**OLD TESTAMENT + NEW TESTAMENT = THE BIBLE,**

**AND ITS 21ST CENTURY RELEVANCE**

**AIM: For some, the Bible is an antiquated and outdated book written by men (“white” “men”) to further oppress and diminish certain groups of people (including people of color, women, immigrants, etc.) This lesson will reinforce that the Bible still remains a Book that reveals God’s purposes and plans for human life and provides the instructions for humans to establish and sustain holistic salvation.**

1. The Bible is a Book of Faith. **What does that mean?**
2. **VIEW THE OLD TESTAMENT AND NEW TESTAMENT AS TWO INDIVIDUAL THINGS WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE WHOLE**
	1. Can a bird fly without two wings? A bird needs two wings to fly
	2. Can a human walk (effectively) without two legs?
	3. Can a human see (effectively) with one eye? – peripheral vision
3. The Bible is One Book with Two sections: Old Testament and New Testament

**THE OLD TESTAMENT IS STILL RELEVANT: JESUS DID NOT DESTROY THE LAW**

**Matthew 5:17-20 *17****“****Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets****.* ***I did not come to destroy but to fulfill****.* ***18****For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.****19Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven****;* ***but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.******20****For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.*

* 1. **INTRODUCTION**
1. Why did Jesus make that statement?
	* 1. This is at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry…
		2. In **Matthew 5:21-48**, Jesus is about to address the law – the rabbis’ interpretation/ understanding/

application of it against Moses’ statement of it and God’s intent of it

* + 1. Jesus wanted everyone to be clear regarding His position relating to the law
	1. Did Jesus destroy the law or the prophets?
		1. Jesus obeyed and taught the law and the prophets (**Matt 5:19, 20**)
		2. **Matthew 19:16-22***,* ***16****Now behold, one came and said to Him, “Good Teacher,* ***what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?****”* ***17****So He said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.* ***But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments****.”* ***18****He said to Him, “****Which ones?****” Jesus said, “‘****You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ 19‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself****.’ ”* ***20****The young man said to Him, “****All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?****”* ***21****Jesus said to him, “****If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me****.”* ***22****But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great*

*possessions*

* + 1. Jesus stands in between: The Law as Bondage and The Law as License
		2. Jesus provides a way of salvation that meets all of the requirements of the law (**Romans 3:21, 22, 31*****21****But now* ***apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known,*** *to which the Law and the Prophets testify.****22This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ****to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile,****31Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law****.* **THE LAW IS FULFILLED**
	1. **WHAT IS THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS?**
		1. Basically, this meant the whole of the Old Testament. However, a strict classification required the

addition of the Hagiographa (hagios = holy, and graphia = writing = holy writings).

* + 1. **The Law, The Prophets and The Writings**
1. **The Law –** The Torah or the Pentateuch
2. **The Prophets**
	* 1. **Former Prophets:** Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings.
		2. **Latter Prophets:** Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel (also known as Major Prophets) and the 12 Minor Prophets.
3. **Writings –** All of the rest
	1. **WHAT DOES “DESTROY” AND “FULFILL” MEAN?**
4. Destroy = To repeal, revoke, rescind, retract. That is, to deny their divine authority; to set people free from the obligation to obey them.
5. Fulfill = To accomplish what was intended in them; to express in its full significance.
	1. **WHAT IS A “JOT” OR “TITTLE”?**
6. Jot = the smallest letter in the Hebrew language. Jot is also *iota*  the smallest Greek letter.
7. Tittle = the little bend or point which serves to distinguish certain similar Hebrew letters [ וּשְׁלֹשִׁים ]
	1. **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO “BREAK” ONE OF THE COMMANDMENTS?**
8. The word “break” means to “relax” or “loose”. We are not to “break”, “relax” or “loose” the commandments
9. Or worse, we are not to teach others to “break”, “relax” or “loose” the commandments
	1. **GREATER RIGHTEOUSNESS THAN THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES…**
		1. Jews who converted to Christianity did more and gave more
		2. From 3 prayers a day to 5 prayers a day // More Tithe

**THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE BIBLE**

1. **If someone told you about something unbelievable or miraculous, would you believe them?**
2. **What if they told you they saw it themselves. Would that change your ability to believe it?**
3. **EYE WITNESS ACCOUNTS**
	* + 1. **JOHN 1:14, *4****And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and* ***we have seen his glory****, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.*
			2. **ACTS 4:20, *20****for we cannot keep from speaking about what* ***we have seen and heard****.”*
			3. **2 Peter 1:16-21,** *16For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,* ***but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty****. 17For he received honor and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.” 18****We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain****.*
			4. **1 John 1:1-**3*, 1 We declare to you what was from the beginning,* ***what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands****, concerning the word of life— 2this life was revealed,* ***and we have seen it and testify to it and declare to you*** *the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us— 3****what we have seen and heard we also declare to you*** *so that you also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.*
		1. **Luke 24:38-43***,* ***38****He said to them, “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?****39Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see, for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have****.”****40****And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.****41****Yet for all their joy they were still disbelieving and wondering, and he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?”****42They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43and he took it and ate in their presence.***
		2. **Jewish historian Flavius Josephus**, **Antiquities 18:63:** “About this time lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he was the achiever of extraordinary deeds and was a teacher of those who accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the Messiah. When he was indicted by the principal men among us and Pilate condemned him to be crucified, those who had come to love him originally did not cease to do so; for he appeared to them on the third day restored to life, as the prophets of the Deity had foretold these and countless other marvelous things about him, and the tribe of the Christians, so named after him, has not disappeared to this day.”
		3. **Jewish historian Flavius Josephus**, **Antiquities 20:200: “**Having such a character [“rash and daring” in the context], Ananus thought that with Festus dead and Albinus still on the way, he would have the proper opportunity. Convening the judges of the Sanhedrin, he brought before them the brother of Jesus who was called the Christ, whose name was James, and certain others…

**THE RELEVANCE OF THE BIBLE**

* 1. **2 Timothy 3:16, 17*,*** *16All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17that the man* [woman] *of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*
		1. All Scripture
		2. Given by inspiration of God. [*theopneustos* = (*theo* – God) and (*pneustos* – breathe) = God-breathed]
		3. And is profitable for: a. **Doctrine** – [teaching] Tells you where the road is
1. **Reproof** – [conviction] Tells you where you got off the road
2. **Correction** – [setting right] Tells you how to get back on the road
3. **Instruction in Righteousness**  Tells you how to stay on the toad
	* 1. Why? To equip you for every good work

