

StudyJesus.com presents

F.A.Q.

Introduction

Over time, we have received many email responses. As stated in our "[mission and philosophy](#)," StudyJesus.com only responds to Biblical questions, always seeking to provide answers from God's Holy Word. Over the years, we have been asked several Biblical questions which, in one form or another, are similar. So, in the hope of perhaps saving our friends and students valuable time, we present these basic answers to **Frequently Asked Questions**

1. Q: WHAT ABOUT EATING IN THE MEETING PLACE?

A: Once one has made the leap of faith to areas of *freedom* like one song leader, Sunday school, Wednesday night assemblies, offering the Lord's Supper outside the community of believers (hospitals, nursing homes, etc.) one wonders what is at the core of one group wishing to impose its freedom upon another group. Elders or leaders of the church make several decisions regarding *freedoms*. In fact, that is the basic area in which they operate. Biblical commands, examples, and inferences speak for themselves. That is why we leave decisions on *freedoms* to elders or leaders of the church. Hebrews 13:17 is clear in this regard, "Obey those who have rule over you, and be submissive, for the watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you." The elders or leaders of each local congregation make decisions on freedoms for that congregation. For instance, one congregation might choose the freedom to restrict eating in their building, and another may chose not to restrict eating in the building – both would be correct. They are also correct because it is a *freedom*. 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 is also instructive especially related to *freedoms*. This section deals with being sensitive to ones conscience. He uses the example of meat that had been offered to an idol. What is the lesson for each of us? Be sensitive to those who disagree with us in areas of *freedom*. If a person feels it is wrong to eat in the church building than by all means do not eat there. On the other hand, if a person feels it is ok to eat in the building then by all means do so. The truth we all need to learn regarding this matter is this: congregations choosing not to eat in the meeting place should not impose their *freedom* on others who do. Anytime we focus on how we are different rather than on how we are alike, dissention is the result. Let us focus on Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Let us take the energy expended on miniscule debates and put it behind spreading the good news of Jesus. There will be no discussion in heaven. The local church, the body of Christ, is a foretaste of life eternal. It is interesting to note that in Matthew 25 we learn that the sign of saved people is not where they ate, but rather who they gave the food to.

2. Q: PLEASE EXPLAIN ROMANS 3:21-26 IN THE KING JAMES VERSION

A: By understanding Paul's long sentence in Romans 3:21-26, we understand the Gospel, all of Romans and the Bible. The 1885 English Revised Version changed "the faith of Christ" to "faith in Christ" in Romans 3:22; Galatians 2:16, 2:20, 3:22; Ephesians 3:12; and Philippians 3:9. In his book, "Commentaries on the Old and New Testament," James Burton Coffman concludes that the KJV is a correct translation of all these verses, a fact confirmed by the total agreement of the Emphatic Diaglott in each case. James Macknight, Adam Clarke, as well as other older commentators, also agree with the KJV translation of these verses – "the faith of Christ," like the "faith of Abraham" in Romans 4:16. We asked a full-time minister serving a large church about whether he believed that in order to be saved one had to believe in the "faith of Jesus Christ" and were amazed with his reply: "God provides righteousness to those who believe. If through the faith of Jesus – everybody would be saved." We asked the same question to a Christian university Bible professor, who expressed a view held by many modern translations today. He wrote: "Both ideas . . . are biblical . . ." We then presented the question to an elder of a large church, who wrote: "The believer's faith causes him to respond to that perfect justification which is and was brought by Christ in His obedience to God's will of offering His son as the perfect atonement for all mankind (sins)." We concur with the elder and older commentators such as Coffman, whose commentary on this verse is a scathing rebuke of many modern-day professors and preachers. Coffman points out that we should stay with the KJV in this verse, because changing it represents the same tampering with the Word of God which resulted in the monstrosity of changing "the righteousness of God" to "a righteousness" (Rom. 3:21 & Rom. 1:17). He writes: "the true Scriptural justification by faith has absolutely no reference to the faith of stinking sinners, but to the faith of the Son of God. The only end served by this change was to bolster the faith only theory of justification." He further writes: "the true grounds of justification cannot ever be in a million years the faith of fallible, sinful people, would appear to be axiomatic. How could it be? The very notion that God could impute justification to an evil man, merely upon the basis of anything that such a foul soul might either believe or do, is a delusion. Justification in any true sense requires that the justified be accounted as righteous and undeserving of any penalty whatever; and no man's faith is sufficient grounds for such an imputation. On the other hand, the faith of Jesus Christ is a legitimate ground of justification, because Christ's faith was perfect." In the absolute sense, only Christ is faithful – "Faithful is he that calleth you" (1 Thess. 5:24). Only He is called "the faithful and true witness" (Rev. 3:14). The faith of Christ was also obedient; a perfect and complete obedience, lacking nothing. Therefore, we conclude that the sinless, holy, obedient faith of the Son of God is the only ground of justification of a human being – Christ only is righteously justified in God's sight. How then are we saved? We are saved "in Christ," having been incorporated into Him – justified as a part of Him. Our study prompts agreement with Coffman's conclusion that faith is not the ground of our

justification; it is not the righteousness which makes us righteous before God. The “faith of the Son of God” is the only basis for our justification, and that faith is definitely included in the “righteousness of God” mentioned in this verse. Even the righteousness of God through faith of Jesus Christ shows the principal constituent of God’s righteousness. In conclusion, God’s righteousness is the righteousness of Jesus Christ – His absolute, intrinsic, unalloyed righteousness – implicit in His perfect faith (mentioned here) and His perfect obedience (implied). The contrary notion that God’s righteousness is some imputation accomplished by the sinner’s faith is unfounded. Any righteousness that could commend itself to the Father and become the ground of anything truly worthwhile would, by definition, have to be a true and genuine righteousness. That righteousness was provided by the sinless life of the Christ, summarized in this verse as “through faith of Jesus Christ,” the idea being much clearer in the KJV, “The righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ.” We concur with Coffman on this subject, including his final conclusion, “. . . the word believe in this verse refers to sinners’ faith (believer’s faith) which is no part of God’s righteousness at all, but, like baptism, is but a mere condition of salvation – being neither more nor less important than baptism.”

