

What is the difference between unlimited and everlasting?

There is a difference between quantity and duration. God's love is unlimited and everlasting.

Is God's patience everlasting? Nehemiah 9v30

Can we assume on God's patience? When does it come to and end?

If God is patient, so must we be, patience is a Fruit of the Spirit, it is also part of the description of Love, Love is patient. Galatians 5v22, 1 Corinthians 13v4

Why do we find it so difficult to be patient?

There are lots of answers to that question. Patience is associated with maturity. Our immaturity causes us to be impatient. Is it that we don't trust God, or that we think we know better? Is it to do with our need to achieve the goal and our inability to appreciate where we are? Are we so consumed with the shortness of our life now, that we have failed to grasp the length of eternity?

If you ask a child to make a model airplane, he will rush it. as far as he is concerned the only important thing is to get it finished. An adult will take his time, for him the pleasure is the making the plane not finishing the plane.

Impatience is a bizzare thing, it does not achieve anything good. Whether you wait patiently or impatiently you still wait as long.

What differences are created by the way we wait? Stress seem longer.

We need patience in earthly things and spiritual things.

What earthly things do we need patience with?

What response will being patient, elicit from the people around you?

Sometimes respect, but like God's patience, it will can also be misinterpreted and abused.



We need to be patient with God.

God is not going to hurry. He has His own timing and if we are impatient, it is us who are going to miss out. An example of this would be Abraham and Ishmael.



Read Psalm 37v7, Psalm 40v1, Psalm 27v14

What does waiting mean in these passages?

Can you rush God? Being Patient, hopeful attentive, trusting

No, you cannot rush God, you must trust Him. He does not see time the way we do. When you ask why don't You...? (As many people in Scripture did.) You must acknowledge that although you don't know them, and may never know them, God has His reasons.

Never give up hoping, never give up asking, never give up praying, never give up trusting.



We need patience with ourselves

It is going to take time to get from where you are now, to where God wants you to be. Just because you have not arrived is not a reason to be disheartened.

God is patient with you, you must be patient with yourself.

Does this mean we can be apathetic, slow or lazy?

We are in this thing for the long haul. Paul calls the Christian life a race, but our faith is not a 100m sprint, it is a marathon. We have to let God finish the work He has started in us. You cannot do it by yourself. Philippians 1v6

What would happen if God worked too quickly in your life?



We need to be patient with others.

It is very easy to get impatient with those around us who have not quite reached our level of brilliance. When they show ignorance of spiritual things or a lack of maturity, we think down on them and judge them.

Why is this hypocritical?

What attitude should you take?

God is patient with you. He bears your faults and defects, and works you through them. You must do the same for others.

How is your patience going to bear fruit?



You need to be patient in your ministries and callings.

You start pastoring a new church, and revival does not break out in your first week. **What do you do?**

If we expect to see immediate results for everything we do, what effect will it have on us when they don't come?

Many of the things God calls us to do take time. They require patience and faithfulness to obtain the results that God wants. Weeds grow over night, trees take time.

What else do you need to be patient with?

Bible Studies

Patience and the Warrior

Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city. Proverbs 16v32

The question is why? As a society we celebrate the warrior mentality, the go-getter, the entrepreneur. But that is not the only way to be or the only way that brings results.

What is the patient man described as? What is the warrior described as?



Read Proverbs 15v18, Proverbs 14v29.

Obviously the patient man, in Proverbs, is a person who is in control of his behaviour, emotions and desires. This is the opposite of Proverbs' warrior.

We all have personalities, our nature. In Old English the word that was used to describe this was *spirit*; A gentle spirit. A critical spirit. (Angry, lazy, controlling, loving, greedy, manipulating etc.) It's '*just our nature.*' In modern language we would use the word temperament.

These things become strongholds in our life, places of power and control. They can be strongholds for good or evil, God or Satan.



Love can be a stronghold in your life. It can reach out to others. It can control you. It will touch everything you do.

A critical spirit can be a stronghold in your life. It can reach out to others. It can control you. It will touch everything you do.

While Love is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, and evidence of His control in your life. A critical spirit, is the fruit of something else, and can represent the control of the Enemy in your life. In extreme cases this 'spirit' is in fact an evil spirit. Sometimes these various strongholds conflict and our life becomes a battlefield.



Read Job 6v11, Romans 8v25

What is the difference between patience and laziness?

What are their similarities?

When we are patient, it is because we hope to achieve something by being patient. Patience has a goal. Laziness has an end, or a result. Patience is in control of a situation, laziness isn't.

What are the dangers in mistaking inaction for patience?

In Job 6v11 patience had to do with hoping, with waiting for God with faith.

There are different kinds of patience. The Israelis, who have a pathological inability to wait quietly in a queue, make fun of the English for not having the patience to learn languages. The English were made to queue.

Patience is better than a warrior, because patience has to do with knowing the right time to act. It's not just waiting, inaction, slowness or laziness. Ecclesiastes 3, says there is a time for everything, the patient person knows that time.

Patience is wisdom put into effect, it is emotional intelligence.



A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offence. Proverbs 19v11

What happens if you do the right thing at the wrong time?

Men of Issachar, who understood the times and knew what Israel should do 1 Chronicles 12v31

What happens when you try to rush things?

What happens when you don't act when you should?



God is Patient

It is one of His most miss-interpreted attributes.

What does God's patience get misunderstood for?

That He doesn't care, doesn't know, is too weak to act, or that He doesn't exist.

God's patience has a goal, what is it? Romans 2v4, 2 Peter 3v9

Your patience also has a goal. It is to fit in with God's will and His plans. Not to be behind them and not to be ahead of them. You cannot fit God into your life, you must fit your life into God. For this you will need to have patience.

What happens if you try to run ahead of God's perfect timing?

But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life. 1 Timothy 1v16

How did God show patience in Paul's life?

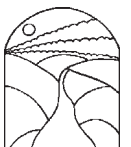
How does He show it in our lives?

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**What does it mean to grow in service?
Is this just in Church?**

How are you going to grow in knowledge?

This is probably the easiest one. We are surrounded with easy ways to increase our knowledge, no other generation has had this ease of access. Is the church any better for it?
But is it enough to attend Church and read the Bible?



**What does it mean to grow in grace?
What effect is growing in grace going to have on those around you?**

**What does it mean to grow in faith?
How are you going to do this?**



What areas are you deficient in?

Where do you need to grow? This part of the study is not intended to be invasive. You do not need to tell everyone, you do need to be honest with yourself.

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We all need to grow in all these areas, none of us have reached perfection in any one of them. It has often been pointed out that Christ works progressively in our lives. He does not deal with all the things that need to change in our lives at once, If he did we would probably end up in a psychiatric hospital! He works gradually on one or a few things in our lives. Pinpointing the areas in our lives that have to change and working on them. When they are done, He starts to work in a different area.

What happens if you stay still too long?

As a Pastor I get frustrated with those who paint a picture of what the perfect Christian should be, (Smith Wigglesworth, the Apostle Paul, and Mother Teresa all rolled into one) and then castigate the congregation for not being it. Yes we need to see the goal and how far we have to go, Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Mat 5:48. But done too often, it leads to frustration, disillusion and despair. A goal we cannot reach!

Instead, it seems to me what is important is dealing with the next step. If we do, God will take care of the final goal.

being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. Philippians 1:6



What is the next step?

It may be dealing with a sin, be seeking a gift, or becoming active in worship (doing something radical like raising your hands!). It may be going to Bible School, or starting a quiet time. It may be starting to witness, it may be volunteering for a job in Church.

What else could it be?

How are you going to know?

Most of the time, if we take a good hard look at ourselves, the answer is not hard to find. It seems to me the most obvious solution is to ask God. **“Lord what are the things we need to be dealing with in my life?”**



Having identified it, what do you do next?

It may be as simple as obeying what God tells you. You don't need three months coaching, deliverance and anointing with oil, to raise your hands in church or start reading your Bible, you just need to do it!

Other things we may need to study up on or get some help, find a book, ask an elder.

Once you know the object, the method is not so hard to find. Taking the next step leads to the step after that. Is it possible that some of the spiritual blocks (like unfulfilled prophecies or calls) in our lives are there because we have not dealt with the next step?

What is your next step?

Bible Studies

Taking the next step.

We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing. 2 Thessalonians 1:3

So you have become a Christian, wonderful. New start, new status, new way of life. Your name is written in the Lambs Book of Life, your eternal future is secured. God is on your side and everything is complete. So what do you do now?

- Read Ephesians 2v8** **What does 'been saved' mean?**
Read Acts 15v11 **What does 'we are saved' mean?** Rom 10v10
Read 1 Corinthians 1:18 **What does 'being saved' mean?.**
Read Philippians 1v28 **What does you 'will be saved' mean?**

Salvation is past, present, continuous and future.

Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, 1 Peter 2:2 we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. Ephesians 4:15

connection with the Head..., from whom the whole body... grows as God causes it to grow. Colossians 2:19 Salvation is not an end, it is a beginning. We have to grow in Christ, in many different areas.



Believer, Disciple, Christian.

We use these words synonymously, but each has a slightly different meaning.

A Believer, believes. in Scripture the word implies action, acknowledging that Jesus is Lord is not enough, we have to make a commitment to Him. The devil believes in God, but it does not mean he is saved! James 2v19. We tend to use this word in a passive sense, and of an intellectual process. Yes, I believe in God.

Hopefully we come to understand that this believe is to effect all of our actions.

A Disciple, learns. He is on a journey to become something he has not yet achieved.

A Christian belongs. The Greek word christiani, means; 'of the household of Christ', a servant or a soldier of Christ. This was originally a word used by outsiders to describe those who followed Jesus. Acts 11v26, 26v28, 1Pet 4v16.

What different parts of our faith do these words apply to?

Perhaps the most important word for us is disciple.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, Matthew 28:19

What things mark a disciple?

Learns from, follows and imitates a master.

Disciple derives from the idea of discipline.

How must a disciple be disciplined?

Who is our teacher?

If we are a disciple what will our attitude to life be?

When do you stop growing as a believer?

What was Paul's attitude? Philippians 3v12

In what areas of our Christian life do we need to grow?

Faith,	fruit of spirit,	Love,
gifts of spirit,	maturity	Knowledge,
understanding,	Service,	purity,
grace,	obedience	

We need to grow in every area of our Christian walk. To grow in knowledge is of little use if we do not grow in service. To grow in power is no use if you do not grow in love. The challenge that faces us, is to keep growing.



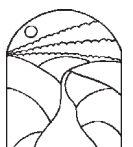
What does it mean to grow in the fruit of the Spirit?

How are you going to do this?

Which fruit do you lack?

What does it mean to grow in purity?

How are you going to do it?



Ezekiel's river grows! Ezekiel measures it every 500m, each time it is deeper.

What were the four measurements?

What is the river?

Ezekiel does not tell us what the river is, but he does tell us where the river comes from and the effects it brings. There are two possibilities. Again they are not mutually exclusive.



The river that flows from God and from the New Covenant believer is the spread of the Gospel. On the day of Pentecost it was a trickle, today it is a river. Ezekiel's river grew exponentially, so has the Church.

If this is true what effect does the Gospel have on the world it flows through?



Read John 7v37-39, John 4v13-14

What did Jesus describe as a river flowing out from us?

The river then is the Spirit of God

till the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the desert becomes a fertile field, and the fertile field seems like a forest. Isaiah 32:115

For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants Isaiah 44:3

What effect does the Spirit have on the dry ground?

What is the dry ground?



What effect is the Holy Spirit intended to have in our lives?

What effect are we intended to have on the world around us?

When we talk of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, we tend to think in terms of our being filled and the need to remain full of the Spirit. Of the Holy Spirit flowing into us.

What was Jesus emphasis in John 7v37-39 and 4v13-14?

We like to think of the Holy Spirit flowing into us, but Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit flowing out from us.

Which did Ezekiel think of?

What is the difference? What effect will this difference have?

You would have to say it is a difference in attitude. Is the Holy Spirit for me, out of me, or through me. If you concentrate on the Holy Spirit as an experience for me, then you will only see the effects of the Holy Spirit within you. But if you think of the Baptism of the Spirit flowing from you, you will look to affect the world you live in.



Which do you think God intended?

Who are the Fruit and the Gifts of the Spirit for?

If we keep the Baptism in the Holy Spirit as an internal thing, will we ever reach the potential God has for us?

Can the Holy Spirit flow out of you, unless He is flowing into you?

I think this is one of those strange spiritual paradoxes; the more that flows out, the fuller you become. Unless you flow out, you never become full.