**Psalm 119:** This Psalm is a resource for honoring and applying the Word of God in our daily lives as the Psalmist celebrates the **authority, significance and beauty of God’s Word.**

**THE WOMEN: DEACONS, MINISTERS, PASTORS –**

**DID PAUL SAY WHAT THEY SAY PAUL SAID?**

**AIM: The role of women in ministry remains a very controversial topic in many churches. Not only are there multiple views and opinions regarding what women can and cannot do in the church, many have developed their views and opinions from passages in the Bible – specifically Paul. In this lesson, we will examine Paul’s writings and discern if Paul actually said what we say Paul said.**

**INTRODUCTION**

1. Paul’s letters were written to individual churches and pastors in specific communities in response to individual and immediate questions, concerns and/or problems.
2. **Example: Wrote letter to child/grandchild – would the contents directly apply to all children/grandchildren?**
	1. **No – There are specific things you would say to your child/grand based upon specific relationship**
	2. **Yes – there would be some general things that would benefit all children/grandchildren**
3. Examples:
	1. The **church in Corinth** was in a very secular city
		1. Major seaport between Italy and Asia
		2. Outdoor theater to accommodate 20k
		3. Athletic games second to the Olympics
		4. Temple of Aphrodite (1000 prostitutes)
		5. “To act the Corinthian”= to act in an immoral way
		6. The city influenced the children of God /church

g. What were some of the problems in the church in Corinth?

* + - 1. Sexual immorality in the church
			2. Factions in the church
			3. Civic / legal concerns in the church
			4. Apostle worship
	1. The **church in Galatia** was influenced by the Judaizers
		1. Judaizers were people who continued to adhere to the Jewish customs and laws after receiving salvation through Jesus, the Christ.
		2. The Judaizers came from the Jerusalem church to his churches in Galatia, stressing the need for Gentiles to be circumcised and keep the law.
		3. Consequently, the Judaizers limited Christian freedom and caused divisions the church.
	2. **The church in Philippi** was supportive of Paul’s ministry
		1. Paul had a special relationship with the Philippian church. In part, because the church supported Paul financially and emotionally during his ministry
		2. Although Paul is writing to the church from prison, he encouraged the Philippians to remain steadfast in their faith and to persevere through trials.
		3. Paul also expressed gratitude for the assistance brought to him by Epaphroditus.
1. Therefore, in each letter, it is important to discern between :
	1. The individual and immediate questions, concerns and/or problems needing to be addressed ***in that church***
	2. The cultural and social norms and practices that were established in the individual communities where the churches were located. For example:
		1. Head covering for women (1 Corinthians 11:5)
		2. Master/Slave relationships (Ephesians 6:5-9)
		3. **Each community had things socially, culturally and ethically specific to that community**
			1. **Atlanta – 75 streets have “Peach” in the name**
			2. **Wisconsin – Green Bay Packers and Lambeau Field**
			3. **New York City – Fast paced and hurried**
			4. **Nevada – Prostitution is legal in licensed brothels**
	3. The foundational Christian teachings that transcend time to form and shape our theological underpinning, doctrinal understanding and spiritual reinforcement. For example:
		1. Grace d. Salvation g. Justification by Faith
		2. Faith e. The Resurrection h. The Church as the Body of Christ
		3. Love f. The Holy Spirit j. The Spiritual Gifts

**WHAT DID PAUL BELIEVE?**

1. **1 Corinthians 9:19-***,* ***19****For though I am free with respect to all,* ***I have made myself a slave to all****, so that I might gain all the more.****20****To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to gain Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might gain those under the law.****21****To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not outside God’s law but am within Christ’s law) so that I might gain those outside the law.****22****To the weak I became weak, so that I might gain the weak.* ***I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some.***
	1. **Some might call this compromise…**
	2. **For Paul it was accommodation…**
	3. **PAUL MET PEOPLE WHERE THEY WERE**
2. **Acts 16:22, 23***,* ***22****Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, “Athenians, I see how extremely spiritual you are in every way.****23****For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, ‘To an unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.*
	1. **Paul respected what people believed**
	2. **Paul used the foundation of their beliefs to introduce them to Jesus**
	3. **PAUL GAVE PEOPLE THE FREEDOM TO MEET JESUS WHERE THEY WERE**
3. **Galatians 3:28, 29***,* ***28****There is no longer Jew or Greek; there is no longer slave or free; there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.****29****And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise.*
	1. **Who you are has no significance to who you are**
	2. **If we belong to Christ, we are in Abraham’s will – and we all get the same thing**

**WHAT DID PAUL SAY?**

1. **1 Corinthians 11:4, 5***,* ***4****Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head.****5But every woman who prays or prophesies*** *with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved.*
	1. **Women could speak in public**
	2. **Women could bring a prophetic word – The opportunity to tell a man what to do (Thus says the Lord)**
	3. **Honor the head covering traditions in that church community**
2. **1 Timothy 2:11, 12***,* ***11****Let a woman learn in silence with all submission.****12****And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.*
	1. **False teaching had entered the church**
		1. **1 Tim 1:3, *3As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you***

 ***may charge some that they teach no other doctrine,***

* + 1. **1 Tim 6:2, 21, *20O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge— 21by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. Grace be with you. Amen.***
	1. **The teachers of the heresy were the men:**
		1. **1 Tim 1:*20, 20of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.***
		2. **Delivered to Satan**
	2. **The victims of the heresy were the women**
		1. **2 Tim 3:6, 7*, 6For among them are those who make their way into households and captivate immature women, overwhelmed by their sins and swayed by all kinds of desires, 7who are always studying yet never able to recognize truth.***
		2. **Be quiet**
	3. **Asceticism: Self denial / Denial of Marriage – Sex – Food**
	4. **Something was also happening with the way the women were dressing – See vv. 9, 10**
1. **1 Corinthians 14:33-35***,* ***33****For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.* ***34****Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says.****35****And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.*
	1. **Context of Chapter 14 – Order in the Church**
	2. **Speaking in tongues (w/o an interpreter): 27If anyone speaks in a tongue, *let there be* two or at**