3. Q: DOES GOD REALLY FORGIVE PEOPLE WHO KILL SOMEONE? HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE?

A: Those people in Acts 2 had crucified the Son of God, and the Apostle Peter’s words, inspired by the Holy Spirit, cut them deeply, too. The glorious answer to this question is, “Yes, God really does forgive penitent sinners – even those who take life.” Two Bible examples stand out: David in the Old Testament (2 Samuel 12), and the Apostle Paul in the New Testament (Acts 22:4). But, in Acts 2:28, the Holy Spirit inspired Peter to answer the question this way: “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” How is this possible? It is possible because of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Our Savior said: “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you” (John 15:13-14). Yes, Jesus wants to be our friend, and if we let Him, then His Father will be our Father, too (John 20:17).

4. Q: WHAT ABOUT HARRY POTTER? I DON'T THINK GOD WANTS US TO BELIEVE IN MAGIC BUT I DON'T KNOW HOW TO EXPLAIN THAT TO MY CHILDREN AND HUSBAND. CAN YOU HELP?

A: We appreciate the many email responses from concerned parents sharing deep concern about children being exposed to magic through movies. The content of such email messages go to the heart of Scripture. Sadly, many today seem bent on following most anything that leads away from God, apparently with little or no concern for children. When the Holy

Spirit inspired the Apostle Paul to list the way we should live and walk in this life (Gal. 5:22), he did not list witchcraft or magic. Therefore, we can only conclude that it is not to be a part of our lives. However, in the preceding verses (19-21, KJV), Paul does list, among other things, *witchcraft*, stating: “they that do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” Then, in Revelation 21:8, the Apostle John puts “*magic arts*” (the NASB says “sorcerers”) in the list of things that, if practiced, lead to “the fiery lake.” We feel the concern of Christian parents and encourage them to personally stay close to God’s Holy Word, always seeking His will in all things for life, remembering always that “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says . . .” (Rev. 2:7, NASB). In other words, stay focused on God’s Word, so that your family will be able to see your love for God. Perhaps in this way their hearts will open to God, and they will hear what the Spirit says.

5. Q: IS THIS WEBSITE OWNED AND CONTROLLED BY A RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION? YOUR MISSION AND PHILOSOPHY DOESN’T SOUND LIKE IT, BUT THAT’S FOR YOU TO SAY. WE WANT TO FOLLOW JESUS, BUT DON’T WANT TO BE A PART OF ANY MAN-MADE RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION. ARE WE WRONG?

A: Our mission and purpose is grounded on the concern expressed in such emails questions regarding control. No, we are not now and have never been controlled by any religious organization. One cannot “join” the Bible church, but can only be added by the Lord Himself (Acts 2). So, our allegiance is to Jesus Christ and we serve Him – period! In other words, we seek to be a servant of Jesus only. Therefore, we are more concerned about being in His Book of Life (Rev. 21:27), than in man’s membership roll. It was Jesus Himself who said: “Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter” (Matt. 7:21, NASB). Perhaps it is because of personal and denominational agendas that so many today have lost the true significance of the cross. Re: “Are we wrong.” Those who judge others harshly will themselves be so judged (Matt. 7:1-2). Sadly, many have not yet learned the Lord’s hard lesson of loving the unlovable (Matt. 5:44). Our Savior left a marvelous example – He did not judge (John 12:47). This should serve as a grave caution to us all.

6. Q: WHY IS “SAME SEX MARRIAGE” SO POPULAR IN OUR COUNTRY TODAY? DID ANY ANCIENT CIVILIZATION LEGALIZE “SAME SEX MARRIAGE”?

A: We never read of God’s people sanctioning “same sex marriage”. But, we do read of its condemnation. For instance, Moses: “You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female: it is an abomination” (Lev. 18:22, NASB), and the Apostle Paul: “For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their

own persons the due penalty of their error” (Rom. 1:26-27, NASB). We do not know of any ancient civilization that legalized “same sex marriage”. As perverted as the Roman Empire was, to our knowledge they never did. We do not recall Egypt sanctioning it, either. Why is it so popular? The answer is the same as it’s been since the Garden of Eden – Satan is alive and well, working hard among us. However, our Father has always joined men to women in marriage, not men to men or women to women (Matt. 19:4-6). We can be sure that God will do so until the end of time, no matter how governments or people may define marriage.

7. Q: CAN I WRITE YOU WITH ANY BIBLE QUESTION?

A: To those who have such questions, think about it this way: We are now studying God’s Holy Word together. We are both eager to know more about Jesus and desire to find out more about what God wants us to do. So, yes, let’s continue to study together, and yes, any Bible question(s) you might ask of us will be seriously considered and we will respond as quickly as possible.