Paddling or swimming.

If the out pouring of the Spirit which starts as a trickle, becomes a mighty river, where are we? Are we ankle deep or are we swimming in the flow.

Have we become satisfied with a little flow of the Spirit or are we seeking more?

In Ezekiel the river grew with distance. This could mean time or experience. In the vision this growth seemed natural and cumulative. Did you notice that Ezekiel's way of measuring the river, was to get in the river?

What do you think this means for us?

How are we going to grow in the things of the Spirit?

Seek, mature in relationship and purity, use, be aware (I think the big one is use what we have) faith, stirring up, loose fear

Bible Studies

Ezekiel 47



Read Ezekiel 47v1-12

This passage is part of a series of visions Ezekiel received about a new temple. (chapters 40-48.) The temple Ezekiel describes is very different from either Solomon's temple, or the temple that stood in Christ day. It is much larger and has a different layout. The temple ceremonies are also radically changed. A temple fitting its description has never been built. Both Jews and Christians have struggled to interpret these chapters and to reconcile them with the rest of Scriptural teaching.

Among Christians are two views espoused; 1 That these are the blueprints for a temple to be built in the millennium. 2 That the visions speak figuratively of believers as God's temple. (the two views are not necessarily exclusive). A new temple speaks of a new way to approach God, the New Covenant that God has made with us through Christ's death.



Read Revelation 22v1-6 Zechariah 14v2-9

Again this is part of a larger vision, this time of the New Jerusalem. The visions are similar, although in Revelation there is no temple v22. John's vision seems to apply to a time called the 'eternal state' i.e. After Christ's return when we are with God for eternity. John is also drawing a parallel to the Garden of Eden. However to an extent, it also talks about *life in the Spirit* now.

Where does the river flow from? Ezekiel 47v1,2&12

There are two answers to this question, both are true, but both lead to slightly different interpretations. Ezekiel says it is flowing from the temple. But he also mentions that it flows from the sanctuary, south of the altar.



What do you think the temple represents? What do you think the altar/sanctuary represents?

John has a similar vision, **Where does his river start?** Rev 22v1
It seems to me that the river's source is the presence of God, the sanctuary, and it flows out from believers into the world.

The river flows from the temple in Jerusalem through the Judean hills and into the dead sea.

What is the effect of the river on the land?

What is the effect of the river on the Dead Sea?

Why is the Dead Sea called the Dead Sea?

The Dead Sea is an *inland port of drainage*, the Jordan flows into it, but nothing flows out. The water evaporates leaving behind all the impurities, consequently there is no fish or plant life in the Dead Sea. It is dead! The river brings it abundant life.

What contrast does Ezekiel want us to understand?

What do you think the fish and fishermen represent?

It could be that Ezekiel just wants to emphasize the extent of the abundant life. But Jesus spoke of the Kingdom being like a net catching fish, Matthew 13v47. He also spoke of us being fishers of men. So the fish are people saved for the kingdom.

What do the leaves of the tree bring?

The fruit of the tree could be many things, but the fruit of the Spirit seems applicable. John describes these trees as the tree of life. The leaves bring healing. This is spiritual healing, healing from sin and the restoration of peace.

"But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit." Jeremiah 17v7-8, Psalm 1v3

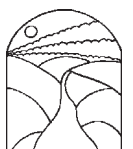
What is the overall impression you get from reading this passage?



Read Ezekiel 47v2-5

We have seen that Ezekiel's river brings life.

What else does Ezekiel's river do in this passage?



Churches are places for sinners not saints. To become a Christian we need to acknowledge our sinfulness. (It is impossible to be saved while denying that you are a sinner.) If I were perfect, I would not need Jesus. I go to church because I am a sinner and I need Jesus very badly. The dentist is a good place to go if you have a tooth ache!

We must- recognize the vast difference between those who are trying to live as Christians but who make mistakes and those who say they are Christians but do not try to live better.

Does being a Christian make you better than anyone else?



Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Matthew 5:48
Assuming (quite safely) that none of us has quite got to that position, **how could you preach on this verse without being a hypocrite?**

In one sense it is impossible. Because we are preaching a standard that none of us can keep. If this is hypocrisy, then every preacher and every Christian is guilty.

What was Paul's attitude? Philippians 3v12

And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. Philippians 3:9

What is the difference between made righteous and self righteous?

Which one are you? Where does our righteousness come from?

For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not? 1 Corinthians 4v7

Our righteousness is a gift, we cannot boast of it.



How are you going to avoid being a hypocrite?

Be humble, be honest, be loving, be sincere.
Acknowledge your faults. Be transparent, don't put up a façade.
Live a life consistent with what you believe.
Glory in forgiveness, not self righteousness.
Let God work in your life to deal with sin.
Live on your actions not your words.
Condemn sin never sinners. Live grace, forgiveness and love.
Do not condemn others when you are guilty. Romans 2v1
Do not claim to be what you are not – claim to be what God made you.
Do not elevate yourself by teach others a standard you won't keep.

Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, Romans 12:3

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Philippians 2:3

M L Jones spoke about *practising the presence of God*. Remembering that God sees and knows all you do, and that it is God you need to impress and not anyone else.

What effect does our hypocrisy have on the World? Romans 2v24



How are you going to avoid being seen by the world as a hypocrite?

The best way to avoid being seen as a hypocrite is to avoid being a hypocrite.
The world sees us as hypocrites when we say one thing and do another. When we claim to be better than them. When we are inconsistent with our teachings. As we have seen this is inevitable, we teach total purity, yet not one of us practices it. So we must be honest about what we believe and who we are. About grace, forgiveness and how God is changing us.

The danger here is that we build 'cardboard cathedral' that others can only find to be false. We think the glory of the church is in our perfection and sinlessness. That the moment you become a Christian you become impeccable (unable to sin). That it is our job to point out how much better we are than others and how they are obliged to live to our standards.

If this is our attitude can we do anything but fail?

Is the Church about being respectable?

The glory of the Church is in God's forgiveness, power and righteousness. It is evidenced by the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. Matthew 5v15

It is in God that I found what I need. I am a sinner saved by grace.

One of your work mates tells you that one of your Christian friends has just been caught in stealing from the firm. **What do you say?**



A millstone around our necks.

The fear of hypocrisy has deeply effected the church. This is a work of the enemy. Many are so scared of being a hypocrite that they will not go to church or publicly live as a Christian. "Don't you know Jesus hates hypocrites! "**(does He?)**". "When I have triumphed over sin go to church." "If I cannot live the Christian life correctly then I cannot live it at all".



What are the flaws in these arguments?

How can the fear of being a hypocrite effect your Christian walk?

If you are sincere before God can you be a hypocrite?

Bible Studies

What is a Hypocrite?

When Jesus looked at the religious institutions of His time He accused them of hypocrisy. The same charge is often made against the Church today. Sometimes it is true. At other times it is the result of a fundamental misunderstanding of what Christianity is about.

Jesus once said to his disciples "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. Luke 12v1. The question is, did He mean, "watch out, those Pharisees are dangerous"? Or did He mean, "be careful that the same hypocrisy found in them does not infect you." I think the latter.



What is hypocrisy?

The simplest definition is *saying one thing and doing another*. However, as we will see, there is a bit more to it than that.

The Greek word used in the Gospels is *Hypokrino*, it means, *a stage actor*, and it came to mean one who play acts or disguises himself, a pretender.

In what way are hypocrites actors?

Originally it meant *one who gives an answer*, (in a play; one who responds). This is interesting because to be a hypocrite you have to believe something strongly, you have to have a known opinion. This is one reason why the church is open to charges of hypocrisy.

Why do you need an opinion to be a hypocrite?

The *krino* in *Hypokrino* is the verb to judge, (reply, expound or interpret). Hypocrisy is associated with judging others.

In what way are hypocrites false judges? Romans 2v17-24

Why do so many people accuse Christian's of being hypocrites?

Look up these passages and work out what they were doing that made them hypocrites.

Matthew 6v2

acted men's approval

Matthew 7v3-5

Judged/taught others full of sin themselves.

Matthew 15v7-9

acted one way with their lips another with their heart.

Matthew 22v18

pretending to be sincere, acting as spies.

Matthew 23v13

legalism without grace

Matthew 23v25&27

outside inside

Matthew 23v29-30

We are better than them

The first reference is interesting, did the Pharisees involved believe in giving? Was it part of their teaching? Did they want to give and enjoy doing so? The answer to all these has to be yes. Since they taught alms giving not to give to the poor would be hypocrisy. Not to do so publicly would have been to open themselves to the charge of hypocrisy. Jesus knew their motives were wrong. They taught and did the right thing, but they were still hypocrites.



What things are associated with hypocrisy?

What are the opposites?

Is he a hypocrite?

- A rich Christian who believes in God's love and drives past a slum without doing anything. 1 John 3v17
- A preacher who admits to his own failings but preaches the need for holiness. Romans 7v18, 1 Cor 9v27
- A preacher who preaches holiness yet lives in unrepentant sin? Mat 23v27
- A drunk who lectures people on the dangers of alcoholism.
- A pro-life activist who secretly has an abortion.
- An anarchist who won't pay his taxes.
- An anarchist who does pay his taxes.
- An adulterer who attends church regularly.

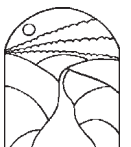
The last two are the interesting ones. It depends why the anarchist pays his taxes and why the adulterer attends church. If he does so to gain respectability, he is a hypocrite. But not if he does so knowing his sin and knowing Christ is his only hope to overcoming it.

On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners Mark 2:17

Self-righteousness, inconsistency, judgmental, thinking of yourself as better than others. etc

Humility, consistency, concept of our sinfulness but our forgiven-ness.

STREAMS IN THE DESERT



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Read Matthew 6v20-21

Is Jesus suggesting that our treasure can be an idol?

Why can a desire for wealth so easily become an idol? 1Tim 6:v9-10, Heb 13v5

How are we going to recognize the idols in our lives?

Anything that takes away from our worship of God. It can be in the area of our affection, finance or time. The best technique is to ask God to show you the idols you have set up. Whether we realize it or not, we are all philosophers. We all have a view about what is important in life and how we should live. A way of making sense of the world. An idol is a product of our belief system. Within these personal philosophies you will find many of our idols.

We do not think of these things in terms of worship. Who ever admitted to worshipping a car? So for us a better question might be;



To what do you trust your future?

What do you trust to provide for your needs? (education, work,

To what do you attribute your success? skill, reputation)

What do you love more than God?

If you exercise self reliance, instead of God reliance, self has taken the place of God. You have made yourself an idol!

Are such idols just ideas in our minds or can they be physical things too?

Often the idols of our minds find a physical expression. A lust for wealth may materialize into a fine house. A god of freedom may manifest itself in a flash car.



Is materialism an idol?

Is secular humanism an idol?

What makes something an idol for you?

What kind of things could be an idol for us?

Which of these could be an idol? Car, pride, control, lust, money, TV, free time, personal rights, family, beauty, music, Pastor, celebrity.

Are they of themselves bad?

There is nothing radical about this idea it has been preached the world over. Yet many of us find it very hard to identify the things in our lives that are idols. (It's much easier to identify them in other peoples lives). *You mean the things I love and cherish so much are actually idols!*

If an idol is something that takes, time, affection or finance away from God.

How much is too much? (When does it stop being an acceptable part of our life and start being an idol?)

What things result from, or are associated with idol worship?

Ezekiel 14:3

stumbling-blocks

What does this mean?

Jonah 2:8

forfeit the grace

What does this mean?

Judges 8:27

became a snare

What does this mean?

Deuteronomy 4v16

Corruption

What does this mean?



A Graven image

We have seen that an idol can be a physical image or something set up in our hearts. That it can also be an image of a false god or a false image of the true

God. There is a danger that in our religion we create idols of God. We create a defective or limited view of who God is and what He can do. When we do this we worship an idol of our own making and not the true God. God seems to take delight in shattering these false views of who He is.

Do we worship God or our concept of God?

When the form of religion becomes more important than the God behind it, we practice idolatry. For example; when we put our faith in the act of prayer and not the God who answers prayer, we practice idolatry. Attending church never saved anyone, responding to God did. We must remember that Christianity is an act of the heart, which expressed itself in our actions. If we trust in the actions and forget the all important things like faith, love and relationship we become idol worshippers.

Bible Studies

Idolatry

Dear children, keep yourselves from idols. 1 John 5:21
Throughout the Old Testament God continually battled with the people's persistent idolatry. The Prophets consistently preached against it, but Jesus did not have to. By His day Judaism, thanks to it's time in exile, was largely free from idols.