**the most three, *each* in turn, and let one interpret. 28But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God.**

* 1. **Prophesying (let other have a turn): 29Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others**

**judge. 30But if *anything* is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. 31For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged.**

* 1. **Women (perhaps how they were speaking): 34Let your women keep silent in the churches, for**

**they are not permitted to speak; but *they are* to be submissive, as the law also says. 35And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.**

* 1. ***Sigaō* = To keep silent, Holy one’s peace**
		1. **Does not suggest not speaking forever… Rather, a pause in speaking until something**

**else occurs – then, speaking may resume.**

* + 1. **Luke 9:36*, 36When the voice had ceased, Jesus was found alone. But they kept quiet, and told no one in those days any of the things they had seen.***
		2. **Luke 20:26*, 26But they could not catch Him in His words in the presence of the people. And they marveled at His answer and kept silent.***
		3. **Acts 15:12*, 12Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles.***

**WHAT DID PAUL DO?**

1. **Priscilla and Aquila – Romans 16:3-5a and Acts 18:18-26**
	1. ***3****Greet* ***Prisca*** *and Aquila,* **[ her name is listed first ] *my coworkers in Christ Jesus****,* **[ co-worker would suggest doing the same type of work ]*****4****who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but also all the churches of the gentiles.****5****Greet also the* ***church in their house****.* **[ perhaps they were co-pastors ]**
	2. ***18****After staying there for a considerable time, Paul said farewell to the brothers and sisters and sailed for Syria, accompanied by* ***Priscilla*** *and Aquila. At Cenchreae he had his hair cut, for he was under a vow.****19****When they reached Ephesus, he left them there…****24****Now there came to Ephesus a Jew named Apollos from Alexandria… .****25****He had been instructed in the Way of the Lord, and he spoke with burning enthusiasm and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John.****26****He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when* ***Priscilla*** *and Aquila heard him* ***they*** *took him aside and* ***explained*** *the Way of God to him more accurately.*
2. **Junia – Romans 16:7***, 7Greet Andronicus and* ***Junia****, my fellow Israelites who were in prison with me;* ***they*** *are* ***prominent among the apostles****,* **[ prominent = bearing a mark / stamped = suggests that they were apostles ]** *and they were in Christ before I was.*
3. **Phoebe – Romans 16:1, 2***, I commend to you our sister* ***Phoebe, a deacon*[diakonos]***of the church at Cenchreae,****2****so that you may welcome her in the Lord, as is fitting for the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a benefactor of many and of myself as well.*

**SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT, FAVOR AND GIFTS**

**AIM: Although we say that we are “People of the Book” and “People of Faith” and “Holy Spirit Led” do we really seek spiritual discernment when we have decisions to make? In this lesson, we will examine examples where spiritual discernment was used on the early church and consider the positive outcome that were achieved.**

**INTRODUCTION**

1. Spiritual Discernment = Relying on the Holy Spirit and the Bible to guide, inform, influence and ultimately

govern how we make decisions.

1. How do we incorporate the Holy Spirit and Scriptures in the decisions we make both at church and at home?
2. As Saints, we have the mind of Christ (***16****“For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we*

*have the mind of Christ.* **1 Corinthians 2:16 (NRSV)**

1. How do we distinguish between the decision making process in the broader society and the decision making process in

the church?

1. God is in Control

**SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT**

**Acts 1:15-26 Who should replace Judas as the next Apostle?**

15And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said, **16**“Men *and* brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus; 17for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry…” **20**“For it is written in the Book of Psalms: ‘Let his dwelling place be desolate, And let no one live in it’;and, ‘Let another take his office.’ 21“Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.” **23**And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. **24**And they prayed and said, “You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen 25to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.” 26And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

1. **Problem:** Judas needed to be replaced (v. 16)
2. **Narrative for a Decision:** Was given by Peter (vv. 20-22)
3. **Process:**
	1. The group proposed two names (v. 23)
	2. The group prayed (vv. 24, 25)
4. **Result:** The group cast lots, and Matthias was chosen (v. 26)

**Acts 4:23-31 Should the Apostles continue speaking in the Name of Jesus or stop as they were commanded?**

**23**And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. **24**So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: “Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, 25who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: ‘Why did the nations rage, And the people plot vain things? 26The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the Lord and against His Christ.’ 27“For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together 28to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. 29Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, 30by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.” **31**And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

1. Peter and John are arrested for preaching Christ (vv. 1-3). After their release, the religious rulers commanded

them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. (vv. 18-21)

1. Peter and John had previously given their response to the leaders’ command (v. 20)
2. **Problem:** Should the disciples stop speaking in the Name of Jesus as they were commanded?
3. **Narrative for a Decision:** Was given by Peter and John (v. 23)
4. **Process:** The group prayed, and subsequently prayed for more boldness to speak (vv. 24-30)
5. **Result:** God answered, and filled them with the Holy Spirit to speak with boldness (v. 31)

**Acts 6:1-7 How do we ensure that everyone’s needs are met?**

1 Now in those days, when *the number of* the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. **2**Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. 3Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of *good* reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; 4but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” **5**And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, 6whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them. **7**Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

1. **Problem:** The Hellenist complained that their widows were neglected in the daily food distribution (v. 1)
2. **Narrative for a Decision:** Was given by the Apostles (v. 2-4)
3. **Process:** Seven men were chosen and brought before the Apostles, who prayed, and laid hands on them (vv. 5-6)
4. **Result:** The word of God spread, and the number of disciples multiplied (v. 7)

**Acts 12:25; 13:1-13 Who should go and minister the Gospel of Jesus to the Gentiles**

**25**And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled *their* ministry, and they also took with them John whose surname was Mark.1Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. **2**As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” **3**Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent *them* away. **4**So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. **5**And when they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They also had John as *their* assistant… **13**Now when Paul and his party set sail

from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem…

1. **Problem:** Of the many qualified prophets and teachers, who should go and minister the Gospel of Jesus? (v. 1)
2. **Narrative for a Decision:** Was given by the Holy Spirit (v. 2)
3. **Process:** The Holy Spirit chose Barnabas and Saul, and the church fasted, prayed, laid hands and sent them (v. 3)
4. **Result:** Barnabas and Saul went out preaching to the Gentiles and had a successful ministry (vv. 4, 5)
5. **Problem: They took John Mark with them… The Holy Spirit did not separate John Mark for the work…**