8. Q: WHEN IN LIFE DOES ONE MAKE THE DECISION TO BE HOMOSEXUAL?

A: When dealing with any soul, we suggest always being gracious and dealing only on a personal level. Though we hate *all* sin and grieve when God’s truth is mocked, still, it’s never easy to look past the sin and see the sinner who needs Christ as much as we do. But if we are seeking to obey God, then we are imitating Christ, and He was and is a friend of *all* sinners. Scripture commands us to be salt and light, but always in love and always with an eye toward sharing the glorious truth that God wants to forgive. This is the principle we should always try to follow. It is doubtful that at some point in life one says, “Okay, I’m going to be a homosexual.” However, whatever such patterns show up in our lives, we make chooses to continue down those paths. Or we can say, “Look, this or that is not Christlike, and I need to deal with it in my heart.” But once we start down a certain path – once we recognize that something in our life is not Christlike – then we must look to God for the remedy. It’s important to stay focused on God’s Word, verse by verse. In the wake of so much controversy, we need to be lovingly ready with Biblical answers to questions any unbeliever may ask. Scripture is the only means by which our eyes can be opened – the only agent that can soften our hard hearts. It alone has the power to transform our selfish motives and self-serving minds. In the same way God’s Word takes root in any unbelieving heart, bringing it to repentance, it can rescue us from darkness, no matter how deeply we might have plunged. God’s Word is truly powerful and needs only to be heard, and that’s why we proclaim it. So, we should never be discouraged. Let us stay on the path of Bible study, allowing the love of God to continue working in our lives and hearts, through His Word.

9. Q: Is my loved one, who, though not baptized, was still a good person, taking food to the poor, helping people and believing in Jesus, with God or in hell?

A: May God bless you in the loss of your loved one and give you the peace and comfort as only He can. We do not know the answer to your question – such an eternal judgment is not ours to make. However, we did think of that wonderful exchange between Jesus and Peter following Jesus' resurrection (John 21:15-23). After asking Peter three times if he really loved him, Jesus told Peter that he would live to a ripe old age, giving him plenty of time to do the work to which Jesus was calling him. Peter then saw John standing behind them and asked, "Lord, what about him?" Jesus response to Peter is all we really need to know about the eternal destiny of others: "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me" [paraphrased]. To put it as bluntly as Jesus did to Peter, how God will exercise His prerogative on the Day of Judgment is none of our business. To "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything" as He has commanded us, means that our job is to tell others in no uncertain terms that "whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." We are merely messengers. We are not the judge. "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" (Rom. 11:33-34). "For nothing is impossible with God" (Luke 1:37). "It is impossible for God to lie" (Heb. 6:18). There are two distinct context represented here. First, the revealed plan of salvation, in which baptism plays an indispensable part along with faith and repentance. Second, final judgment, in which God's sovereign power includes the prerogative to exercise (or not exercise) divine clemency for those who have failed to comply fully with the plan of salvation. Given these two distinct context, the exercise of divine clemency is only a "possibility." It would be a grave error to assume that what *might* happen at the final judgment changes in any way the divine plan of salvation. All we know is what we read in the Bible. John Newton put it this way, "If I ever reach heaven I expect to find three wonders there: first, to meet some I had not thought to see there; second, to miss some I had expected to see there; and third, the greatest wonder of all, to find myself there."

10. Q: Is the Old Testament part of God's Word for us today? Is the Old Testament below the New Testament? Is the Old Testament part of God's Holy Word or not? Is it equal to the New Testament or below it and useless today?

A: Perhaps ones study should begin with Galatians 3:24-25: "Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor." The *tutor* Paul is referring to is the Old Testament. *Tutor* or *pedagogue* refers to one who was entrusted with the supervision of a family, taking them to and

from school, being responsible for their safety and manners. The Law was a pedagogue to the Jews, with a view to Christ. In other words it was to prepare the Jews for faith in Christ by producing convictions of guilt and helplessness. The need for the pedagogue ceased when “faith came” – the object of that faith being the seed which is Christ. The Old Testament is of tremendous value. In it we come to know God, creation, and how He dealt with His people. We see prophecies written and we begin to await the Messiah. The New Testament introduces us to the Messiah, Jesus Christ and to the birth of the church He died for. Under the Old Testament Law there were over 600 laws to keep. It did not matter how one felt about them – just keep them and be in a right relationship with God. Under the New Testament we see Old Testament prophecies fulfilled and hear Jesus say in Matthew 5: 21, “You have heard that it was said to those of old, You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.” So here we see from Jesus Himself that the Old Testament prohibited the act of murder while the New Testament (Jesus) teaches not even to think about it. Perhaps Jesus answers the question best in Matthew 5:17: “Do not think I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.” So the Old and New Testaments are the Bible and both should be studied as they exist in a beautiful harmony.

11. Q: Can we baptize each other? Do we need a preacher?

A: Yes, of course. What is important is the decision of the person being baptized. It is the same decision transaction found in Acts 2 – a preacher is not needed.

12. Q: How is baptism done?

A: Baptism should be done the same way it was done in Acts 2, at Pentecost; in Acts 8 with the Samaritans; in Acts 8:35 the Ethiopian nobleman; in Acts 9:3-6 and Acts 22:16 for Saul; in Acts 10:1-6, 11:14, 10:34-43 and 10:48 for Cornelius; in Acts 16:13-15 for Lydia, in Acts 16:29-34 for the Philippian jailer, and Acts 18:4-8 for the Corinthians. Being baptized is about John 3:5, “born of water and the Spirit;” 1 Peter 3:21, “the answer of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” It is about Romans 6:3-6, “into His death . . . buried with Him . . . newness of life . . . united together in the likeness of His death . . . our old man was crucified with Him . . .” It is about the change of Acts 17:30. It is about the confession of Romans 10:9-10. It is a down into the water emersion like Phillip and the Ethiopian (Acts 8:38). In the end it is about what God does when we follow the examples He has provided for us. It is not about something we earn, but about His free gift to those who care enough to accept Him at His Word – the Bible – setting aside what people say, in favor of what He so simply says.