Read Jeremiah 10v1-10 Isaiah 40v18-25

In this passage what is an idol?

What contrast is made here between God and the idols?

If an idol is only wood, stone or metal what is the harm in it?

Do these idols still exist?

In a sense, the passage deliberately misses the point. Even the pagans did not believe that the wood itself was powerful, the idol became a vehicle for the god whom it represented and who indwelt it.

What makes a carving an idol, rather than a statue?

I would say the act of worship or devotion, (by someone not necessarily just you) and declaring it as such. In 1 Corinthians 8v4, Paul says We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one.

What does he mean by nothing at all?

What is behind an idol? 1 Corinthians 10v19-20, Deuteronomy 32v16-17, Psalm 106v35-37

What danger could there be for the believer in such idols?

What kind of things should we avoid?

The first commandments prohibit the making of idols, not only of foreign gods, but also of idols intended to represent Jehovah. *Deuteronomy 4v15-19*. It is likely that the golden calves made by Israel, first at Sinai and then at Dan and Bethel, were intended as images to represent the true God.

Why did God refuse to be worshiped this way?

There are many answers to this question. Firstly I think God want to avoid being seen as one of many competing gods. I think He also wanted be free from the our preconceived ideas about who He is and what He is like. You can't contain God and you must let God speak for Himself, this He has done in Scripture.

This is what the LORD says: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be? Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?" Isaiah 66:1-2



Spiritual Idols

Believers in the first century world were confronted with physical idols as are believers today in many parts of the world. Obviously the perils of us falling for physical idol worship, although existent, are slim. This kind of idolatry is not hard to identify or avoid. John has a different kind of idol in mind.

When John says 'Keep yourselves from Idols' what kind of idols does he mean?



Read Ezekiel 14v1-6

What kind of idols are these? What does this mean?

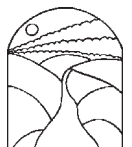
What is this kind of an idol?

These were not physical idols, representing false gods. This was something internal, something in the heart or mind. The simplest definition of this kind of idol is: *anything that takes a place in our lives that is intended for God.*

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature:....greed, which is idolatry. Colossians 3v5, Ephesians 5v5

Why does Paul say greed is idolatry?

Greed is idolatry because a greedy person believes the things of this life will take care of him. Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." Luke 12:15



**When the disciples cried out in terror what did Jesus say? Matthew 14v27
Do we still fail to recognise Jesus at work and respond in fear and dismay?**



**What did Peter say? Why?
Was this a rational thing to suggest?
As a test to see if it really was Jesus, what weakness did it have?
What other risks did he face?**

This is typical Peter, rash and impulsive, but quick to learn and follow.

Sometimes it is a thin line between faith and presumption.



**What is presumption?
What is faith?
What is the difference?**

The difference is found in one simple word in v29, *come*. Presumption is assuming on God, faith is obeying Him.



**What kind of courage did it require to step out of the boat?
Why do you think he did it?
Did he walk on water?
What caused him to sink?
What did Jesus do?**

The Application

An application for us is not hard to find.



**What do you think the boat represents?
What do you think walking on water represents?**

Peter was a fisherman, the boat represented everything he knew and was comfortable with. Walking on water represented the exact opposite. It is after all impossible, it cannot be done! The boat is the natural the water the supernatural. Walking on water is living by faith.

What does living by faith mean?

As Christians we talk so much about faith and how important it is but very often we will do everything possible to avoid having to exercise it.



**Do you think this is a healthy attitude?
Why do we avoid situations that might require faith?
What does getting out of the boat mean for us?**

What sort of things are you going to need before you set out in faith?

A word from God! Courage and some faith might help.



**What do you think the waves and wind represent?
What happens when we look at them?
Where should we look?
What enabled Peter to walk on water?**

Is it promised that we will never fail?

No in fact from Peter's example quite the opposite! Peter got very wet. But there is a promise in this passage, that when we do fail, Jesus will be right there to rescue us.

What are the risks in stepping out in faith?

Why do you think fear of failure is such a problem for so many people?

There are many things that can and will fail, God will never fail.

Who suggested that Peter walk on the water, Jesus or Peter? v28

Who authorised it? v29

Often we wait for God to tell us what to do (which is right) but sometimes it needs to be us taking the initiative saying; 'Lord is this what you what from me?'

Well I guess you could say Peter made a fool of himself, again. Eleven disciples, watched, eleven disciples stayed dry, respectable and safe. One got wet, one failed, one made a fool of himself, but one for a brief moment walked on water. I know which group I would rather be in.

Bible Studies

Walking on the water



Read Matthew 14v22-36 Mark 6v45-56, John 6v16-24

Three of the gospel accounts record this incident, all three place it in the context of another great miracle. **What was it?**

Neither John nor Mark, record that Peter walked on the water.

Jesus has gone up into the hills alone to pray. He had sent His disciples on ahead of him to the other side of the lake.



What was the disciples current position and problem?

Were they in any immediate danger?

What kind of a mood do you think they were in?

It had been a long day, they were tired and probably frustrated. According to Mark they were rowing hard against the wind. (6v47).

Mark comments that Jesus was walking past them not to them, perhaps in the manner of Luke 24v28. The fourth watch of the night is between 3 and 6am.



Who did the disciples think Jesus was?

What was their state of mind as a result? Mark 6v50

Why do you think they made this assumption?

Does this mean the Bible endorses the existences of ghosts?

No, it doesn't, it only says that the disciples, in their fear, assumed it was a ghost, as it turned out they were wrong. The Bible is quite clear that after death we leave this world for the next. There is no place in Biblical theology for disembodied souls roving the earth. Orthodox Christianity, where confronted with the possibility of ghosts attributes them either to demonic activity or sees them as a form of vision.

What happened when He reached the boat? Matthew 14v32 Mark 6v51

Why do you think Jesus chose to walk across the water?

It has to be more than just the shortest route between two points. Jesus did not do miracles gratuitously. John only records seven of Jesus miracles, including this one. Each miracle he selects is intended to teach us something.

What did Jesus want the disciples, and us, to understand?

In many ways this incident is similar to the calming of the sea. *Matthew 8v23-27, Luke 8v22-25 and Mark 4v35-41.* The basic meaning is the same Jesus has mastery over nature, He is not an ordinary man, we should stand in awe of Him. Matthew puts it like this: Then those who were in the boat worshipped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God." Matthew 14:33

Is it significant that the disciples worshiped Jesus? Matthew 4v10, Rev 22v8-9

What similarities are there between this story and the calming of the sea?



Mark gives us a clue about the reason Jesus walked on the water.

What is it? Mark 6v52

What does Mark mean by the loaves? Mark 6v30-44

(Now would be a good time to familiarise yourself with the story.) The question is,

What was it about the loaves they hadn't understood?

Again it is about Jesus amazing power, but I think it is more than that.

But he answered, "You give them something to eat." Mark 6:37 Matthew 14v16 Luke 9v13

Why do you think Jesus said this?

I think Jesus was trying to stretch their faith and their participation in His work. Trying to break their conservative ideas about what God can do. Shock them into broadening their spiritual horizons.

How does this apply to us today?

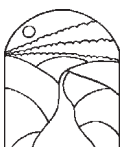
If this is so then Peter was the only disciple who grasped it.

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Just as there are accounts of a great flood in the myths of many of the worlds ancient cultures, so to there are accounts of a time when men lived in one village and spoke one language. Some of them include the story of an unfinished tower destroyed by the gods.

It has been speculated that, with the memory of the flood still recent, they want to build something that could, protect them from another flood. Side-stepping God's judgement, giving them the freedom to behave as they wished without fear.

Would the tower have survived?

The Tower of Babel today



What was the attitude of the people who build the tower?

Where is this kind of attitude seen in society today.

Arrogance and a wilful denial of God seemed to mark their behaviour. One of the basic philosophies of today's society is *secular humanism*, while it contains much good, it glorifies man, makes him self-sufficient, and master of his own destiny, it has no place for God. It is the religion of our western world. It is a modern tower of Babel.

What attitude should we have toward God?

How does today's society try to reach God, or to be more precise, side step God?

Babylon, in Scripture, came to represent all that is evil, a culture opposed to God. Rev 17v5, 18v21.

Can man reach God through human effort?

Babylon stands for all manmade religion, attempts to reach God by our own goodness, good works or wisdom. All attempts to do so are futile. In the faith of the Bible, God reached out to man. What man could not do God did by sending his Son to earth to die on the Cross. God took the initiative. We call this grace.



The tower of Babel also finds it's way into Church life. Whenever we concentrate of building an empire, an edifice or a monument to our own achievement, then we are building Babel. When the structure becomes more important than the goal.

When our image is more important than God's work. Whenever we loose sight of God's will. When ever people cease to be important. When ever God's glory takes second place, we are building Babel. Anything we build for our own glory or out of pride is Babel.

He said, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?" Daniel 4:30

Who's glory was Babel built for?

In what ways does the Church try to build a tower of Babel?

What is the danger when this happens?

Is this just a danger for big organisations or for churches and individuals

Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labour in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain. Psalm 127:1

The problem is that often we deceive ourselves into believing that what we are doing is for God when really it is for us.

How can we guard ourselves against this danger?

The Outcome

Man tried to go up, but God ended up coming down.

What was God's conclusion about mans efforts? Genesis 11v6

What does this tell us about the power of unity, both for good and evil?

How is this kind of unity achieved?

Do you think there is a parallel in the incredible advances of our day?



What did God do prevent them continuing? x2

In the end God got His way, by disrupting their language.

Why did God choose this way to act?

There is a contrast here with the day of Pentecost. On both occasions God gave new languages and scattered the people, at Babel it bought disunity, at Pentecost it bought unity and the glory of God

What were the effects of God's judgement?

There is a parallel to this found in Acts, where God commanded the church to take the Gospel to all nations, but Jerusalem was just too comfortable, God had to send a persecution to scatter them.

Do you think this is why God has allowed so many denominations?

Bible Studies

The Tower of Babel

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They settled, they built a city, they build a tower.

Make a name and avoid being scattered.



Read Genesis 11v1-9

Cush was the father of Nimrod, who grew to be a mighty warrior on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; that is why it is said, "Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the LORD." The first centres of his kingdom were Babylon, Erech, Akkad and Calneh, in Shinar. From that land he went to Assyria, where he built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah and Resen, which is between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city. Genesis 10:8-12

This is an event that took place about 100 years after the flood. The name of the area where the city was build was Shinar, This plain is where Babylon was located. (Some of the modern language translations, drop Shinar and call it Babylonian.) Archaeology has shown that this area was one of the first centres of civilisation. Here in the plain between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers the Sumerian culture flourished. It is also significant that the best know of the extra biblical accounts of the flood, the Gilgamesh chronicles, come from this area. The Sumerians are credited with inventing writing.

What did the people do when they reached Shinar? x3

Is it significant that they used bricks and mortar, rather than cut stone?

Some people think that bricks and mortar represents human effort, and Stone, Divine methods. Bricks are certainly inferior and less long-lasting, but in a plain they were readily available, stone wasn't.

Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth." Genesis 11v4



Why did they want to build a city and tower?

Who's glory was the tower for?

How high was the tower intended to be?

The kind of tower they built was probably a ziggurat, a kind of a step pyramid used as a temple or place of worship. The ruins of several giant ziggurats still exist in modern day Iraq/Iran.



In the ancient world people believed in a three tier universe. The earth was like a flat disk, above it was an arch in which the gods lived, below it was another arch which was the underworld. (this was a pagan idea, it is not taught in the Bible). If they built a tower high enough they could physically reach heaven.

How likely were they to succeed?

Do you think this was their intention?

If it was, then it was architecturally ill-conceived, the mountains that surrounded the plain were higher than they could ever hope to build and yet they still did not reach the heavens.

Assuming they did believe they could physically reach heaven.

Did God fear they could succeed?

We cannot build a tower that reaches the upper atmosphere, they certainly couldn't. We also know the heaven is not physically located above the earth, it's an entirely different plane of existence. So if God knew this project was doomed to failure, why did He intervene? There must be more to it than just building a tower.

What was wrong with what they were doing?

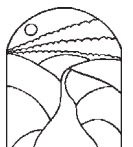


There goal was to avoid being scattered. This was in direct rebellion to God's command to cover the earth Geneses 9v7, KJV

Secondly it was to make a name for themselves, instead of God. It was a refusal to worship and honour God.