**THOUGHTS ON SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT**

1. Unfortunately, some use “Spiritual Discernment” as a tool for Enabling, Guilting and Manipulating
	1. “The Spirit said.” “The Spirit is not leading me in that direction.” “Let’s pray about it and see what God says.”
	2. The Holy Spirit will only give one response / one answer
2. If we are spiritually Discerning, where does Free Will enter?
	1. If we genuinely have Free Will, then God’s Will means nothing
	2. Jesus did not exercise Free Will
		1. **John 4:34*,*** *Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.*
		2. **John 6:38***,* *For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.*
	3. Paul did not exercise Free Will
		1. **Romans 1:1***, Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus…*
		2. **Titus 1:1***, Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ*
	4. Example: Did Adam and Ever exercise Free Will when they ate the fruit?
		1. **Revelation 13:8; 17:8***, 8…whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. 8…whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world…*
		2. **Acts 2:23***,* ***23****But God knew what would happen, and his prearranged plan was carried out when Jesus was betrayed. With the help of lawless Gentiles, you nailed him to a cross and killed him.*(NLT)

**\* \* \* \* WHO IN THE BIBLE DO YOU BELIEVE EXERCISED FREE WILL?**

**JUDAS**

* **John 13:21, 25, 26***,* ***21****When Jesus had said these things, He was troubled in spirit, and testified and said,*

*“Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me.”****25****Then, leaning [*[*e*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=john%2013&version=NKJV;NRSVUE;NLT;CEV;NIV#fen-NKJV-26656e)*]back on Jesus’ breast, he said to Him, “Lord, who is it?”* ***26****Jesus answered, “It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it.” And having dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.*

* **John 6:70, 71*****70****Jesus answered them, “Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?”****71****He*

*spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve.*

* **John 17:12*****12****While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them,*

*and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled.* (NRSV)

* 1. Our job is to stand still and let God do what God wills to do
		1. **Psalm 46:10,** *Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!*
		2. **Exodus 14:14***, The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.”*
		3. **2 Chronicles 20:17***, You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the*

*salvation of the LORD, who is with you…*

1. When we rely on the Holy Spirit and the Bible to guide, inform, influence and ultimately govern how we make decisions, we receive God’s Favor
	1. **Psalm 84:11***,* ***11****For the Lord God is a sun and shield; he bestows favor and honor. No good thing does the Lord withhold from those who walk uprightly.* (NRSV)
	2. **Psalm 5:12***,****12****Surely, Lord, you bless the righteous; you surround them with your favor as with a shield.* (NIV)
2. Spiritual Gifts: **1 Corinthians 12:1-12*****7****A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other…* ***11****It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.*
	1. Spiritual Gifts are not hobbies, talents, skills or abilities
	2. Gifts = *Charisma* (*Charis* = Grace and *Ma* = the result of). Spiritual Gifts = A gift of grace denoting extraordinary powers, distinguishing certain Christians and empowering them to serve the church
	3. Spiritual Gifts are given to edify / build up the Body of Christ
		1. **1 Corinthians 14:12***,* ***12****So with yourselves: since you are striving after spiritual gifts, seek to excel in them for building up the church.*
		2. **1 Peter 4:10, 11***, 10 God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. 11 Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through*

*Jesus Christ. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen.*

* 1. Spiritual Gifts Surveys – **NO** // Asking God to reveal the gift God has given – **YES**

 **TITLE: JUSTICE: TREATMENT OF THE POOR AND VULNERABLE**

 **AIM: To show that God’s concern for the poor and vulnerable applies to current situations occurring in**

 **America and the world**

**CONTENT:**

1. Identify recent unjust activities that have occurred
	1. America – The previous unjust immigration policies including child separation and the projection that it will occur in the new administration
	2. Russia – The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and their military effort to seize territory and occupy the country
	3. Israel – Israel’s unjust killing of the Palestinian people and the unjustified destruction of their homes, schools, hospitals, businesses, etc. in Israel and Gaza has led to unimaginable pain, suffering and loss, with innocent civilians, many who are children, tragically caught in the destruction
	4. Milwaukee – The Guest House of Milwaukee gave a 30-day vacate notice to homeless people who were living in tents across the street from their shelter without providing housing options for them, The number of encampments increased after unhoused people were pushed out of downtown in the run up to the Republican Nation Convention in July.
2. What is Justice?
3. God is Justice / Just. Mistreating the poor is an offense against God. God identifies with the poor and vulnerable.
	1. Proverbs 14:31 g. Psalm 33:5
	2. Deuteronomy 32:4 h. Psalm 9:7
	3. Psalm 11:7 i. Psalm 10:17, 18
	4. Isaiah 5:6 j. Jeremiah 9:24
	5. Psalm 89:4 k. Luke 18:7, 8
	6. Isaiah 61:8 l. Isaiah 30:18
4. God calls us to be Just. Believers should speak up for the poor and vulnerable, defend their rights and work to alleviate their suffering
	1. Isaiah 1:17 g. Leviticus 19:15
	2. Psalm 106:3 h. Deuteronomy 27:19
	3. Zechariah 7:9 i. Proverbs 21:3
	4. Deuteronomy 16:20 j. Jeremiah 22:3
	5. Proverbs 29:7 k. Amos 5:24
	6. Leviticus 19:9. 10 l. Psalm 82:3
5. Justice is Love in Action
	1. Proverbs 21:15, ***15****It is a joy for the just to do justice, But destruction will come to the workers of iniquity.*
	2. “Love cannot be substituted for justice in a nonsectarian society that is not committed to the Christian ethic of ‘Love thy neighbor.’”

