are scientific problems. Thus the solutions must first of all lie in the reforming of society's heart rather than an increase in our knowledge.

The empty tomb of Christ's resurrection may not hold the scientific knowledge relevant to the world's environmental problems, but because it deals with sin, the empty tomb does show the starting point.

Dominion

And He awakened and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, Peace! Be still! And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. ~ Mark 4:39

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - Jesus is untroubled by any circumstance and He tells us not to let our hearts be troubled (John 14:1). At one time Jesus was in a boat, which was being so badly tossed by a storm that His disciples were sure that they would all drown. While they worried Jesus slept. Eventually the disciples woke Him up and pleaded for Him to help. Jesus didn't join them in their worrying, He merely spoke to the storm and a great calm set in (Mark 4:39).

Nothing takes Jesus by surprise and His peace is our peace (Eph 2:14a).

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - The Psalmist tells us "I sought Jehovah, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears" (Ps 34:4).

The Christian life is a blessed life. Sometimes it is blessed with difficulties? We do not grow if we run away from these difficulties. Instead God wants to carry us through them and train us in them, that He can be trusted. Trials and difficulties work faith and endurance and character in us (Rom 5:3-5).

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - On 30 September 1938 the then Prime Minister of England Neville Chamberlain returned from a conference with Adolf Hitler declaring "Peace for our time". Chamberlain had secured an agreement from Hitler that he would not further invade countries outside Germany. German occupation of the Sudetenland began on the next day, 1 October and less than a year after the agreement, following continued aggression from Germany and its invasion of Poland, Europe was plunged into World War II.

There can be no peace when evil is ignored or appeased. Calvary leads the way in victory over evil, but each generation of Christians must maintain the fight, as lovingly and wisely and humbly as Christ did.

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Last Things

And there shall in no way enter into it anything that defiles, or any making an abomination or a lie; but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. ~ Rev 21:27

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - The Bible says that God knows those who are His (2 Tim 2:19). Even now God has written your name in the Lamb's Book of Life. He knows the end from the beginning.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - God has established an eternal city in which all Christians have a place. In fact Jesus said that He was going to prepare a place for us there (John 14:2). Since Jesus, The Lamb, has taken away the sin of the world, how much more sinless must heaven be? There is no place for sin and deceit in The Lamb's eternal abode.

We are to live lives worthy of the Christ. There is no place for sin in the life of the Christian. Because it is God who called us to Himself, we can be certain that He will enable us to live the holy life which is pleasing to Him for "He who has begun a good work in you will perform it to the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil 1:6). Our eternal reward of His presence is certain.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - In addition to the Lamb's Book of Life, the Bible also speaks of another book which appears at the last judgement. It is the book of the deeds of men and women (Rev 20:12-13). For the non-Christian who has not come under the protection of the Lamb's sacrifice, the extent of God's disapproval will be tempered by the way in which they have lived their lives. They will be judged according to their deeds.

Work & Society

Give, and it shall be given to you, good measure pressed down and shaken together and running over, they shall give into your bosom. For with the same measure that you measure, it shall be measured to you again. ~ Luke 6:38

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE - God is a spirit but He uses physical means for dealing with us. For example He used the man, Christ Jesus to save us by dying on The Cross, and sometimes He will use other men and women to bless us (Luke 6:38). Often we are so focussed on expecting a miracle from God that we don't notice when a person acts as the agent for that miracle. In love God sends people to us to help us.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE - God gave us that which was closest to His heart, when He sent His Son Jesus (John 3:16) to die for our sins. If we are to grow in godly character then we too must learn to give that which is close to our heart, our money and time.

As Christians we have received of God's love and so we ought to be ready to give to others (not just the church). Don't be surprised if God draws you into being a practical part of His redemptive message of good news to on the earth.

FROM THE WORLD'S PERSPECTIVE - Some people imagine that giving to God is like investing in shares. "Give and it will be given". Their faith is tied firmly to their self-interest. God is not mocked. Christian giving is firstly an act of faith based on obedience and love. To give solely in expectation of blessing in return is also an act of faith but it is driven by self-interest and idolatry.

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