Reaching heaven meant reaching God. They were going to do this through human means. They were trying to exalt themselves over and against God. to be independent of God and self sufficient. To make their own religion and reject God. Such a process is described in **Romans 1v18-23**. Consequently some people identify the tower of Babel as the birth of paganism and idolatry.

In Hebrew, Babel means *confusion*, but in the Sumerian and Greek versions of the name it means *gateway of heaven*. This name may speak of the tower or God's visit.



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Our Storms

What do you think the storm represents?

What do you think the boat represents?

Some people say the boat is the church, I prefer to look at it as each of our lives. The storm represents the troubles, difficulties and crisis we face. Some of the sufficient to swamp our lives.

Can you think of any examples?

Two Lessons



Jesus can speak to the winds and the waves in our lives and make them still. Just like Jesus was in the boat with the disciples, He is in your life.

What did they expect Jesus to do when he woke up?

Clearly they knew that waking Jesus up was what they needed to do. But they were fishermen and Jesus was a carpenter, so I can't imagine it was help with the boat they wanted. Consciously or subconsciously, they were looking for a miracle.



The problem was solved when Jesus took charge

The problem was solved when the fishermen knew there was nothing left they could do. Their experience and seamanship was not enough.

How does this apply to us?

We too need to call for help. We too need to realize that our own skills are not sufficient. The disciples were frustrated because Jesus was asleep. "How can you be sleeping when we are in such dire straits?"

Have you ever felt, in the midst of one of your storms that Jesus was asleep?

Why do you think this is?

Is He asleep? Psalm 121v4

According to this passage, what should we do when face with a storm?



There is another thing we need to learn from this.

Were the disciples in real danger?

Clearly they thought they were.

Did Jesus share their opinion?

What was Jesus reaction to being woken up?

He seemed unimpressed. Jesus didn't share their sense of imminent disaster or their panic.

If Jesus was in the boat was it ever going sink?

We need to realize that Jesus in us, makes all the difference, our lives are secure, not because of the stability of the boat, or the skill of the sailor, but because of the presence of Jesus. Jesus is always with us in the storm.

Does this mean we are never going to get wet?

To extend the metaphor, Paul says; three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, 2 Corinthians 11:25 But Christ was in the boat and God saw Paul through, safe onto dry land.

According to this explanation, what should we do when face with a storm?

Sometimes Jesus will miraculously calm the storm, other times He will bring us through the storm, but whatever happens, He is in control.



What fault did Jesus find with the disciples?

"You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Matthew 8:26

"Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" Mark 4:40

"Where is your faith?" Luke 8:25

What do we learn from this?

How should we react in times of fear?

Sometimes you can hear Jesus speaking through the wind and the crash of the waves, and into our storm, "why are you afraid?"

Bible Studies

Calming the Sea



Read Matthew 8v23-27

This incident is also recorded in Luke 8v22-25 and Mark 4v35-41. It is important to remember that this is not a parable, but an actual event that Matthew records.

Several of the disciples were experienced fishermen.

Galilee is a lake about 21km by 11km. Galilee is usually a placid lake, even in the late afternoon when the wind changes bringing with it choppy waves. At times it does get sufficiently rough to cause trouble. The boats used for fishing in Jesus day were quite low to the water and could have been swamped in such conditions.

Why do you think they were afraid?

Do you think experienced fisherman would be given to panic?

Matthew records that the storm was sudden and furious. Some people have taught that this storm was sent by the enemy, to destroy Jesus. They find significance in the fact that Jesus *rebuked* the storm, a word generally reserved for combating Satan.

Who's idea was it to cross the lake? 8v21, Mark 4v35, Luke 8v22

Jesus was asleep in the boat. **How did the disciple interpret Jesus sleep?**

Is there any other way to interpret it?



What accusation did the disciples make against Jesus? Mark 4v38

Do you think they blamed him for getting them in this mess?

Did Jesus care?

Jesus was not asleep because he did not care.

Did Jesus think they were going to drown?

Why did He rebuke their lack of faith?

Does this mean they really had no faith?

Faith drives out fear and fear drives out faith. D.A. Carson

Do you think this statement is true?

Is this what happened to the disciples?

What did Jesus do to the storm?

Why were the disciples amazed?

O LORD God Almighty, who is like you? You are mighty, O LORD, and your faithfulness surrounds you. You rule over the surging sea; when its waves mount up, you still them. Psalm 89v8-9
He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed. Psalm 107v29

What do you think Matthew intended us to understand from this account?

Remember it is not a parable. He wanted us to understand just how powerful Jesus is.

The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!" Matthew 8v27

They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!" Mark 4v41:.

In fear and amazement they asked one another, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him." Luke 8v25



Would you like to answer the disciples question, what kind of a man is this? Colossians 1v15-20

Why is it important for us to grasp this point?

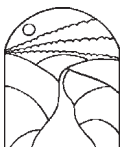
The Gospels want us to understand that Jesus was not just an ordinary man, he was, (and is) the Son of God, God incarnate. Without this fact, the whole system of salvation, presented to us in the Bible, falls apart.

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Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. James 4:8



The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. John 10:10



I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no-one can snatch them out of my hand. John 10:28



being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. Philippians 1:6



I can do everything through him who gives me strength. Philippians 4:13



And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:19



Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me. John 12:26



Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them. John 13:17



Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. John 14:27



He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Romans 8:32



neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:39



But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. Luke 12:31



Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. Mark 11:24 Mark 9:23



“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Matthew 11:28-29



Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and your plans will succeed. Proverbs 16:3
Psalm 1:3



Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. Psalm 119:105



The LORD will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life; Psalm 121:7
Psalm 23:4 Psalm 34:7



Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. Psalm 126:5



Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart. Psalm 37:4



Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall. Psalm 55:22

Bible Studies

Great Promises

What is promised?

What does the promise mean?

When might I need a promise like this?

Is there a condition?



No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. 1 Corinthians 10:13 James 4:7



If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9



For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17



But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:8 John 14:26 Luke 11:13



God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” Hebrews 13:5, Isaiah 43:2



Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, “This is the way; walk in it.” Isaiah 30:21



but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. Isaiah 40:31



So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10



The LORD will grant that the enemies who rise up against you will be defeated before you. They will come at you from one direction but flee from you in seven. Deuteronomy 28:7, Deuteronomy 20:4



The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. Deuteronomy 33:27



The LORD will keep you free from every disease. He will not inflict on you the horrible diseases you knew in Egypt, but he will inflict them on all who hate you. Deuteronomy 7:15



But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed Isaiah 53:5



Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Galatians 6:9 Matthew 16:27



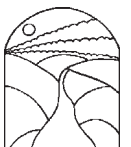
.If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. James 1:5

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Rest comes in surrendering to God, in acknowledging that we can never be good enough and relying on Jesus. It comes in forgiveness of sins, in trusting God. It is by faith. Rest is a relationship with God, a state of intimacy. It is facilitated by forgiveness of sin and is by grace. It cannot be earned.

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.... Matthew 11:28
Can you hear Christ calling you to intimacy?

The story so far.



There is a place of intimacy with God – which we can find.
We have a need for that intimacy – it is satisfying.
God created us to be objects of His intimacy – He desires intimacy with us.



How am I going to find intimacy with God?

At this point it would be easy to come up with a list of do's and don'ts. But if the above is true, and intimacy with God is our natural condition, then we need to identify the things that block that intimacy. That stand in the way of what should be natural for us.

What things stand in the way of intimacy with God?

Sin, unresponsiveness, Agnosticism, (believing that god is far away from us) never thinking about God, never talking to God, being too busy for God

As has already been mentioned there are many kinds of relationships and not all of them include intimacy.

Would you expect to find intimacy in an employer, employee, relationship?

Would you expect to find intimacy in a teacher, student, relationship?

What kind of relationships do you find intimacy in?

Here is the big question, what do these relationships have in common?

Trust, love longevity, commitment, openness, desire, equality etc

So we are sitting here on the counselors couch, trying to figure out way we don't have an intimate relationship with God.

The first question has to be, what kind of a relationship do you have with God?
A relationship with God can be based on many things; fear, guilt, duty, awe, etc.
These are not going to generate intimacy.

What should our relationship with God be based on?

Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.
Deuteronomy 6:5 & Matthew 22v37

To love, we can add things like; grace, faith and trust.

Intimacy come as a natural product of a good relationship with God.

Some people exercise a kind of *Christian Agnosticism*, they believe in God and go to church, but they do not believe that God cares for them. God is always aloof from them, He does not concern himself with their daily life.

Is this what God is like?

Is this kind of a view of God going to bring about intimacy with him?

What would need to change to enable the person to know God intimately?

A few pointers



One of the cornerstones of intimacy with God is worship.



You cannot develop intimacy with God during the ads on TV.
Intimacy requires time. Be still and know that I am God Psalm 46v10



To the list presented earlier (love, trust, commitment) add communication



Intimacy requires a giving of yourself. Intimacy with a human relationship require reciprocal giving. We have to let down our walls and barriers and let people get close to us, we have to open ourselves up. This involves the risk of being hurt. For intimacy with God we must surrender our fears, doubts and pride and allow God to come close.

In the cross of Jesus, God made the first move, He took the risk. Now it is your turn.
Come near to God and he will come near to you. James 4:8

Bible Studies

Intimacy with God

Read Job 29v1-4

Job had many troubles, the lose of his children, his health and his worldly possessions. Yet of all these one of the thing that troubled him the most, and which he finds most inexplicable, was the loss of his relationship with God.

How does Job describe his relationship with God? v4

There was a time when God was his intimate friend, now, through no fault of his own, this relationship is gone. The heavens are brass. He describes his relationship with God in v3. When his lamp shone upon my head and by his light I walked through darkness! Job 29v3

What was the light? What was the darkness?

For me, this presents a graphic picture of Job (and us), living in a world of darkness, sin, oppression and ignorance, and yet God's light shining on him. Everywhere he walks he walks in light.

For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light. Psalm 36v9

Intimacy with God was that light. But now the light has gone out and he is left in the darkness.



Intimacy with God needs to be the aim of our lives.

Humans are social creatures. Relationships are important. There are all kinds of relationships, good and bad. There are also all kinds of relationships with God.

What relationship with God is described in Ephesians 2v3?

Is this a good or bad relationship?

On the positive side, God describes His relationship with us in many ways, not all of them include intimacy.

What degree of intimacy do these relationships include?

Master - servant	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Friend	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Father - Child	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Husband - wife	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

One of the reoccurring themes in the psalms is the search for intimacy with God.

When will you come to me? Psalm 101:2

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. Psalm 42:1

Other psalms celebrate this intimacy.



Read Psalm 84

Which verses in this psalm talk about searching for intimacy?

Which verses talk about finding it?

The psalmist tells us that the sparrow has found a place near the altar. In doing so, he is telling us that **there is a place of intimacy for us in God**. Just as the sparrow found a place so must we. The psalmist called this a pilgrimage, he had to keep searching, and so do we.

As humans we crave intimacy. It is one of the forces that drives our societies promiscuity and destructive relationships. Intimacy is something we are bad at. It requires a reciprocal giving which is very risky.

God put the desire for intimacy in us.



God wants intimacy with us

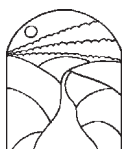
God walked with Adam in the cool of the day. He created us to be objects of His intimacy. He did not create us to be His servants, (He made Angels for that.) He created us for relationship with Him. God wants an intimate relationship with us. But it must be on His terms.



Read Hebrews 4v1-11

Do you think this rest speaks of intimacy?

How do we enter this rest?



“Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth.” Psalm 46:10

This verse is presented as a conclusion to the psalm and a command to us. (Notice the change of tense {He>I}, the rest of the psalm is about God but in this verse God speaks).

The phrase *be still* requires that we have been involved in some kind of activity, which we are now to stop.

What are we to be still from?

Fear, panic, useless activity, self designed plans, self reliance etc

Works as a means to salvation. Hebrew 4 reminds us that we cannot enter into God’s rest by our own good works.

How else could you put this phrase?

Stop running around ... stop making so much noise, calm down, stop fussing, don’t panic, cease your striving, chill out. Stop trying to figure it all out, stop getting in the way, Trust me. be patient etc.

Being still, means stepping back, and allowing God to move
The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.” Exodus 14:14



Read Zechariah 2:13

What meaning does be still have in this verse?

Reverence and awe, humility in the presence of God, repentance before him, even being ashamed of our rebelliousness, are all found here. And yet Zechariah also conveys a sense of the privilege of being involved with God.

What does Be still mean in these verse?

Why were they to be still?