“Justice at its best uses power to enforce its requirements for social welfare, but power must be used carefully because power without justice constitutes institutional injustice…Love at its best willingly sacrifices the self for the good of others, but love without justice is irrational sentimentality and meaningless emotionalism.’ **Dr. J. Alfred Smith**

* 1. “When the days grow dark and nights grow dreary, we can be thankful that our God combines in his nature a creative synthesis of love and justice that will lead us through life’s dark valleys and into sunlit

pathways of hope and fulfillment.” **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

* 1. “We need to reclaim the concept of love, not as an abstract, all embracing, fantasy but as a set of ethics, principles, values and behaviors. A love that is justice in action… To begin by always thinking of love as an action rather than a feeling is one way in which anyone using the word in this manner automatically

assumes accountability and responsibility**” Bell Hooks**

* 1. “Justice is what love looks like in public, just like tenderness is what love feels like in private”  **Dr. Cornel West**

 **TITLE: SODOM AND GOMORRAH: WHAT IS IT REALLY ABOUT?**

 **AIM: To explore all of the reasons why God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah and consider how present day**

 **actions and activities could position us to receive God’s judgment.**

**CONTENT:**

1. The story is found in Genesis 19:1-38
2. What was the problem identified in Sodom and Gomorrah? Genesis 18:20, 21
	1. Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great
	2. Because their sin is very grave (heavy)
3. What are the specific sins identified in the story?
	1. **Homosexuality/Rape**: The men of the city (both young and old, from all over the city) wanted to rape the two angels who came in the form of men and threatened to rape Lot also (vv. 4-10)
	2. **The minimal value of females/minor daughters**: Lot offered his two virgin daughters to the men, that they could, “do with them as you wish.” (v. 8)
	3. **Unrighteousness**: There was not ten righteous people in Sodom (vv. 18:32 and 19:13)
	4. **Compromise**:
		1. Lot is sitting at the gate – a place where prominent men of the city sat. Therefore, Lot had fully integrated into the life and lifestyle of Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 1)
		2. Lot had to be forced out of the city by the angels (vv. 15, 16)
		3. Lot’s wife looked back at he city and things she was leaving and was turned into a pillar of salt (vv. 17, 26)
		4. Lot’s two daughters devised a plan to get their father, Lot, drunk and had sex with him so they could be come pregnant. (vv. 31-38)

 **TITLE: JOB: TRUSTING GOD THROUGH TRIALS**

 **AIM: To develop principles for how to trust God as we go through the trials of life.**

**CONTENT:**

**WHEN I LOSE PEOPLE AND THINGS CLOSE TO ME (JOB CHAPTER 1)**

1. Job lost everything and everyone (except for his wife)
2. Some of us have lost people and things close to us
3. **Perspective:**
	1. “*Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord.* ” (v. 21)
	2. If I leave with what I came with, it is a good day
4. **Principle: God is in Control: Everything Belongs to God**
	1. **Deuteronomy 8:18*****18****“And you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.*
	2. **1 Chronicles 29:14***,* ***14****But who am I, and who are my people, That we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, And of Your own we have given You.*
5. **Therefore, I will trust God through my trials: The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord**

**WHEN I LOSE MY HEALTH AND THINGS PERSONAL TO ME (JOB CHAPTER 2, VERSES 1-10)**

1. Job lost his health
2. Some of us have lost our health and things personal to us
3. **Perspective**
	1. Job’s wife, “*Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!*” (v. 9)
	2. Job’s response, “*You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?*” (v. 10)
	3. We must learn to Ignore the Ignorant
4. **Principle: God is in Control: Everything Balances Out**
	1. When it is good, God is in control.
	2. When it is bad, God is in control
5. **Therefore, I will trust God through my trials by accepting the good from God and accepting the bad?**

**GOD IS IN CONTROL**

1. Who initiated the encounter between Satan and Job? God did
2. Who initiates all of our encounters? God does
3. Who established limitations on what Satan could do regarding Job? God did
4. Who establishes limitations on what others can do regarding us? God does
5. Therefore, I will trust God through my trials: **God is in Control – Everything Belongs to God**

 **God is in Control – Everything Balances Out**

 **TITLE: WHAT ARE THE SIGNS THAT WE ARE IN THE END TIMES?**

 **AIM: Because of the things happening in the world, every generation has said, “We are living in the last days.”**

 **What are the actual signs that we are in the end times?**

**CONTENT:**

**MATTHEW 24:3-31**

* 1. Two Questions: ***3****Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying,*
		1. *“Tell us,* ***when will these things be****?*
		2. *And* ***what will be the sign of Your coming****, and of the end of the age?”*
	2. Five Answers
		1. ***4****And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you.* ***5****For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.* ***6****And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass,* ***but the end is not yet.***
		2. ***7****For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places.* ***8All these are the beginning of sorrows****.*
		3. ***9****“****Then they will deliver you up to tribulation*** *and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake.* ***10****And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.*
		4. ***11****Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.* ***12****And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.* ***13But he who endures to the end shall be saved****.*
		5. ***14****And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and*

***then the end will come****.*

* 1. The Great Tribulation: According to Jesus in verse 9 and the following verses, Christians will go through the Great Tribulation. Many Christians have taught that those who are saved will not go through the Great Tribulation. However, Jesus makes it clear through these verses that Christians will go through the Great Tribulation.
		1. ***15****“Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand),* ***16****“then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.* ***17****Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house.* ***18****And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.* ***19****But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!* ***20****And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.*
		2. ***21****For then there will be* ***great tribulation****, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.* ***22****And* ***unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened****.*
		3. ***23****“Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe it.* ***24****For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders* ***to deceive, if possible, even the elect.******25****See, I have told you beforehand.*
		4. ***26****“Therefore if they say to you, ‘Look, He is in the desert!’ do not go out; or ‘Look, He is in the inner rooms!’ do not believe it.* ***27****For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.* ***28****For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together.*
		5. **Revelation 7:4-17,*****4****And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed…* ***9****After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,* ***10****and crying out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”…* ***13****Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “****Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?****”* ***14****And I said to him, “Sir, you know.” So he said to me, “****These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation****, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb…*
	2. The Parousia: Jesus’ Second Coming
		1. ***29****“****Immediately after the tribulation*** *of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.*
		2. ***30Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven****, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and* ***they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven*** *with power and great glory.* ***31****And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*
		3. **John 5:28, 29,*****28****Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice* ***29****and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.*
		4. **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18,*****13****But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have* ***fallen asleep****, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.* ***14****For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so* ***God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus****.* ***15****For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that* ***we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep****.* ***16****For* ***the Lord Himself will descend from heaven*** *with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And* ***the dead in Christ will rise first****.* ***17Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air****. And* ***thus we shall always be with the Lord****.* ***18****Therefore comfort one another with these words.*
		5. **2 Thessalonians 2:1-4,** *Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you,* ***2****not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us,* ***as though the day of Christ had come****.* ***3****Let no one deceive you by any means;* ***for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first****, and the* ***man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition****,* ***4****who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.*
		6. **I Corinthians 15:50-58,*****50****Now this I say, brethren, that* ***flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God****; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.* ***51****Behold, I tell you a mystery:* ***We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— 52in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye****, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.* ***53****For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.* ***54****So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”* ***55****“****O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?****”* ***56****The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.* ***57****But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* ***58****Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*
		7. **2 Timothy 3:1-***5, 1**But know this, that****in the last days perilous times will come****:****2****For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,****3****unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good,****4****traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,****5****having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!*