13. Q: When baptized, what church should we attend?

A: Desiring to assemble for worship with other believers, paying homage and reverence to God, is Biblically based (1 Cor. 15:58; Matt. 4:10). While we do not discuss or offer suggestions about religious organizations, we do offer these Bible-based suggestions: seek out a church that believes in, as well as teaches, that God's Holy Word, the Bible, is truly the actual Word of God, inspired by God Himself; seek out a church that believes in, as well as teaches, that Jesus Christ is the divine and eternal Son of God – was born of a virgin – was with God in the beginning – was killed, buried and rose from the grave – that He died and shed blood to save us from sin – that He is now in heaven and will return; seek out a church that recognizes and teaches its origin was at Pentecost, as revealed in Acts 2; seek out a church that follows and teaches the Great Commission, revealed in Mark 16:15-16; seek out a church that understands and teaches Jesus' plea for unity, as revealed in John 17:20-21; seek out a church that believes in, lives by, and steadfastly teaches the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42). Since the church is the body of Christ (Rom. 13:3-8), seek out a church that preaches the Gospel – the good news of Jesus Christ; and seek out a church that practices and teaches immersion in accordance with the Biblical examples of conversion throughout the book of Acts. How can all this be accomplished? The only way is by testing (questioning) their teachings (1 John 4:1, 6). The Lord Himself warned about the traditions of men (Matt. 15:6). The true church of our Lord will always hold firmly to the traditions taught by the apostles (1 Cor. 11:2; 15:1-2; 2 Thess. 2:15). It certainly will not be easy to "check out" and question hundreds of churches, most of which claim to be the church established by and belonging to Jesus Christ. So, along with the thoughts listed above, perhaps asking a couple of questions about one specific Biblical teaching might be helpful, such as: "Do you believe, teach and practice immersion for baptism?" "Do you believe, teach and practice baptism for the remission of sins?" as taught in Acts 2, 8, 9, 10, 16, 19; and Romans 6, especially verses 1-7. The church Jesus Christ shed His blood to establish believes, teaches, and practices the Holy Word of Almighty God (the Bible) – in daily living, worship, and salvation. The Lord's church always seeks to "accurately handle the word of truth" (2 Tim. 1:15 NKJV). Seeking out the church of the Bible, the church Christ died to establish is a marvelous journey. The task will not be easy and will require much courage, patience and study of God's Holy Word.

14. Q: Can we start a church in our home? If so, how is that done?

A: For more on the Lord's church, see [The Church](#) in A Religion Library section of StudyJesus.com. Starting the church in a home is not a problem, if the same elements are present there as were present in Acts 2 at Pentecost. The early church met in homes. Legal details (beyond the spiritual) can be answered by an accountant. Ask about a non-profit status and application for 501(c)(3) from the IRS.

15. Q: How can we contribute? Is there a mailing address where we can send our donation?

A: We find such offers deeply touching, humbling, and overwhelming. Because we do not seek online contributions or promote and sell products online, we have always responded by asking the contributor to help someone in their area in the spirit of James 1:27: “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”

16. Q: According to Matthew 27:52, 53, graves were opened and bodies rose from the dead. Who were they and what happened to them? Did they go to heaven? Did they go back to the grave? Or did they stay on earth?

A: It is not known specifically who these were, nor what exactly became of them. Perhaps they were persons who had recently died and were known of in Jerusalem. Had they been “ancient” saints they probably would not have been so recognizable. Matthew’s narrative does not tell us whether they came to life before Jesus rose and remained in the tombs or came to life after He died (probably after He died). There is nothing said of the reason why they were raised. Possibly, amid the other wonders attending the death of Jesus, this was to convince the Jews He was the Messiah. Perhaps some, who were His “open” friends, were raised up now as an attestation that He in whom they had believed was the Christ. But that is only speculation on our part. What happened to them after they had entered the city – whether they died again or ascended to Heaven is unknown. Further conjecture is vain. StudyJesus.com seeks only Biblical answers and prefers to answer with book, chapter and verse when possible.

17. Q: We have decided to cover our family with the blood of Jesus Christ, but have no home church or preacher. How can we “repent and be baptized?”

A: The obvious calm and assurance present in your home is evidence of God’s power. Your decision to cover your family “with the blood of Jesus Christ” is one He always blesses. The following is the answer to your question regarding repentance and baptism. Repentance implies sorrow for sin as committed against God and a purpose of heart to avoid it. The mere fact that God hates it is reason enough for us to hate it. In Peter’s address in Acts 2 at Pentecost he is telling them to turn away from sin and to exercise sorrow for it. Repentance is more than alarm although alarm is part of the process. It is an every day, in every way change. A changed life which is sorry for the past and committed to change in the present and future. “Be baptized” is the direction Christ gave to His apostles for all those who “believe.” The Jews had not been baptized so baptism now would be a profession of the religion of Christ – a declaration to the world that they embraced Christ as the Messiah. It was equivalent to saying that

they publicly embraced Jesus Christ as the Son of God and as their Savior. The Good News of Jesus required such a profession then as well as now. All this is done “in the name of Jesus Christ,” i.e., Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We are baptized for Him and His service – covered by His blood – His sacrifice for our sin. He paid the price for us. We reenact His death, burial, and resurrection in the act of baptism. We die to sin; we are buried with him in baptism; and we are raised to walk a new life. Baptism is an act of obedience not a work that earns a reward. His grace (God’s riches at Christ expense) is a free gift to those who believe and obey. It is a new birth. Upon confession of your faith that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; with repentance as your commitment for Jesus – in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you can baptize each other. This can be done in a church baptistery, a swimming pool or a bath tub. Baptism is an emersion, so anywhere that can be accomplished is ok. Romans chapter 6 is a good place to grow in your understanding of the significance and deeper meaning of baptism. Also, log on [Salvation](#) in the A Religion Library section of StudyJesus.com.

18. Q: We are a small group of believers and do not want to publicly or officially name ourselves or join a denomination. Can we be just Christians and continue worshipping in our homes? Is there anything special that we should know about or be doing?