Nehemiah 8:11

Psalm 37:7

(NB: none of the above 4
verse us the same Hebrew
for be still as Psalm 46)

This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: “In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it. You said, ‘No, we will flee on horses.’ Therefore you will flee! Isaiah 30v15-16



It has been pointed out that until you are still, you will not know God. This is true in salvation. It is not until we stop relying on our effort and call on the name of Jesus, that we can be saved. The Cross is the ultimate place of stillness. It is somewhere where you have to stop, a ‘drive-by’ will not do it. It is also true in the Christian life. Our activity, both good and bad, and the pressures of life can rob us of intimacy with God.



Read Luke 10v38-42

Being still in God’s presence is a vital to our spiritual health.

Please write Luke 10v41-42 in large red letters across your soul!

There is something deeply illogical about this verse. Being still, is not a good method of learning. If your entire revision for an exam consists in being still, you will fail. Yet there is a knowledge of God, which cannot be obtained any other way.

We learn by studying the Bible and we learn by serving God. But there is a depth to be acquired by being still in God’s presence.

This kind of knowledge leads strongly to relationship with God.

Do you think being still is the solution to everything?

There is a time and a need for action, but invariably there is a need to be still first. It is one of the things, that is going to help stop us from doing the wrong thing.



Hurry hurry is the password, I got to get my daily bread.

We’re too busy talking, to hear what God has said.

Moving in your mind so quickly, confusion seems to reign.

Don’t you think we ought to stop, and hear what God is saying? Len Magee

Bible Studies

Psalm 46 - Be Still

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Read Psalm 46

This is truly a beautiful psalm.

When you finished reading it what did it make you feel?

For me it is a psalm of reassurance, peace and encouragement. It helps me to put my troubles into perspective and to trust God.

The psalm is divided into three by three declarations

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. V1

The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah v7

The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah v11

It is also divided into three by the word Selah, (which means consider). Selah comes at the end of each of three pictures. Sometimes we get caught up in the precise meanings of Hebrew or Greek words and in doing so miss the big picture.

What do each of these pictures describe?

What do you think each means?



Psalm 46v2-3

Psalm 46v4-6

Psalm 46v8-9

There are two ways in which this psalm can be understood;

The Psalmist is talking about his world, the problems he faced and therefore, the problems that we also face in this world. The first picture, the **earthquake** is one of life falling to pieces, of turmoil and confusion. Terra firma, all we have ever relied on, crumbling to the sea. Living on a landslide, The **city of God** is the security and stability that Jesus brings to a person when they trust him. Despite the destruction that is all around. v6. The last picture, is of bring **peace to the storm**. God sorting things out and returning order to our confused world. In the midst of this He stands exalted and glorified.

The second way of looking at this is eschatologically, the psalm that talks about the end times. The earthquake is the events before the return of Christ, the city, the kingdom of God, the new Jerusalem, Rev 21. The last picture is God's final triumph in the world. Rev 11v15. *Both of these explanation are correct.*

The word 'fall' (Hebrew *mot*) also occurs three times;

What falls?

v2

What doesn't fall?

v5

What falls?

v6

Why doesn't the city of God fall? v5

Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. Romans 14:4

To him who is able to keep you from falling Jude 1:24

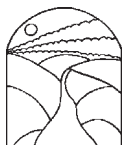
What does this psalm say is the basic reason for our confidence? vs1,5,7&11



What does it mean for God to be our refuge?

What does it mean for God to be our strength?

What does it mean for God to be our ever present help?



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Ananias and Sapphira must have had some strange ideas about church and some strange ideas about God. They were only concerned with external things and how people saw them. Not with what God saw. It reminds us of the danger of putting up a front when the reality is missing. Where were their devotion and commitment to God? They had gone hollow. I wonder how long it had been like this?



Do you think Ananias was like people today who go to church for the sake of appearances?

Many go through patches when we do the externals of the faith but our love for the Lord has waned.

What are the dangers of such times?

What should we do when they happen?

What dangers are there for the Church when people within it start to see it as a secular institution?

Would you say Ananias and Sapphira were lax in their attitude towards God?

What was their attitude towards God?

1 Samuel 16v7, John 7v24 Matthew 6v3

How did Peter know Ananias was lying?

As I understand it, Peter exercised the spiritual gift of the word of knowledge.

Who struck Ananias down, Peter or God?

Do you think Peter knew what was going to happen?

This was clearly God's action. He is judge of the earth and he has the right to judge and punish us. In the end we will all be judged for our action. The Bible speaks of Temporal judgement (judgement now, 2 Peter 2v9) and Eternal judgement, (after death, 2 Cor 5v10, Heb 9v27)

There is nothing unusual about the speed of the burial, It is consistent with contemporary Jewish practice and a hot climate. Even today in Jerusalem, because it is a holy city corpses may not be kept in the city over night, they must be buried or removed.

Why did Peter question Sapphira as he did?

We are all individually responsible for our actions. Sapphira would not be judged for Ananias' sin, only for her own. He gave her a chance to repent.

If she had come clean, would she have been struck down?

No, she would not have.

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Hebrews 4:12 O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. Psalm 139:1-2

What does it mean to test the Spirit mean? Deut 6:16, Psa 78v18,56, Acts 15v10 I think it includes deliberately doing something against God's will.

Can you think of anyone else in the Bible who was judged in a similar way?

There are many; Achan, Judges 7; Uzzah 2 Sam 6 and Uzziah 2 Chr 26v19 stand out.

Many people commit sins that are far worse and get away with them.

Why did God judge Ananias and Sapphira so harshly?

Clearly God was making an example of them.

He was protecting the churches unity, holiness and purpose.

He was protecting the integrity and spirituality of the church.

For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 1 Peter 4:17

The sins of some men are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them; the sins of others trail behind them. 1 Timothy 5:24



What message did God want to get across?

What does this tell us about the way we should give?

What does this passage tell us about the nature of God?

What would happen if this occurred in our church on Sunday?

What was the effect of this miracle on the church and the community? v11-14

Bible Studies

Ananias & Sapphira

There are times when church can be quite exciting. There are also aspects of New Testament Christianity that no one seems to pray for in today's church.



Read Acts 4v32-37

It is important to understand the background of this incident.

For various social and religious reasons Jerusalem had far more than its fair share of poor. They were partially provided for from temple funds, believers in Jesus would have been excluded from this provision. The church took it upon themselves to provide for the poor among them.

Is this still important today?

It is hard for us to understand what a major issue this was for the Church. Distribution of food to the poor was the first major internal problem that the Jerusalem church faced and it nearly caused a split. Acts 6v1-7

What does this passage tell us about the attitudes, priorities and practices of the church?

Who provided for the poor? - What kind of people?

Why do you think people sold their fields or houses?

Is there any indication that this giving was anything but voluntary?

The money was laid at the Apostles feet. v37 Those who gave, gave out of their surplus.

What does this imply?

It implies that the money was given to God and that it was an act of worship.

But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving. 2 Corinthians 8v7



Read Acts 5v1-11

Was it wrong to keep some of the money from the sale?

If you answered 'yes' you have missed the point of the passage.

According to Peter, who did the land belong to? v4

According to Peter, who did the money belong to once the land was sold? v4

So what did Ananias and Sapphira do wrong?

They did several things wrong but basically it was deceit. They lied. They pretended to give all the money when in fact they kept some. If they had said, "here is half the money", they would have done nothing wrong.

Were their actions premeditated? v7b

Why do you think they pretended it was the whole amount of money?

Were they trying to please God or man?

This was a kind of hypocrisy. They wanted praise from man. They treated the church with contempt. They were phonies

Are money and faith always hostile to each other?

Who did they lie to?

What does this mean?

What does Peter attribute this deception to?

Does this mean it was not Ananias fault?

What does it mean? 1 Peter 5v8



Ananias failed to recognise two spiritual forces at work in the church.

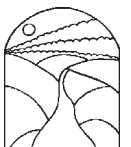
Failed to recognise the Holy Spirit.

Failed to recognise the enemy.

How is the enemy at work within the church?

In what way did he fail to recognise the work of the Holy Spirit?

In what way did he fail to recognise the work of the enemy?



In what unacceptable way might Cain have brought the sacrifice?

If the heart is wrong the offering can never be right.

What do you think is needed to make a sacrifice acceptable?

What was Cain's response when God did not look favourable on his offering? v7

Some believe that Cain's anger was that of bewilderment, he did not understand why his sacrifice was not acceptable, raising crops was harder work than tending flocks.

If this is true does it excuse Cain?

Did God reject Cain?

No he didn't; he talked to him and warned him of danger and encouraged him to do right. It is clear that Cain and Abel were real contrasts. I imagine there was a history of tension between them. God had room for both of them. Cain was not rejected because of his personality but because of his sin.

Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it." Genesis 4:6

Why was Cain angry? Did he have the right to be angry?

According to the above verse whose responsible for sin?

What obligation does God give us regarding sin?

I believe this is a very important verse when it comes to sin. Sin contains many factors, temptation, genetic predisposition, upbringing, opportunity etc. These are sin crouching at our door, but they are no excuse.

Humankind has shown dramatic inability to master sin. *Master it!* cf. Luke 22v31

Read Romans 6v12-16

How does this compare with Genesis 4v6?

What two alternatives do we have regarding sin?

What did God do to help?

How did Cain respond to God's admonition?

Were Cain's actions in the heat of the moment or premeditated?

Why do you think he killed Abel?

What should he have done?

I guess you would call this misdirected anger. Cain was angry at God himself and Abel. Instead of asking why he was angry, instead of dealing with the problem he vented his anger on Abel.

Why do you think Cain took his anger out on Abel?

What did this achieve?

What part did jealousy play in this?

What would have cured this jealousy?

"In your anger do not sin" ...do not give the devil a foothold. Ephesians 4:26

What are the dangers of acting out of anger?

What dangers does jealousy pose for us?

Jude v11 spoke of the way of Cain. ***What was Cain's way?***

It was the way of envy, of violence, unloving and uncaring. The way of surrender to the enemy and refusal to do the things that would bring him God's blessing. According to Hebrew 11v4, he is the antitype of faith. It seems clear that he did not believe there would be any consequences of his actions or judgement on his sin.

Cain denied being 'his brothers keeper'. This denial was an excuse for his actions.

To what extent are we responsible for those around us?

Is this phrase still used as an excuse for actions or our inaction?

Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. Genesis 4:10

And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead. Hebrews 11:4

You have come... to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. Hebrews 12:24

If Abel's blood cries out from the ground what does it say?

If Jesus blood also speaks what does it say?

The contrast here is fascinating. Abel's blood cries out for justice, for vengeance, for retribution, of all the ill's of mankind for all the innocent blood shed through the millennia. Jesus blood cries out for forgiveness and atonement, a better word.

What effect did the murder have on Cain?

He was alienated from his family, he became a restless wanderer. Sin has the same effect on us.

Bible Studies

Cain and Abel

Read Genesis 4v1-12

Adam and Eve's sin seemed small, and we assume they went on to live basic good lives, but the damage had already been done. In this passage we see the effects of their disobedience. This effect was far beyond what they could have imagined. They sowed the wind and reaped the whirlwind.

Abel kept flocks Cain worked the soil.

Anthropologists describe a fundamental conflict between those who raise crops and those who herd animals, their needs are conflicting. (it is possible this is reflected in the command against combining wool and linen in a garment. Deut 22v11)

What did Cain offer? What did Abel offer?

What reasons do you think they had for bringing sacrifices in the first place?

There is no record that God commanded them to bring sacrifices. Nor are we told what the sacrifices were for although the implication is that they were firstfruit offerings. Deuteronomy 18v4 Numbers 18v8-14. The reasons could have been;

To seek forgiveness for sin.	As an act of worship to God.
As a token of thanks to God.	As a declaration of faith in God's provision.

The Hebrew 'minah', suggests the goal as worship, rather than repentance. In all likelihood it was a combination of these reasons.

What was God's attitude towards the two sacrifices?

The question is why was Cain's sacrifice unacceptable? **There are three possibilities:**

1

Some have suggested that the absence of blood was the problem.

Were crop offerings acceptable to God? Leviticus 2v1

Under the law, sin offerings required blood, Leviticus 6v30. This possibility rests on the assumption that this was an offering for sin. As we have seen the Hebrew suggests this was not a sin offering. (*Minah* is used of the grain offering) What is more Cain's, brought fat portions. Under the Law, these were not sufficient for sin either, (they were only a part of the sin offerings, Leviticus 4v8-10.) Blood is not never mentioned in this passage.

It is certainly true that God will not accept any old sacrifice for sin, it had to be a blood sacrifice. Today God will not accept, for example; good works, gifts to the church, etc. as sin offerings. Instead we must confess our sin and believe in Jesus, 'once for all' sacrifice on the Cross, as our means of forgiveness. No other sacrifice is acceptable.