 **TITLE: CULTIVATE A HEART OF CONTENTMENT**

 **AIM: To develop a perspective on life that promotes contentment – that is, sufficiency in oneself for all things –**

 **through the power of Christ living within.**

**CONTENT:**

**CONTENTMENT WITH GODLINESS 1 Timothy 6:6-10**

*6Now godliness with contentment is great gain. 7For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. 9But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

1. What is true wealth and riches? Godliness with contentment
2. We started this life with nothing and we will end this life with nothing. Therefore, how do we deal with what we have in between? Contentment.
3. Worldly riches
	1. *9But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.*
	2. *10For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*
4. Therefore, those who pursue godliness, will find contentment with what they have. Those who pursue money will never be content and will always be searching for more.

**CONTENTMENT WITH CONFIDENCE Hebrews 13:5, 6**

*5Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have, for he himself has said, “I will never leave you or forsake you.” 6So we can say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?”* (NRSV)

1. The writer distinguishes between the love of money and money. Yes, we need money to survive and fulfill out human needs. However, loving money – making money a priority – elevating money as a primary emphasis – worrying about money.
2. We are to be content with what we have because we know: …*for he himself has said, “I will never leave you or forsake you.*
3. We add to the contentment, confidence in God: *The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?*

**CONTENTMENT WITH JESUS’ STRENGTH Philippians 4:10-14**

***10****I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned for me but had no opportunity to show it.****11****Not that I am referring to being in need, for I have learned to be content with whatever I have.****12****I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need.****13****I can do all things through him who strengthens me.****14****In any case, it was kind of you to share my distress.*

1. The church in Phillipi greatly desired to assist and support Paul in his work. However, the opportunity was not available for them to do so.
2. Paul comforts them by assuring them that although he did not have much, he was content with what he had.
	1. ***12****I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty.*
	2. *In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry,*
	3. [I have learned the secret] *of having plenty and of being in need.*
3. Paul’s contentment came from Jesus’ strength

 **TITLE: IS LOVE A NOUN OR A VERB?**

 **AIM: As we know the love of God because we experienced the love of God, may the students live their love in a**

 **way that others experience it.**

**CONTENT:**

**GOD IS LOVE 1 John 4:7, 8**

***7****Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.****8****Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.*

**ELOQUENT SPEECH WITHOUT LOVE IS NOISE 1 Corinthians 13:1**

1. The city of Corinth was a major seaport. People from all over the region docked in Corinth for business as well as pleasure. It was therefore beneficial for the Corinthians to know multiple languages to assist them in their business transactions. It is not difficult to imagine the boasting that occurred as they competed with each other for eloquently speaking multiple languages. However, Paul challenged them that their vast knowledge of and eloquent communication in multiple languages resulted in them only being noisemakers if they were not displaying genuine love.
2. Many of us are familiar with the phrase, “Actions speak louder than words.” That phrase very clearly expresses the reality that people can become so occupied with watching what we are doing that they cannot hear what we are saying. Let us ensure that our actions line up with our words, and determine that each word that proceeds from our mouths are grounded in the genuine love that emanates from God.

 **EXPRESSIONS OF SPIRITUAL POWER WITHOUT LOVE IS NOTHING 1 Corinthians 13:2**

1. Paul acknowledged this distinction as he considered those who expressed supernatural, spiritual power. They exercised their gifts, they fulfilled their calling, and they applied mountain moving faith to their works. Unfortunately, after accomplishing all of that, it was difficult to discern if they were spiritual superheroes or spiritual supervillains. Why? Because they did not do what they were doing out of a genuine love. Consequently, Paul concluded that they were nothing. They had supernatural, spiritual power, yet they were nothing.
2. We all have spiritual gifts, and we all are called to exercise our gifts for the benefit of humanity to the glory of God. People should see, hear and feel the presence of God in us. People should experience the evidence of the power of God on us. People should receive the benefit of the participation of God working through us. More importantly, however, the genuine love of God that flows into us should flow out of us into them so that they may know the love of God and be clear that we are superheroes/supersheroes for God.

 **EXPENDING OF SELF WITHOUT LOVE PROFITS NOTHING 1 Corinthians 13:3**

1. Paul expressed that there are those who expend of themselves, and give all that they have for the benefit of the ministry. They come early and they remain late. They sacrifice their time, their treasure and their talent. They give and give, then give some more. Along with acknowledging those who give of themselves, Paul also admonishes that how and why they give is more meaningful that what they give. If their giving is not motivated by love, no matter how much they give, they gain nothing.
2. As we consider the motivations for our ministry, are we motivated by genuine love or are we doing it for a desire to be recognized? Paul makes it clear that all of my sacrifices account for nothing if they are not made out of a genuine love. How and why do I do what I do?

**LOVE IS NOT TALKING. LOVE IS DOING 1 John 3:16, 17**

***16****By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren* [sisters]*.****17****But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother* [sister] *in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?*

1. John asks that question this way, “How can the love of God be in that person?” If the love of God were in them, they would respond in a loving way. John goes to the core of the problem and shares that the person has shut up their heart. Think about what that means. Someone is in need, someone is hurting, someone is in sorrow and instead of opening up their heart to lovingly respond, they shut up their heart. John makes it clear that loving is more than talking; loving is doing. How do we know that loving is doing? We know that loving is doing because Jesus showed His love for us by doing – by laying down His life for us.
2. Ask yourself, “When was the last time that I ‘did love’?” In responding to the question, think beyond those whom you know or those whom you like. When was the last time you ‘did love’ for a stranger, for an enemy, for someone who could not ‘do love’ back for you? May we be more intentional about opening up our hearts and loving those who need our love the same way that Jesus opened up His heart to love us.