A: “Just Christians” – what a beautiful and powerful statement. We would that the whole world be “just Christians.” The beauty of your faith and statement inspires and encourages. Re: Home worship. Nothing is more Biblical. That is the model of first century Christianity. Rhoda’s Gate, Lydia’s House, the Jailor’s House, Justus House, Publius House, Priscilla and Aquila’s House, Narcissus House, Crispus House, etc. just to name a few. Now, your house can be added. Re: What you should know or be doing. In the early church the Lord’s Supper was the high point of the assembly. Some today seem to hurry the process each week; others have relegated it to a monthly or quarterly observance (see Matthew 26:26-30; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2, Heb. 10:25, etc.). Prayer, singing, giving, and teaching were also a part. Exactly how we follow the first century examples is left to us – this flexibility is our freedom.

19. Q: Why did Jesus say “repent and be baptized” but then said that only unbelief would condemn?

A: Re: “repent and be baptized.” There is a great deal of information regarding this subject. This is intended as a short synopsis. Let us begin with faith. Faith involves obedience. Faith and obedience are often combined in the Bible. Paul spoke of the “obedience of faith” at both the beginning and end of the Roman letter (1:5; 16:26). The phrase refers to the obedience that accompanies faith. From the Biblical perspective, faith and obedience are equivalent. There was no faith in the Bible that was not obedient. “Faith and Baptism” – the perspective developed on a conditional promise and illustrated from Naaman and the fall of Jericho

which may help to explain the relation of the New Testament teaching on faith and on baptism. Baptism is an act of faith, not a work in the sense of Romans 4. Baptism is not a work, either in the sense of merit or of Christian works. “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven” (Acts 2:38). “For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Gal. 3:26-27). Faith is the reason why a person is a child of God; baptism is the time at which one is incorporated into Christ. “Faith and Works” – human works do not save but are the result of salvation. “. . . for we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life” (Eph. 2:10). Good works do not save, but saved people work. Re: “only unbelief would condemn.” An unbeliever does not believe. Belief leads to faith. Faith leads to obedience as discussed above. Unbelief is therefore no faith. No faith, therefore no obedience. Etc. “Belief” as an objective completion of a process is not supported in Holy Scripture. Looking at the entire body of information, one has difficulty ignoring the conversions of Acts: Pentecost – Peter preached Christ (Acts 2:14-36); the people were pricked in their hearts (Acts 2:37); repentance and baptism (Acts 2:38); 3,000 were added to the church (Acts 2:41, 47). Samaritans – they heard the Gospel of Christ (Acts 8:5-6); they believed and were baptized (Acts 8:12). Ethiopian – Phillip preached Christ (Acts 8:35); faith, confession, change of life, baptism (Acts 8:36-39). Saul of Tarsus – he believed in Christ (Acts 9:3-6); fasting, prayer, belief and repentance (Acts 9:3-6); he was baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 22:16). Cornelius – he was a good man, but he was not saved (Acts 10:1-6, 11:14); Peter preached Christ (Acts 10:34-43); belief was required (Acts 10:43); they were baptized (Acts 10:48). Lydia – Paul preached (Acts 16:13); she heard, believed, and was baptized (Acts 16:13-15). Philippian jailer – he asked, “What must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30); he listened, believed, changed, and was baptized (Acts 16:29-34). Corinthians – Paul preached (Acts 18:4); they believed and were baptized (Acts 18:8).

20. Q: What did Peter mean when he commanded repentance and baptism, when Jesus had only said believe and be baptized?

A: One should note that Jesus also preached “repentance” and not just belief and baptism. Consider Jesus’ last words in Luke’s Gospel: “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:46-47).

21. Q: David played a harp; can we play guitars in worship?

A: Perhaps it is best to answer this question in the spirit of 2 Timothy 2:15. Consider how detailed God is in the Old Testament (Old Covenant, Heb. 8:13; 2 Cor. 3:14), *specifically* commanding His people regarding worship

(for example, when Hezekiah restored Temple worship in 2 Chronicles 29:20-36). Jesus Christ established the New Covenant (Heb. 8:8-12; 10:1-10). So, God's New Covenant people (us), like those of the old, seek to observe His *specific* New Covenant commands. In Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, God's Holy Word clearly places the melody of worshipful singing in our hearts – not in instruments.

22. Q: Who did Jesus pay the ransom to – God or Satan?

A: Jesus did not pay a ransom *to* anyone. If He did, it would imply the utterly unacceptable. First, it would imply a bargaining, negotiation session between God and Satan that is unthinkable. Did God have to “come to terms” with Satan to set His Son free? God is all-powerful! (Ps. 91:1-2; Eph. 1:18-21). Second, God did not want Jesus delivered from the cross. Why would the Father ask His Son to do something He did not want done? (Luke 22:42). Third, already Jesus had shown He had power over Satan (Matt. 4:1-11). We also note that Jesus was to receive “all power and authority” from the Father (Matt. 28:18). Why would the Father withhold such power before the crucifixion and freely give it after the crucifixion if this were not His will to start with? Obviously, then, the Father willed Jesus to go to the cross and Jesus came to do His Father's will (Heb. 10:7). So, in what way was a ransom involved? Scripture says “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28). “. . . He has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed . . .” (Heb. 9:15). What Jesus did is described “as a ransom.” He did not pay to somebody; He paid to save us “as a ransom” would be paid. In what way did He “pay?” – By giving His life. An illustration may help. A man came back to America from Europe after years abroad. He had spent a fortune. He became well-educated. He was very accomplished. His widowed mother had supported him completely all those years by being a scrub-woman, working on her knees in the public buildings of New York City. The fumes from the scouring had left her blind. Her attendant had to help her stand on her gnarled arthritic feet. She had paid a terrible price in order for her son to have a carefree life. She expended herself for him. Her life, with all its sacrifice, was not paid to anyone. It was given that her son might live “the abundant life” (John 10:10).