Some have suggested that Abel's sacrifice was unacceptable because it was the fruit of the soil, consequently the product of the curse, 3v17. This is tenuous.

2

There is a Jewish tradition that states that Abel brought the best of His flock while Cain did not bring his best but brought substandard produce. If it was a firstfruits offering it did not have to be the best only the first. Maybe Cain gave leftovers.

3

The third possibility is that the offering was acceptable but not the way it was offered.

By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead. Hebrews 11v:4 Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous. 1 John 3v12 Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam's error; they have been destroyed in Korah's rebellion. Jude v11

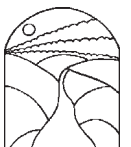
What do these three passages tell us about the problem with Cain's sacrifice?

What does Hebrews mean when it says that Abel's sacrifice was an act of faith?

God says If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? It was not the sacrifice that God rejected but Cain himself. I do not think it was the sacrifice but the way that it was brought and perhaps things that had gone before, that were the problem.

When you sacrifice a fellowship offering to the LORD, sacrifice it in such a way that it will be accepted on your behalf. Leviticus 19:5

(lack of
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evil dispo-
sition,
greed)



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What two alternatives do we have regarding sin?

What did God do to help?

How did Cain respond to God's admonition?

Were Cain's actions in the heat of the moment or premeditated?

Why do you think he killed Abel?

What should he have done?

I guess you would call this misdirected anger. Cain was angry at God himself and Abel. Instead of asking why he was angry, instead of dealing with the problem he vented his anger on Abel.

Why do you think Cain took his anger out on Abel?

What did this achieve?

What part did jealousy play in this?

What would have cured this jealousy?

"In your anger do not sin" ...do not give the devil a foothold. Ephesians 4:26

What are the dangers of acting out of anger?

What dangers does jealousy pose for us?

Jude v11 spoke of the way of Cain. ***What was Cain's way?***

It was the way of envy, of violence, unloving and uncaring. The way of surrender to the enemy and refusal to do the things that would bring him God's blessing. According to Hebrew 11v4, he is the antitype of faith. It seems clear that he did not believe there would be any consequences of his actions or judgement on his sin.

Cain denied being 'his brothers keeper'. This denial was an excuse for his actions.

To what extent are we responsible for those around us?

Is this phrase still used as an excuse for actions or our inaction?

Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. Genesis 4:10

And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead. Hebrews 11:4

You have come... to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. Hebrews 12:24

If Abel's blood cries out from the ground what does it say?

If Jesus blood also speaks what does it say?

The contrast here is fascinating. Abel's blood cries out for justice, for vengeance, for retribution, of all the ill's of mankind for all the innocent blood shed through the millennia. Jesus blood cries out for forgiveness and atonement, a better word.

What effect did the murder have on Cain?

He was alienated from his family, he became a restless wanderer. Sin has the same effect on us.

Bible Studies

Cain and Abel

Read Genesis 4v1-12

Adam and Eve's sin seemed small, and we assume they went on to live basic good lives, but the damage had already been done. In this passage we see the effects of their disobedience. This effect was far beyond what they could have imagined. They sowed the wind and reaped the whirlwind.

Abel kept flocks Cain worked the soil.

Anthropologists describe a fundamental conflict between those who raise crops and those who herd animals, their needs are conflicting. (it is possible this is reflected in the command against combining wool and linen in a garment. Deut 22v11)

What did Cain offer? What did Abel offer?

What reasons do you think they had for bringing sacrifices in the first place?

There is no record that God commanded them to bring sacrifices. Nor are we told what the sacrifices were for although the implication is that they were firstfruit offerings. Deuteronomy 18v4 Numbers 18v8-14. The reasons could have been;

To seek forgiveness for sin. As an act of worship to God.
As a token of thanks to God. As a declaration of faith in God's provision.

The Hebrew 'minah', suggests the goal as worship, rather than repentance. In all likelihood it was a combination of these reasons.

What was God's attitude towards the two sacrifices?

The question is why was Cain's sacrifice unacceptable? **There are three possibilities:**

1

Some have suggested that the absence of blood was the problem.

Were crop offerings acceptable to God? Leviticus 2v1

Under the law, sin offerings required blood, Leviticus 6v30. This possibility rests on the assumption that this was an offering for sin. As we have seen the Hebrew suggests this was not a sin offering. (*Minah* is used of the grain offering) What is more Cain's, brought fat portions. Under the Law, these were not sufficient for sin either, (they were only a part of the sin offerings, Leviticus 4v8-10.) Blood is not never mentioned in this passage.

It is certainly true that God will not accept any old sacrifice for sin, it had to be a blood sacrifice. Today God will not accept, for example; good works, gifts to the church, etc. as sin offerings. Instead we must confess our sin and believe in Jesus, 'once for all' sacrifice on the Cross, as our means of forgiveness. No other sacrifice is acceptable.

Some have suggested that Abel's sacrifice was unacceptable because it was the fruit of the soil, consequently the product of the curse, 3v17. This is tenuous.

2

There is a Jewish tradition that states that Abel brought the best of His flock while Cain did not bring his best but brought substandard produce. If it was a firstfruits offering it did not have to be the best only the first. Maybe Cain gave leftovers.

3

The third possibility is that the offering was acceptable but not the way it was offered.

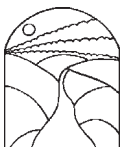
By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead. Hebrews 11v:4 Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous. 1 John 3v12 Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam's error; they have been destroyed in Korah's rebellion. Jude v11

What do these three passages tell us about the problem with Cain's sacrifice?

What does Hebrews mean when it says that Abel's sacrifice was an act of faith?

God says If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? It was not the sacrifice that God rejected but Cain himself. I do not think it was the sacrifice but the way that it was brought and perhaps things that had gone before, that were the problem.

When you sacrifice a fellowship offering to the LORD, sacrifice it in such a way that it will be accepted on your behalf. Leviticus 19:5



from you sooner or later God will give you back. While it is gone you are weak and hopefully he can kill you. God can give life to the dead and He will do so, but while you are spiritually dead (not responding to God), Satan hopes to destroy you. Put you in a place where you will not find your way back to God. The only one who can let this happen is you, God is, after all on your side. Watch what he steal from you.

Most of all Satan wants to steal people from God's Kingdom.

Most of the time Satan is not an armed robber, he is a cat burglar, you may not even realise you have been robbed until way down the track.

Revelation 12:10

He is the Accuser of the Brethren

What does this mean?

How is he going to accuse you?

Who is he going to accuse you to?

We call this condemnation, it is when Satan starts to point the finger at us. Most of the time it is internal. It is Satan lying to us.

How are you going to overcome this voice of condemnation?

1 Thessalonians 2:18

He is a hinderer

What is he going to try to hinder?

What kind of things is he not going to oppose?



Blinding the eyes

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 2 Corinthians 4:4

What does Satan do to the unsaved?

Why?

When you get save, you wonder why everyone else can't see the amazing truth you have found. Well this is why.

What implications does this have for us in our witnessing?

Witnessing needs to be accompanied by prayer warfare. People will not respond to our witnessing unless we pray. Like always the spiritual and the physical have to go together.

If Satan has blinded their eyes does this mean witnessing is a waste of time?



The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, 2 Thessalonians 2v9

And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. 2 Corinthians 11v14

What do these verses tell us about the way Satan operates?



How do you defeat the Enemy?

I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. 1 John 2:13

At this point a lesson of spiritual warfare always seems the order of the day, but this would be to miss the obvious.

When you throw out his lies you have defeated the enemy.

When you resist temptation you have defeated the enemy.

When you love your enemy you have defeated the enemy.

When you do God's will and what is right you have defeated the enemy.

They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Revelation 12v11

The blood speaks of our redemption, the word our lifestyle and authority.

Keys in overcoming.

Recognise his work,

Stand firm

Resist him

Bind & loose

Enemy can only work in your life if you let him. You have the authority.

Look at the thing that are stopping you being effective as a Christian - that is where you will find the enemies work

Bible Studies

Satan II



Satan is a defeated foe.

Christ Jesus... disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. Colossians 2:15

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

And God placed all things under his feet Ephesians 1:22

The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. 1 John 3:8

who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him. 1 Peter 3:22

Yet Satan is still active, the Bible tells of his final demise, but that is still in the future.

“In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. Hebrews 2:8

Satan is currently defeated, but still active. Jesus has triumphed, but sentence has yet to be fully carried out. This leaves us with an enemy who will attack, but it also leaves us with more than enough resources to defeat him.



We have authority over the enemy.

I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. Luke 10:19

Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. 1 Peter 5:8-9

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. James 4:7

You do not have to fear the enemy. He doesn't have authority over you. You have authority over him.



The Work of the Enemy

John 8:44

He is a Liar and a murder

Four times in this verse Jesus tells us that Satan is a liar. This implies something else, Satan is active in communicating.

How does Satan lie to us?

What effect are these lies going to have if we believe or even entertain them?

Can you trust anything Satan says? What can you trust?

Matthew 4v3

He is a Tempter

What does this mean the enemy is going to do?

What is his goal in doing this?

Revelation 12v9

He is a Diverted, leads astray

What does this mean?

Why do you think diversion works so well?

John 10:10

He is a Thief a murder & destroyer

What do you think he wants to steal from us?

Your Joy, your peace, your faith, your time, your assurance of salvation etc.

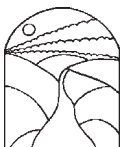
Stealing, murdering and destroying, as I understand it is a process. What Satan steals

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The battle

God & Satan are not equal forces nor do they need each other.

Satan, an angel is powerful God is all powerful

Satan, one place at a time God is everywhere

Satan - great knowledge & wisdom God is all knowing and His wisdom is total.

If you want to find an equal, look at another Archangel, Gabriel or Michael

If Satan can only be in one place at a time, what are our chances of meeting him?

Consequently when we say talk about Satan what we really mean is Satan's forces, of which there are plenty.

In what way do we give the Devil undue credit?

Christians often end up blaming Satan for things he never did.

It is quite obvious that there is a battle going on between God and Satan. Even a quick read of Revelation reveals that the book is as much about the final defeat of Satan as it is our salvation.

Why did Jesus Come to earth? 1 John 3v8

What 'work' do you think John is talking about?

It is also clear that this battle is being fought in the hearts and minds of human beings.



So why doesn't God snap his fingers, destroy Satan and save us a heap of grief?

As I understand it, the battle between God and Satan is an ideological issue. It is not about power, God is all powerful, Satan is not. Somewhere down the line Satan has accused God of being wrong in his actions. In all likelihood, regarding the creation of man, his free will and God's desire for fellowship with him.

His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, Ephesians 3:10

What is God proving through mankind?

Who is he proving it to?

In other places rulers and authorities in heavenly realms, speaks of the enemy. Eph 6v12

God is looking for a people who will love Him unconditionally. I believe the world we live in is the only kind of world in which such love and faith can be proved genuine. God is using you to condemn Satan's sin & to prove him wrong. At the same time to call a people for himself, not forced to obey, not even awed by God's majesty into obeying, but following Him by our own free will.

Names

Think about what these names tell us about this nature.

Isaiah 14v12

Lucifer

Morning star, Light bearer (Lt)

Zechariah 3v1

Satan

Lit the Satan.

Satan is a Hebrew word, it means the accuser or adversar. One who is against God and us. It is a description not a name, in Hebrew it is never *Satan*, but 'the satan' lit 'the accuser.'

Revelation 12v10

Accuser of brethren.

This is what he is doing all the time.

Matthew 4v1

Devil

The word Devil is from the Greek (diabolos {diabolical = of the devil} it means slanderer. It is the Greek equivalent of Satan.

John 12v31

Prince of this world

2 Corinthians 4v4

God of this age

What do you think these names mean? cf 1 John 5v19

Matthew 6v13

The Evil one

1 Peter 5v8

Your enemy

or the enemy, 1 Timothy 5v14

Bible Studies

Satan I

What do people believe about the devil today?

Most people don't believe he exists, others think; sulphur, horns and a pitchfork.

Is either view Scriptural?

Among Christians there are very opposite ideas about Satan.

Either we have an unhealthy fascination with things demonic. Or we ignore him.

We either see him as all-powerful, or so weak that he is not worth worrying about.

Are any of these views scriptural?

Do you think these views depict Satan's own propaganda?

You will find reference to him frequently in the Scriptures. It is dangerous to be ignorant or to disregard something Scripture mentions so often. Nor can we choose the bits of the Bible we will believe and ignore the bits that don't appeal to us.