 **TITLE: THE TRINITY: GOD THE FATHER, GOD THE SON, GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT**

 **AIM: To receive a foundational understanding of the three persons of the Godhead (Father, Son and Holy**

 **Spirit), their roles in salvation and the relationship between them.**

**CONTENT:**

1. The Trinity is defined in the Latin phrase, Mia Ousia, Tres Hypostases, which means, One Essence, Three Persons
2. Triune God
3. Trinity = Tri-unity
4. Not 3 Gods: 1 + 1 + 1 = 3
5. Rather, 1 God: 1 x 1 x 1 = 1
6. Explanation:
7. Water (H2O)
8. Ice - - - - (H2O) - - - Solid - - - (H2O) - - - Father - - - - - - (God)

Water - - (H2O) - - - Liquid - - (H2O) - - - Son - - - - - - - - (God)

Steam - - (H2O) - - - Gas - - - - (H2O) - - - Holy Spirit - - - (God)

1. Some will suggest that the example of water in the forms of solid, liquid and gas provides a good example of the three persons of God being one essence. However, it does not account for all three persons of the Godhead being present at the same time. There is a point at which water can exist in all three states – solid, liquid, and gas – simultaneously. This is called the triple point of water. This is the temperature and pressure at which water as solid, liquid and gas coexists in thermodynamic equilibrium - 32.0135oF at .08871334755psi.
2. The word, Trinity, does not appear in the Bible, however the doctrine of the Trinity is supported by several Bible verses:
3. **Genesis 1:26, *26****Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness…*
4. **1 John 5:7, 8,** *7For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. 8And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.*
5. **Matthew 28:19,*****19****Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*
6. **John 14:16, 23, 26*****16****And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever.* ***23****Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.* ***26****But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.*
7. **1 Peter 1:2***,* ***2****who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.*
8. **Jude 1:20, 21*****20****But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,****21****keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.*
9. Each has duties and responsibilities:
	1. The Father is the Father
	2. The Son is the architect and contractor of creation / Propitiation [atoning sacrifice] for our sins / Head of the church
		1. **John 1:3,*****3****All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.*
		2. **Colossians 1:16, 17,*****16****For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.* ***17****And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist* [are held together]*.*
		3. **1 John 2:2*****2****And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the*

*whole world.*

* + 1. **Colossians 1:18,*****18****And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.*
	1. The Holy Spirit is our Paraclete, which is derived from the Greek verb, *Parakaleo*, (*para* = alongside and *kaleo* = to call) which is translated Advocate, Comforter, Counselor and Helper.
		1. John 14:16-17 – **“To be with us and in us forever”**
		2. John 14:26 – **“Teach and remind us of Jesus’ words”**
		3. John 15:26 – **“Testify [witness] about Jesus”**
		4. John 16:7-11 – **“Convict the world of sin, righteousness & judgment”**
		5. John 16:12-15 – **“Guide us into all truth”**
1. The roles of the Trinity in salvation
	1. God, the Father – **John 6:44,*****44****No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.*
	2. God, the Son – **John 14:6,*****6****Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*
	3. God, the Holy Spirit – **Ephesians 4:30,** *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption*
2. The Son is not inferior to the Father
3. **Psalm 110:1,** *1 The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”*
4. **Psalm 110:5, *5****The Lord is at Your right hand; He shall execute kings in the day of His wrath.*

**Hierarchy Communitarian**





1. The relationship between the Father and the Son
2. The Father and the Son should not be viewed as a human father to his minor son. Rather, as a human father to his adult son
3. This is the same relationship that the Father desires to have with us
4. Relational roles of the Trinity to Christians
5. God, the Father – Our Parent
6. God, the Son – Our Older Sibling
7. God, the Holy Spirit – Our Friend

 **TITLE: WHAT HAPPENED TO PAUL ON THE DAMASCUS ROAD?**

 **AIM: Paul had a supernatural encounter with Jesus on the Road to Damascus. In this lesson, we will explore the**

 **details of Paul’s encounter.**

**CONTENT: Acts 26:9-18**

1. Paul served Paul
	1. Note: Saul is the Jewish/Hebrew name of Paul
	2. “… I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth” (v. 9)
	3. Paul had the authority and commission of the chief priest (v. 10)
	4. Paul was aggressively against the Christians, “*And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, persecuted them even to foreign cities*.” (v. 11)
2. Paul met Jesus
3. At Midday (Acts 22, about noon), along the road I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me.  (v. 13)
4. And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? *It is* hard for you to kick against the goads.’ (v. 14)
5. So I said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. (v. 15)
6. “Lord, what do You want me to do?” (Acts 9:6)
	* 1. Arise and stand on your feet
		2. for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you.
		3. I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness into light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me. (vv. 17, 18)
		4. Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.  And since I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of those who were with me, I came into Damascus. (Acts 22:10)
		5. And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank. Acts (9:9)
7. Paul’s amazing/agonizing experience
8. The men who were with Paul:
	* 1. Stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one (Acts 9:7)
		2. Saw the light and were afraid, but did not hear the voice of him who spoke to Paul (Acts 22:9)
9. The men with Paul saw the light and heard a sound, but did not hear the voice of Jesus speaking to Paul. Paul, however, saw and heard Jesus. Paul had a supernatural and spiritual encounter with Jesus that left him both amazed and agonized.
10. 2 Corinthians 12:1-10
	* 1. Paul shared the visions and revelations that he received from the Lord as he recounts 14 years earlier when he was caught up [caught up = the swift, resistless, impetuous seizure of spiritual ecstasy] to the 3rd Heaven (Paradise) [This was Paul’s Damascus Road experience]. It was here that Paul heard inexpressible things [inexpressible things = unspeakable words, that is, speaking which may not be spoken], things that no one is permitted to tell. Therefore, no other human knows exactly what Paul saw, heard and experienced while those with him saw the light and heard a sound. However, this was the encounter that Paul needed to affirm his apostolic authority.
		2. In Acts 1:21, 22, Peter gave the qualifications for the person who would replace Judas as an apostle, *“So now we must choose a replacement for Judas from among the men who were with us the entire time we were traveling with the Lord Jesus—**from the time he was baptized by John until the day he was taken from us. Whoever is chosen will join us as a witness of Jesus’ resurrection.* Note, the qualifications for apostleship included being with Jesus from his baptism to his ascension and witnessing Jesus’ resurrection.
		3. Although Paul did not have a physical encounter with Jesus – that is, being with Jesus from his baptism to his ascension and witnessing Jesus’ resurrection – to meet the qualifications outlined in Acts Chapter 1, Paul had a spiritual encounter with Jesus, that must have included spiritually being with Jesus, spiritually experiencing Jesus from his baptism to his ascension, and witnessing the resurrected Jesus. Paul used this spiritual encounter to defend his Apostolic Authority.
		+ **1 Corinthians 9:1***, 1**Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?*
		+ **Galatians 1:12***,* ***12****For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came*