23. Q: What does the Bible say about women preachers?

A: The fidelity of women to Jesus during His three years' ministry, and at the cross and tomb, typifies their spiritual devotion in the activities and enterprises of the church of the 21st Century. From the first, women were prominent in the activities of the early church. Consider a few examples: Acts 1:14 . . . Their faith and prayers helped to make Pentecost possible. Acts 9:36 . . . They were eminent in charity and good deeds, as in the case of Dorcas. Acts 12:12 . . . Mary the mother of John was foremost in prayer, assembling the disciples at her home to pray for Peter's deliverance. Acts 18:26 . . . Priscilla is equally gifted with her husband as

an expounder of "the way of God," and instructor of Apollos, and as Paul's "fellow-worker in Christ" (Rom. 16:3). Acts 21:8, 9 . . . The daughters of Philip were prophetesses. Acts 16:14 . . . Lydia demonstrated hospitality, making a home for Paul and a meeting-place for the infant church. Romans 16:1, 3, 6, 12, 15 . . . Paul sends greetings to at least eight prominent in Christian activity: Phoebe, Prisca, Mary "who bestowed much labor on you," Tryphena and Tryphosa, Persis, Julia, and the sister of Nereus. 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14,15 . . . To no woman did the great apostle Paul feel himself more deeply indebted than to Lois and Eunice, grandmother and mother of Timothy, whose "faith unfeigned" and ceaseless instructions from the holy Scriptures gave him the most "beloved child" and assistant in his ministry. From the beginning, women were servants of the church. Consider a few examples: Romans 16:1 . . . Phoebe was "a servant of the church," "a helper of many" and also of Paul. The word *servant* is the term from which we get *deacon* and *deaconess*. Women in the early church were servants who cared for sick believers, the poor, strangers, and those in prison. They instructed the women and children (cf. Titus 2:3-5) – whether Phoebe had an official title or not, she had the great responsibility of delivering this letter to the Roman church. When they had served faithfully and became widowed and destitute, such women were to be cared for by the church (1 Tim. 5:3-16). Philippians 4:3 . . . Paul mentions those women who "labored with me in the gospel." Regarding women publicly teaching (publicly preaching) please consider: 1 Timothy 2:12 (NKJ), ". . . I do not permit." The Greek word for *permit* is used in the New Testament to refer to allowing someone to do what he desires. Paul may have been addressing a real situation in which several women in Ephesus desired to be public preachers. Let us go further in v 12 . . . "to teach." Paul used a verbal form of this Greek word that indicates a condition or process and is better translated: "to be a teacher." This was an important, official function in the church (see Acts 13:1; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11). Thus Paul is forbidding women from filling the office and role of elder or teacher. He is not prohibiting them from teaching in other appropriate conditions and circumstances (cf. Acts 18:26; Titus 2:3, 4). Let us go further in v 12 . . . "to have authority over." Paul forbids women from exercising any type of authority over men in the church assembly, since the elders are those who rule (5:17). Elders or Shepherds of the Lord's church are all to be men (as is clear from the requirements in 3:2, 5). Let us go further in verse 12 . . . "in silence." Verse 11 states, "in silence with all submission." "Silence" (quiet) and "submission" (to line up under) were to characterize the role of a woman as a learner in the context of the church assembly. Paul explains his meaning here in verse 12: Women are to be silent by not teaching, and they are to demonstrate submission by not usurping the authority of the teachers or elders.

24. Q: Who were the "brothers" and "sisters" of Jesus mentioned in Matthew 13:55-56 and Mark 6:3? Mary's own children or children of Joseph by a former marriage?

A: The plain, simple, natural meaning of these passages is that they were Mary's own children, which is substantiated by the statement in Luke 2:7 that Mary "brought forth her first-born son." Why *first-born*, if there were no others? Consider Mark 6:3: "Is this not the carpenter; the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?" So they were "offended at Him" (NKJV). "James, Joses, Judas, and Simon" were actual half-brothers of Jesus. "James" was later a leader in the Jerusalem church (cf. Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; 1 Cor. 15:7; Gal. 1:19; 2:9, 12) and wrote the epistle of James. "Judas" (Heb. Name *Judah*) wrote the epistle of Jude. Nothing more is known of the other two. "His sisters" were actual half-sisters whose names are never given in the New Testament. Nothing is known of them, not even if they became believers as did the other family members. Consider Matthew 12:46: "While He was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside; seeking to speak with Him" (NKJV). These are actual siblings (half-brothers) of Jesus. Matthew explicitly connects them with Mary, indicating that they were not cousins of Joseph's sons from a previous marriage, as some of the church fathers imagined. They are mentioned in all the Gospels (Mark 3:31; Luke 8:19-21; John 7:3-5). Matthew and Mark give the names of 4 of Jesus' brothers, and mention that He had sisters as well (Matt. 13:55; Mk. 6:3). Probably there never would have been any other meaning read into these passages but for the desire to exalt celibacy as a holier form of life. The doctrine of Mary's *perpetual virginity*, i.e., that she remained a virgin, and had no other children, first appeared in the 2nd century Apocryphal writings, in conjunction with considerations of the Superior Sanctity of Celibacy. Then followed the human-concept of "her spotless and precious body" being translated to heaven. In 1854, Pope Pius IX, exercising the assumed Papal prerogative of determining historical facts, decreed the "immaculate conception" of Mary, i.e., that she was sinless, born and preserved "free from all stain of original sin." Re: Mary's "perpetual virginity," consider Matthew 1:25: ". . . and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus" (NKJV). Does not the statement that Joseph knew her not *till* "she had brought forth" a son imply unmistakably that he did *know her* after Jesus was born, that is, cohabit as man and wife? "Know her" is a euphemism for sexual intercourse (See Gen. 4:1, 17, 25; 38:26; Judg. 11:39). Re: Matthew 1:18: ". . . before they came together" (NKJV). Does not this expression imply that they did *come together* afterward? Surely, Joseph and Mary did not pretend to be husband and wife – surely their marriage was more than a public sham? Are we to think that they were hiding virginity under the camouflage of family life? Are we to believe that God would or could be a party to such deception and hypocrisy? Is Virginity any holier than Motherhood?