Ignoring Satan will not make him go away.

Being innocent will afford us no protection.

Paul says: For we are not unaware of his schemes. 2 Corinthians 2v11. Yet frequently we are unaware of his schemes and consequently we are often outwitted them.

When you look at the world around us you have to believe in the devil, otherwise you have to believe that God is either very weak, or Himself evil. There has to be an explanation of the work of evil in the world.

"As far as God goes I'm a nonbeliever.. But when it comes to the devil- well that's something else... the devil keeps advertising.. the devil does lots of commercials."

William Blatty (The Exorcist)

Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

Resist him, standing firm in the faith, 1 Peter 5:8-9

What we do believe.

Jesus Said "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Luke 10v18

Basically we believe that Satan was one of the angelic host, an archangel, along with Gabriel and Michael, who because of rebellion against God, was thrown out of heaven. All this rebellion happened prior to the creation, but seems to be linked to it.

The Bible only gives us very veiled references to this event.



Read Isaiah 14v12-15

The Latin for 'Morning Star', is where the name 'Lucifer' comes from, it means *shining one*. Did you notice the 5 'I wills'? Each of them refers to a different area of deity, Satan wanting to be like God.

When Satan tempted Eve what did he promise? Genesis 3v5

According to 1 Timothy 3v6, what was Satan's problem?



Read Ezekiel 28v12-19

The king of Tyre is here presented as a cipher for Satan.

How does this passage describe Lucifer in his pre fallen state?

Why was he cast down?

Did not fall alone

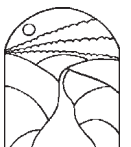
Revelation 12v7-8&4

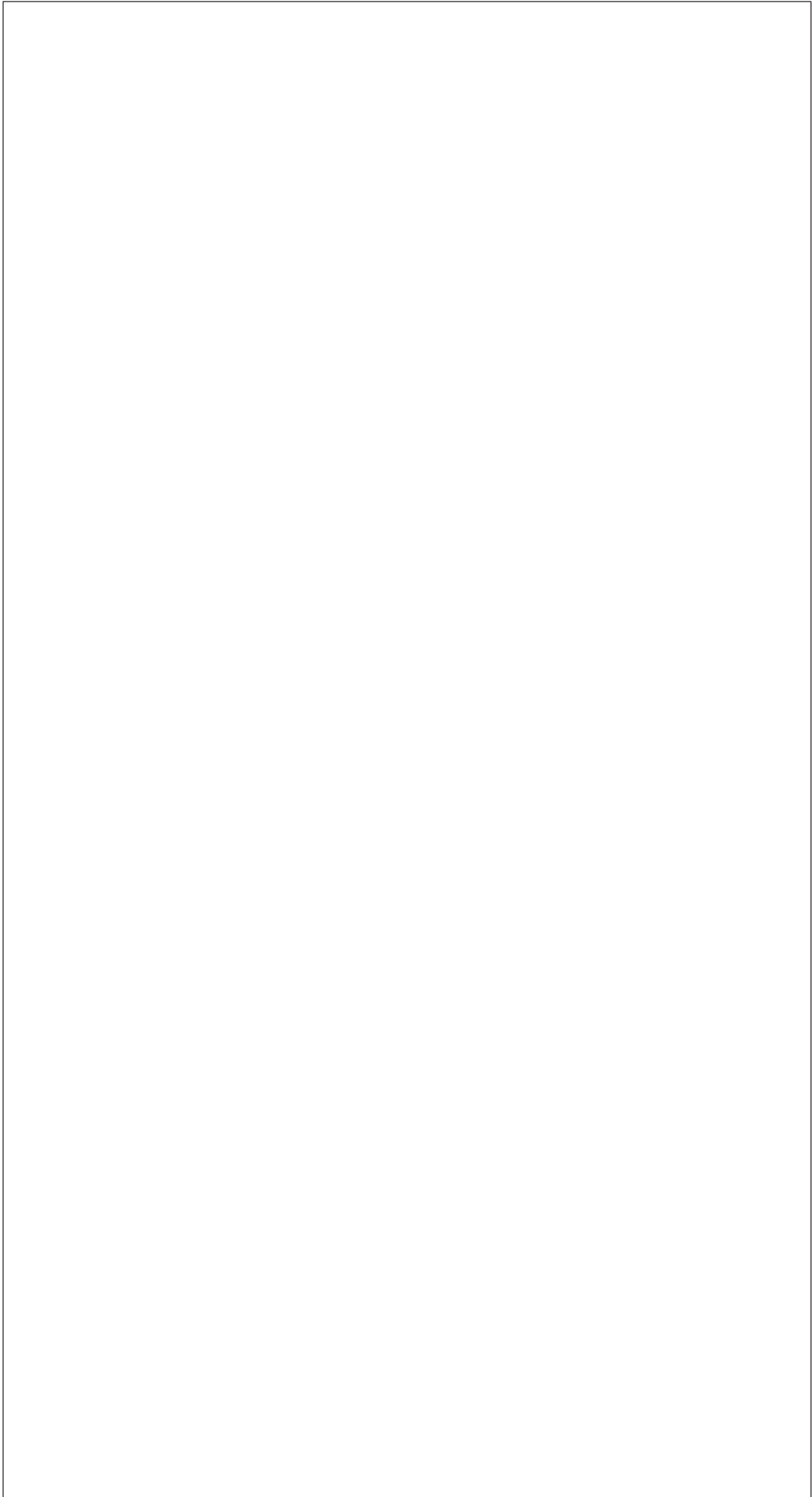
2 Peter 2v4

Jude 6

Some people think the reference in Revelation 12 to a third of the stars falling to earth, means a third of the angelic host fell with Satan. In other places angels are alluded to as stars. Job 38v7.

Satan is a fallen angel - fallen on account of pride.





Bible Studies

Some ideas for answering the last questions

What were the conditions that marked Jesus birth?

Poverty, rejection, humility, shame, obscurity, secrecy.

Why do you think God planned this kind of birth?

(What points do you think He wanted to make?)

King David came from obscurity to be king.

That Jesus was one of us. He suffered the same indignities we suffer.

It put Jesus among the ordinary people.

It showed servanthood.

Do any of the themes in Jesus birth recur in his life?

Yes Jesus continued to live a simple life.

He associated with ordinary people.

He came to serve not to be served.

Luke 9:58 Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

He continued to be found by those who would humble themselves. And missed by those who wouldn't

What contrasts spring to mind?

Glories of heaven, usual kind of king, second coming,

The ways that He could have been born

The way the Jews expected Jesus to come.

The way we expect important people to behave

The honour we want for ourselves.

2 Cor 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

How does Jesus birth fit with His character and purpose?

It describes these things Very well. His care for ordinary people, humanity, simplicity

Can you imagine a Jesus born in regal splendour acting the way he did or humbling himself on the cross?

What effect is this story intended to illicit in us?

This is a Jesus we can relate to, know and love.

What difference should it make to the way we live?

Loose our pride or insistence on position and respect.

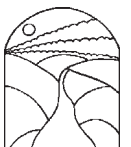
Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. Phil 2:5...

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he owned or had inherited, property in Bethlehem, a field or even a house. It is fascinating that the location of Jesus birth, prophesied in Scripture was facilitated by the Roman Emperor.

The journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem would have taken the best part of a week.



**Would you take your pregnant wife of such a journey?
How would you cope with a donkey ride in such a condition?
Why did Joseph take Mary with him?**

There must have been a compelling reason and it is unlikely that the census required her presence. Mary's position, pregnant and unmarried was precarious. By not divorcing her Joseph took responsibility for the baby and included himself in the scorn. They were probably glad to get away from Nazareth's gossip and perhaps worst.

We envisage Joseph and Mary arriving in Bethlehem the evening of Jesus birth.

Does Luke actually say this?

While they were there, is what Luke says, no time frame is given. Our traditional understanding could be right. Mary spent the first three with Elizabeth her cousin. She must have been in the last trimester of her pregnancy.

Why was it a problem finding accommodation?

Joseph must have had family in Bethlehem why not stay with them?

You would expect a pregnant women to be given generous treatment. Was it because Mary was pregnant and unmarried?



The Inn

Our understanding of the Christmas story has Joseph knocking on the door of a 'motel' and being turned away. This is quite unlikely

This kind of inn was not common in Israel. . It was very un-Jewish and associated with the seedier side of life. It is highly unlikely that Bethlehem had this kind of an inn. (The story of the Good Samaritan uses a totally different word for inn). The Jews took hospitality very seriously and entertained strangers in their homes.

The word used for inn is *Katayma*, it is the same word translated *guest room* in Luke 22v11. It could be used of an inn, but it usually meant a room, in a private home, dedicated to hospitality . If the family was poor it could be a corner of a room. Depending on the context, it could mean a billet for soldiers or even a camp site.

We do not know how long they were there, or where they stayed, before the baby was born.

Several scenarios are possible; That they arrived the night of the birth to find no room. Or that they were staying in a *Katayma* but because of the crowding had to move out for the birth or wanted to move out for the birth.



In a manger

**Does Luke say that Jesus was born in a stable?
Why do we assume this?**

A poor families house was often divide between a higher area for the family and a lower one for the animals. It could have been a shed adjacent to the house. Or as tradition says a cave. It is even possible that it was out of doors.

Why is it significant that no room was found for Jesus birth?



**What were the conditions that marked Jesus birth?
Why do you think God planned this kind of birth?**

(What points do you think He wanted to make?)

Do any of the themes in Jesus birth recur in his life?

What contrasts spring to mind?

How does Jesus birth fit with His character and purpose?

What effect is this story intended to illicit in us?

What difference should it make to the way we live?

Bible Studies

The Census, Inn & Manger

There are many questions about the nativity account that never get asked. So much of our understanding of the subject comes from nativity plays and Christmas cards. It is good to do a reality check every now and again.

Read Luke 2v1-7

Where did Joseph normally live?



The Census

The problems start with Quirinius. Syria was the Roman administrative centre over Israel at the time. The problem is that Quirinius was governor of Syria between 6-9AD. Too late for the birth of Christ. We know he conducted a census in 6AD. Acts 5v37, *Josephus Antiquities 18v26*. We also know that in Egypt a census happened every 14 years.

Jesus was born around (or before) 4BC. So how are we to explain Quirinius being Governor of Syria at that time?

There is some evidence (an incomplete inscription) that Quirinius had a previous term of duty in Syria between 10BC and 7BC. If so the census would date from this time.

Why does Luke describe this as the first census?

Probably to differentiate it from the second, more famous one, he mentions in Acts 5v37. (Luke and Acts are two volumes of the same work). Why would he say first if there had only been one?

The second possibility also centres around the word 'first' it can mean prior or before. In which case Luke is saying the *Census before the one under Quirinius*.

Josephus does record that about this time the whole Jewish nation swore an oath of allegiance to Caesar *Antiquities 17v42*. This could well be Luke's census.

Justin, a Christian author in the middle of the second century, writing to Roman Christians, claimed that Quirinius' census could still be examined. I Apology 34

As far as we know Augustus did not give an edict proclaiming a census across the whole Roman world at one time. We do know that he was very keen on taxation and statistics. According to a Roman historian (Taticus) after Augustus' death, tax statistics from the empire were found to have been written in his own handwriting! This command was probably a general one compelling each province to return such data, rather than a command for a specific empire wide census.



The return to Bethlehem

Why did Joseph go to Bethlehem?

Joseph's clan originated in Bethlehem and it appears most of his family still lived there.

Why was it important for Joseph to return to Bethlehem?

The Messiah had to be descended from King David. Isaiah 11v1, 2 Samuel 7v12-13, "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. 6 In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness. Jeremiah 23:5-6 What is more Jesus had to be born in Bethlehem. Micah 5v2, Matthew 5v2.

Generally with a census, you want people to stay still, not move. The order to return to your ancestral home seems very strange, and unlikely to help in collecting the tax.

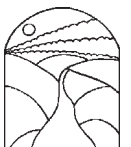
We know of an Egyptian census in 104BC where exactly this command was given. Dio Cassius, a Roman writer also describes the process of collecting taxes around the time of Christ's birth. According to his explanation people returned to property they owned so that it could be assessed and taxed. This is probably the reason for Joseph's journey,

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look from their eyes? What makes them behave the way they do?

Am I seeing this situation clearly, realistically?

In the middle of a problem it is very hard to see it clearly, our emotions get involved and we see the worst, we give in to paranoia and deception.

Is there a spiritual side to this problem?