*through the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

**Ephesians 3:2-5***,* ***3****and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote*

*above in a few words,****4****a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding*

*of the mystery of Christ.****5****In former generations this mystery was not made known to*

*humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit:*

* + 1. Although Paul chose not to boast about the great revelations he experienced, he was given a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment him, to keep me from being too elated. (vv. 6, 7)
		2. Paul pleaded with the Lord three times for the thorn to be removed. Although the thorn was not removed, Jesus replied, “ *My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness*.” (v. 9)

 **TITLE: LIVING GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS APART FROM THE LAW – REVEALED IN JESUS**

 **AIM: That the students will discover that their righteousness does not come from what they do; it comes from**

 **faith in Jesus. However, they will also realize that what they do reveals the righteousness they possess**

 **through their faith in Jesus.**

**CONTENT:**

**Romans 3:9-30**

1. Everyone has sinned, whether they are Jews or Gentiles:  ***9****Well then, should we conclude that we Jews are better than others? No, not at all, for we have already shown that all people, whether Jews or Gentiles, are under the power of sin.****10****As the Scriptures say, “No one is righteous— not even one.* (NIV)
2. The law speaks to those who are under the law, making them accountable to the God. Therefore, no one can be made righteous in God’s sight by keeping the law. The purpose of the law is to reveal to us that we have sinned:***19****Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.****20****Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.* (NIV)
3. Righteousness is only made available through faith in Jesus, the Christ. Additionally, this righteousness is available to everyone who believes – both Jews and Gentiles – because everyone has sinned: ***21****But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.****22****This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile,****23****for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,****24****and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*(NIV)
4. We are justified by faith in Jesus and not by works according to the law. Therefore, as people get caught up in arguments around the distinctions of Jews versus Gentiles, law versus grace, Old Testament versus New Testament, etc., the emphasis should be on knowing that there is one God who justifies everyone through faith in Jesus, the Christ: ***28****For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.****29****Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too,****30****since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.****31****Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.*
5. Abraham was a man who did a number of great works before God. However, Abraham was not justified by those works. **Romans Chapter 4**
	1. *1**Abraham was, humanly speaking, the founder of our Jewish nation. What did he discover about being made right with God? 2 If his good deeds had made him acceptable to God, he would have had something to boast about. But that was not God’s way. 3 For the Scriptures tell us, “Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith.” 4 When people work, their wages are not a gift, but something they have earned. 5 But people are counted as righteous, not because of their work, but because of their faith in God who forgives sinners.*
	2. ***9****Now, is this blessing only for the Jews, or is it also for uncircumcised Gentiles? Well, we have been saying that Abraham was counted as righteous by God because of his faith.****10****But how did this happen? Was he counted as righteous only after he was circumcised, or was it before he was circumcised? Clearly, God accepted Abraham before he was circumcised!* ***11****Circumcision was a sign that Abraham already had faith and that God had already accepted him and declared him to be righteous—even before he was circumcised. So Abraham is the spiritual father of those who have faith but have not been circumcised. They are counted as righteous because of their faith.*

**Colossians 3:1-17 (NIV)**

1. Since you have been raised with Christ, set your mind on things above, not things on the earth: *1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.****2****Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.*
2. You are now a spiritual person. Your spiritual life is no longer in this earthly realm. Rather it is hidden in the life of Christ: ***3****For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.****4****When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*
3. Put to death:
	1. Sexual Immorality
	2. Impurity
	3. Lust
	4. Evil Desires
	5. Greed, which is Idolatry.
4. Get rid of:
	1. Anger
	2. Rage
	3. Malice
	4. Slander
	5. Filthy Language from your lips
	6. Do not lie to each other
5. Put on:
	1. Compassion
	2. Kindness
	3. Humility
	4. Gentleness
	5. Patience
	6. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone.
	7. Forgive as the Lord forgave you
	8. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.
	9. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.
6. Additionally:
	1. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace.
	2. Be thankful
	3. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts
	4. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

**ROMANS 7:1-25**

Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law [[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=ROM%207&version=NKJV;NRSVUE;NLT;GNT;NIV#fen-NKJV-28093a)]has dominion over a man as long as he lives? **2**For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to *her* husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of *her* husband. **3**So then if, while *her* husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. **4**Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. **5**For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. **6**But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not *in* the oldness of the letter.

**Sin’s Advantage in the Law**

**7**What shall we say then? *Is* the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, “You shall not covet.” **8**But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all *manner of evil* desire. For apart from the law sin *was* dead. **9**I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. **10**And the commandment, which *was* to *bring* life, I found to *bring* death. **11**For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed *me.* **12**Therefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.

**Law Cannot Save from Sin**

**13**Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful. **14**For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. **15**For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. **16**If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that *it is* good. **17**But now, *it is* no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. **18**For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but *how* to perform what is good I do not find. **19**For the good that I will *to do,* I do not do; but the evil I will not *to do,* that I practice. **20**Now if I do what I will not *to do,* it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

**21**I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. **22**For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. **23**But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. **24**O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? **25**I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

**PURPOSE OF THE LAW Galatians 3:19-25**

**19**What purpose then *does* the law *serve?* It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. **20**Now a mediator does not *mediate* for one *only,* but God is one.

**21***Is* the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. **22**But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. **23**But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, [[f](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=gal%203&version=NKJV;NRSVUE;NLT;GNT;NIV#fen-NKJV-29126f)]kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. **24**Therefore the law was our [[g](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=gal%203&version=NKJV;NRSVUE;NLT;GNT;NIV#fen-NKJV-29127g)]tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. **25**But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.