25. Q: Did Jesus have siblings? Did Mary die as she lived, a virgin?

A: Jesus did have siblings. The Bible speaks of them frequently. We even know their names. Every gospel mentions them. So does the book of Acts. Please read Matthew 12:46; 13:55; Mark 6:3; Luke 8:19-20; John 2:12, 7:3, 5, 10; Acts 1:14. Consider these further thoughts . . . Mary was a

virgin until after Jesus was born. After that she bore at least four more sons and at least two daughters. In addition to the above references, read Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-35. We find in these readings why Mary was a virgin at the time Jesus was born. With equal clarity, we see that she did not remain a virgin. Both Jesus (the Living Word) and the Bible (the written Word), came to us by way of God's Holy Spirit. Jesus was begotten by the Holy Spirit, and the written Word of God (Scripture), was inspired by the Holy Spirit. We need to carefully read John 1:1-4; 1 John 1:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Peter 1:10-12. We can depend on Jesus and what the Bible says about Him.

26. Q: Why do you use the KJV? Do you plan to make other versions (esp. NIV) available?

A: Our basic reason for using the KJV is that our research shows that today it is still the most widely used Bible translation. Therefore, since most Bible readers in the world are apparently reading from the KJV, and after prayerful consideration, we have opted to use that version in our preparation of Bible study materials. When, in a particular lesson text, a *current meaning* needs explanation in a particular KJV verse, we occasionally provide a more current up to date meaning by referring to a newer version. However, after prayerful consideration we have opted to do so within a particular lesson text, while using the KJV as the main or central translation for continuity of thought throughout the site. However, in the section [A Religion Library](#) the NASB is used. We are concerned about the site being user-friendly and, when possible, contemporary. We pray that it will be useful to those who are serious about studying God's Holy Word. In our private Bible studies we often use the NIV, NKJV, NASB, etc. However, because of our overall goal and prayerful focus, we have opted to use as our primary foundation or base translation of God's Word, the most widely used translation of the Bible, the KJV.

27. Q: Who wrote the first book of the Bible and how did he know about Adam and Eve?

A: Through a careful reading of the book of Genesis, it is repeatedly stated that God instructed Moses to write down what He was instructed to write. The bottom line is that God revealed to Moses His Word about the creation, and many other things. Of course, this revelation did not come at the time of creation, but at the time of Moses in the 1400's B.C.

28. Q: The Apostles' Creed: "I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to

judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.” Will anyone enter heaven until this final judgment?

A: The Apostles’ Creed is not infallible – the Bible is. Biblical writings do not always require literal reading. However, in spite of all these statements, it is probably in agreement with Scripture to affirm that no one goes to heaven until the final judgment (see 2 Cor. 4:14; 1 Thess. 4:13-17; John 3:13; 5:26-29). Of course, the most important thing is to be sure we walk in the light of God’s Word (Ps. 119:105) – that is what leads to heaven. The fact of our going is much more important than the when.

29. Q: Can the fourth chapter of Timothy be applied to the Catholic Church?

A: The context suggests Paul may have in mind a Gnostic heresy that was beginning to disrupt the church. Rejecting certain foods and down-grading marriage smacks of one of their basic tenets, i.e., dualism of spirit and flesh – spirit being pure and flesh (material, physical) being evil. Paul insists such a teaching rejects God’s provisions of all good things, including foods, etc. which are to be received with thanksgiving. But the teaching is descriptive of such practices that have appeared time and time again in history. And Paul is warning against them, wherever they appear.

30. Q: Since so much of the public ministry of Jesus was founded in Capernaum, why didn’t He visit there on his journey to be crucified?

A: One could only wish that there was a specific answer to such a question in Holy Scripture. It would be wonderful to turn to a book, chapter, and verse for an answer. Unfortunately, such is not possible in this case. Perhaps the best answer is to say “It is unknown.” However, here is some food for thought. Obviously, it did not suit His purpose to go to Capernaum at the time in question. Maybe that is where we should leave it – a mystery of purpose. There are other mysteries of purpose to which one can only apply supposition. Consider Matthew 16:20 for example. Here, after Peter’s confession in verse 16 that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Lord says “not to tell anyone He was the Christ.” Why not? Was He not here to make God known? Of course. But, obviously it did not suit His purpose at that time or we can only assume He would have done it differently. It would seem appropriate to note that it was clear He had other more important things to accomplish first – in other words, everything in its time. Once again one could only wish there was a detailed explanation as to His thoughts and motives about this in a subsequent verse. Inferences and educated supposition is all that can be offered. With these thoughts in mind we return to the basic question. First, consider the prophecy of Isaiah 9:1, 2 as referenced in Matthew 4:13-16. Certainly Capernaum was important not only as we have observed, but in the additional sense of prophecy fulfillment. When Jesus had accomplished His purposes in life, only one was left which

could only be fulfilled in death. No death, no burial. No burial, no resurrection. No resurrection, no hope for us. No hope, no meaning to this life. Apparently there was no divine purpose in one more visit to a friendly place in times gone by. Our view of His timetable is clouded by our humanity. His divinity was not. We would like to see a farewell tour like a retiring star or professional athlete. His was not a purpose to serve self on a path of comfort, but rather to fulfill Isaiah's prophecy as a suffering Savior who would be bruised for our iniquities. Perhaps His steps only quickened as He saw the day approaching – His work here approaching completion. When He said "it is finished" it was.

31. Q: Matthew 13:40 says that He will send His angels to weed out the wicked from his children. Am I reading this correctly?