Spiritual things need to be solved spiritually, i.e. through prayer, spiritual warfare, fasting etc. It is vital that we ask God to show us the problem for what it is, if we want to avoid deceiving ourselves.

3

What options do I have?

It is a good idea to figure out what different options are open to us. What can we do. Mostly we only see one course of action when in fact there are several.

What do I want to do?

What will the consequences be for each action?

(For ourselves others and before God?)

Which ones will please God? Which displease him?

4

How does God see this problem?

Now we know what the problem is, we need to see it from God's perspective.

How does he see the problem?

What does He want to achieve from it?

How does God expect me to act?

What does he expect me to do?

When we are faced with difficulties we tend to become egocentric, but God often has a bigger view, he wants to impact other, he wants me to grow.

For example we work with a difficult person, we pray Lord remove them or change them. The truth is that it is us God wants to change, He is using them to knock some rough edges off our character. Or maybe God want to show them Jesus through us.

How will this effect the way we behave?

Are God's goals and our goals usually the same?

A good illustration of this would be the persecution that befell the church in Jerusalem. It would have been fine to pray, "Lord stop the persecution".

What was God's reason for allowing it? Acts 8v4

When Hagar ran from Sari her mistress God told her to go back and submit. ***Why?***

Another aspect of this is seeing the problem through the eyes of faith. 2 Kings 6v15-17. Through what God promises not through what we see.

How might we have to do this?

We need to do what is right and bring glory to God. 1 Corinthians 10v31-11v1

5

What does the Bible say?

The Bible is an incredibly diverse book, what ever problem you face someone in the Bible faced it or there is a verse that speaks to it. Reading the Bible in advance will give you the material to deal with problems and the wisdom to solve them.

6

What does wise council say?

Sometimes talking things over with someone helps to put a problem in perspective, they may have a different way of seeing the situation, they may see things you have missed or have suggestions you never thought of. Others faced this problem and found a way through. 1 Cor 10:13

Who would be a good person to talk to?

Who would be a bad person to talk to?

7

Is there an area of my life that is allowing this to happen?

Often the problems we face are connected to sin, dealing with the sin helps solve the problem. Many of our problems come because our lives are out of sync with God's will and directions. We have to examine ourselves to see if there is anything in us that is creating the problem, or making it worse.

How are you going to know if there is something you need to change?

Bible Studies

How to solve your problems

Well I guess that the title is a little deceiving. To try and solve our problems by ourselves is foolish. We need God's help. Jesus made the following statement.

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." John 16:33

One thing is certain we are going to face problems, everyone does.
Some of these are temptations from the Enemy, who wants us to fail & fall
Some of them are tests that God takes us through to prove our faith in Him.

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. 1 Peter 1:6-7

Either way, why do you think that God allows us to go through difficulties?

Each problem we face affords us two opportunities, to learn, grow and mature or to fail.
If we face a difficulty, and are found wanting, can they still benefit us?

Peter denied the Lord, you could say he was found wanting. But he learned from his failure and next time he was armed with experience. He never denied the Lord again. Problems come in all shapes and sizes, Some are irritants some are life threatening, some are sudden, some are drawn out, some are chronic, others are short lived. Some are internal, like illness, doubt, fear, depression. Others are external, people, jobs, cars etc.

Here are some practical suggestions.



Pray about it.

Philippians 4v6 James 5v13 John 14:13

What effect is praying going to have?

There is an obvious answer to this! But there are also some less obvious ones.

What did Philippians 4v6 say would happen when we prayed?

The next question is what do we pray?

We pray for a resolution to the problems but we also should pray for guidance and wisdom, as well as strength.

Often you will find in Scripture that when someone prayed, God did not directly solve the problem, but he did show them how. When they obeyed, the problem was solved.

Can you think of any examples?



Give the problem to God and ask Him for help.

Sometimes it is good to pray with someone.

Identify what you need and pray specifically for it.



Define the problem.

LUKE 18v40-43

This is one of several occasions when Jesus asked this question. Surely Jesus could see he was blind, surely He knew he wanted to be healed. ***So why did he ask?***

Some of our problems are obvious and easy to define, with others it is not until we sit down and think things through that we realise what is happening and we find what is at the bottom of the problem. People are usually certain what the problem is, (someone else!) often the real problem is quite different, we have to delve deeper.

How do the other people in this situation solve this problem?

If you can see things through their eyes you will know how to act to solve the problem. What other ways are there of looking at this situation?

For example you are having a run in with your teens/parents, how does the situation

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Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. Psalms 119:105
 The Psalmist saw God's word, his commands as a light for his feet. God's light sustains him.

What path is the psalmist walking?

What did God's light enable him to do?

What is the result of having no light to walk in? John 11v10

In the dark, men break into houses, but by day they shut themselves in; they want nothing to do with the light. Job 24:16

What does light represent in scripture?

2 Corinthians 4v6	Knowledge	
Ephesians 5v9	Purity	1 Thessalonians 5v5
John 3v20-21	Examination	Psalms 90v8
Ephesians 5v13	Revelation	Psalms 139v11, Job 12:22
Hebrews 10v32	the gospel	2 Corinthians 4v4
Isaiah 53v11	Blessing, full life	Psalms 56v13
Isaiah 9v1-2	Freedom	Lamentations 3v2

To this list we could add openness.

Which of these do you think walking in the light refers to?

How does each of these relate to us as we walk in the light?

Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away. Genesis 5:24
 Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so? Amos 3:3

So far we have concentrated on the *light* part of the phrase.

What does the walking part mean?

Clearly our walk is the way we live, how we behave in the various environments we encounter. Walking also implies relationship with God. It is an active, progressive thing, something we must consciously do.

Walking in the light is about the kind of relationship you have with God. It is also a matter of an attitude of heart. Walking in the light means living in sincerity and humility before God. Doing our very best to live the way he would have us live.

Making every effort to do his will.

Making every effort to deal with sin.

Making every effort to grow.

Making every effort to learn more of God.

Walking in the Light is the natural and intended way for a Christian to live.

If you cherish sin in your hearts are you walking in the light?

Will you have anything to hide if you are walking in the light?

If you sin does that mean you are not walking in the light?

The truth is we all sin, even the best of us. It is the attitude we have towards sin and what we do once we recognise that we have sinned, that show whether we are walking in the light.

If I am walking in the light what attitude will I have towards sin?

If I am walking in the light what will I do when I realise I have sinned?

The opposite attitude is found in the book of Hebrews;

Read Hebrews 10:26-27

What do you think it means by deliberate sin? Isn't all sin deliberate?

The attitude that is betrayed in this passage is one of indifference to sin. It doesn't matter, I can live with it, it's not so bad, God doesn't care.

Such an attitude cannot take repentance seriously and so finds no forgiveness.

If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; Psalm 66:18

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Psalm 51:17

How are you going to walk in the light?

Bible Studies

Walking in the light

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. 1 John 1:7

The question this study plans to answer is, what does it mean to walk in the light?

What are the two results of walking in the light?

Fellowship

Forgiveness

Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. 1 John 2:9-10

What is the evidence of living in the light?

What is the opposite of living in the light?

Walking in the light means walking in love. **Love for who?**

How does this result in fellowship?

You are either in the light or the darkness, there is no twilight.

John is taking a clear swing at the Gnostics, (an early cult that infected the church) they claimed enlightenment, (knowledge of God), but they did not show it in their actions or by their love.

Hating your brother here means failing to act out of love and self sacrifice, failure to deny oneself, to spend yourself on behalf of the needy. For John, it starts with indifference, not the hostility we usually associate with hate.

Love for others presents no stumbling stone, either for ourselves or for others, on the other hand hatred will trip us up every time.

How does Love helps us avoid sinning. Romans 13:10.

And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love. 2 John 1:6

Walking in the light means several things, some obvious some not so obvious. Primarily it means living in purity, but the verse has to mean more than, 'if anyone lives in holiness his sins are forgiven'. Holy people are not the ones for whom forgiveness is a burning issue.

Where did John get this idea from?

The words of Jesus

Read John 8v12

Walking in the light means...?

Following Jesus

Obeying, being like, Relationship etc.

Read John 12v35

Who is the light?

Walking in the light means...?

Obeying his teachings

The person who walks in the light knows where he is going.

Walking in the light requires trusting in Jesus.

Old Testament words

Read Psalm 89v15

What is the light?

What does it mean to walk in this light? & Psalm 90v8

Read Isaiah 2v5

What does it mean to walk in the light?

There are two other passages in the OT that help us.

Job gives us a graphic description of walking in the light. **Job 29v2-3**. He is surrounded by darkness, and in this darkness he must live, but God's light shines around him wherever he goes.

For Job this light meant that God was watching over him, protecting him and examining him. It also represented God's intimate friendship.

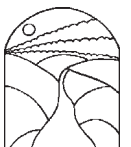
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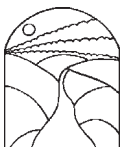
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Who should we be loyal to?



In what way should we express our loyalty to each of these?

People (young) show amazing loyalty to Musicians, movie stars, Sportsmen/women etc.

Why do you think this is?

Sometimes we have divided loyalties, we know we must be loyal but who to?

Can you place the list of people/things we should be loyal to in order?

I am quite mistrusting of these orders, they tend to be artificial. In truth, circumstances change the order. They also tend to create false conflicts. Eg 'I must always put God before family'. Often putting family first, is putting God first. **1 Timothy 5:8**. The conflict is artificial.

Sometimes it is very important to know who has priority demands on our loyalty and who doesn't.

In what kind of a relationship does Loyalty arise?

In what kind of a relationship is loyalty not going to arise?

Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. Philippians 4:3

What kind of effect do you think having loyal people around had on Paul?

It is one of my basic philosophies that you always root for the home team.

If we are loyal to someone and they fail us what should our response be?

Of course it depends on the circumstances, When a position is adopted that is contrary to God's word, loyalties will have to be broken. At other times loyalty has to remain, even against disagreements. Would you give up on your children because they behaved badly? Does God give up on you when you do the same?

An American writer made the statement; "My country, right or wrong" We could adapt it, for the sack of argument, would you agree with;

My Children, right or wrong?

My Church, right or wrong?

The question is where do you draw the line?

Can you explain King David's strange behaviour in this passage?

Read 1 Samuel 24v1-7

An offended brother is more unyielding than a fortified city, and disputes are like the barred gates of a citadel. Proverbs 18:19

How highly do you think God considers loyalty

Do you think people have the right to expect loyalty?

Who do think you should expect loyalty from?

Does God have the right to expect loyalty from us?

Bible Studies

Loyalty

O LORD, God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Israel, keep this desire in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts loyal to you. 1 Chronicles 29:18
their hearts were not loyal to him, they were not faithful to his covenant. Psalms 78:37

Loyal is not a frequently used word in Scripture. The NIV uses it to translate the word }wkn, (Na-Hon) which means *to be right with*. Another word which contains the idea of loyalty is }man, (Na-Ah-Mean), this is usually translated, as it is above, Faithful.

What is the difference between Faithfulness and Loyalty?

This is a hard one, the first word used to describe faithful in my dictionary is loyal, and the first word to describe loyal is faithful. Loyalty includes the idea of devotion. You tend to be faithful in doing something, but loyal to someone or something. You may vote for a party loyal but not be faithful to its beliefs.

The word }man, come from family of verbs with the root meaning to believe. It is the same root that we get Amen (}ma) from. To be loyal (}man) is the passive form of the verb (}mam) Ma-Ah-Mean to believe. Another word (}nma) means faithfulness.

What link do you think there is between loyalty and belief?

What is Loyalty?

If you are loyal to something or someone how will you act?

Loyalty implies ownership. Ownership is when you take something and treat it as belonging to you. If you are loyal to a sports team, then it is because you identify yourself with them. You are likely to talk about *us* rather than *they*. No one ever heard a crowd of supporters shouting "*They won the cup*".

We too will serve the LORD, because he is our God." Joshua 24:18

"As for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not forsaken him. 2 Chronicles 13:10

For this God is our God for ever and ever; Psalms 48:14

For he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care. Psalms 95:7

In that day they will say, "Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation." Isaiah 25:9

They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, "They are my people," and they will say, "The LORD is our God." Zechariah 13:9

What kind of ownership is shown in these verses?

What things result from this ownership

(serve, forsake, care, assurance, rejoicing)

Do you think ownership is important?

If you cannot see God as your God, Church as your Church, Youth group as your Youth group etc.

What is likely to be the result?

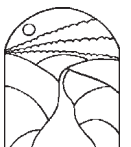
If someone is loyal, what else will they be?

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