A: Yes, you are reading correctly. Also look at 1 Thessalonians 4:13-16; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 20:11-15; Revelation 21:1-4.

32. Q: Can you briefly explain baptism?

A: Perhaps we should start by considering Christ's baptism as the foundation of Christian baptism. Explicit in the text is the association of Jesus' baptism with Sonship and the gift of the Holy Spirit. At the baptism of Jesus, the Spirit came upon Him and God acknowledged Him as His Son (Matt.3:16, 17; Mark 1:10-11; Luke 3:21-23). Then He began His ministry. Only when the Spirit came in Acts 2 did the disciples begin preaching the Gospel. So for Christians, at baptism they are acknowledged as children of God (Gal. 3:26-27) and receive the Spirit (Gal. 4:5-7) and then begin a life of service. At His baptism, Jesus launched His messianic ministry and accepted the way of the cross. One is baptized because Christ was, with all that means. After the cross and resurrection Jesus gave a command to His disciples that included the administration of baptism: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:18-20). Baptism is associated with the following key ideas: Confession of faith (i.e., Acts 22:16); act of repentance (i.e., Acts 19:4); forgiveness of sins (i.e., Acts 2:38); gift of the Holy Spirit (i.e., Acts 10:45); new birth (i.e., John 3:3-5); death and resurrection (i.e., Col 2:12).

33. Q: We want to be baptized like Peter said to do in the first of Acts, but don't know how to go about it. Can you help?

A: May we suggest you baptize each other? What is important is the understanding and motive of the believer who desires baptism – not the person assisting. Obviously, you will need water just like the Ethiopian Noblemen in Acts 8:36. Baptism is an emersion, so you will need something like a swimming pool or bathtub. In Matthew 28:17-20, Jesus

Himself tells us what to do. "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 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. Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

34. Q: Is Jesus God? After all, Isaiah 9:6 speaks of Jesus as mighty God, Counselor, Father, etc. Therefore, why the Trinity (Father, Son and Spirit)?

A: Perhaps Matthew 28:17-20 will be of assistance considering the Trinity question. The Bible presents God in three distinct personalities – 1 God, 3 personalities, i.e., God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit. Perhaps thinking of it as a "Triple Name" will help. It is correct to say Jesus is God. But, to complete the description as provided in the Bible, we must add Father and Holy Spirit. Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (Word/Logos refers to Jesus – the Word made flesh). John 14:16-17, 25-26; 15:26; 16:7-8, 12-13, etc., all refer to Christ's promise to send the Holy Spirit. This helps us see the One God, 3 personalities, of the Bible. Regarding Isaiah 9:6 – "Wonderful. Counselor:" this is not a reference to the Holy Spirit – it denotes one of honorable rank; one who is fitted to stand near princes and kings as their adviser. It is expressive of great wisdom, and of qualification to guide and direct the human race. "Mighty God" denotes Divine nature or strength of God, Divine hero, descriptive of the first part of the verse "Unto us a Son is given." "Everlasting Father" denotes the man abiding forever or the Father of the future – Messianic in nature. The Hebrews used the term "Father" in a variety of senses – literal father, grandfather, an ancestor, a ruler, and instructor. So, all these terms refer to Jesus Who is God the Son – one of three distinct personalities of God in the Bible. We do not feel the Bible teaches that one must know everything in order to complete ones obedience in baptism. We are all learning and growing and the subject of the Godhead or Trinity is among the more difficult of concepts. If one believes Jesus is God he is correct, as far as it goes. Perhaps that is where we should leave it.

35. Q: Salvation is confusing. Preachers say it is free and that baptism isn't needed, but the Bible says otherwise. Why do preachers tell teach not to do something that the Bible says to do? If they are right and salvation is free, then why is anything else required to be saved?

A: Salvation is free but restricted. Bible history is a great illustration of the restrictive condition of salvation. Consider three examples showing salvation restricted to faithful obedience: Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:15-17); Noah's Ark (Gen. 6:17-19); The Passover (Ex. 12:12-13). These clearly show that in Old Testament times, salvation was restricted to faithful obedience. Note just two examples of tragedy resulting when God's restriction was disregarded: Saul (1 Sam. 15:3, 13-15, 22-23) and the Israelites in the wilderness (Heb. 3:12, 16-19). In our age, salvation

continues to be free, but still restrictive. In other words, the free nature of salvation is certainly emphasized in God's Word, but so is its restrictive nature in Christ. Consider these Scriptures: Romans 3:23-24; 5:17-18; 8:31-32; and Galatians 5:1. Jesus Himself emphasized this in John 14:6. Some of the restrictive aspects of free salvation are: *except* you believe (John 8:24); *except* you repent (Luke 13:3); *except* you be converted/turn (Matt. 18:3); *except* one be born of water and spirit (John 3:5); *except* you abide in Me (John 3:5). So, yes, salvation is free to us because God's Son, Jesus Christ, paid the price. Is it unreasonable of God to expect us to accept the restricted, strait and narrow way?

36. Q: What about demons?

A: There is an interest today in demonology and exorcism. The New Testament says much about demons, indicating for instance that they are personal beings (speech, etc.) and evil beings (known by their fruits), but the Word of God gives no wild, imaginative details about demons; no magical methods on how to deal with them; no wide sphere of demonical operation. From Mark 1:23-27, 32, 34, 39; 3:11-12, 14, 22, 30; 5:1-2, 8-13, 18 we learn that Jesus commands the demons (see also James 2:19). From Mark 1:30-31, 32, 34, 40-42; 3:1, 5, 10 we learn that Jesus heals the sick. While both commanding the demons and healing the sick were miraculous works, there is a sharp contrast between the work of Jesus in healing diseases and His work of casting out demons. The same authority and power of Jesus held over illnesses, diseases, and infirmities, He also held over demons, or evil spirits. He could send them to the abyss (Luke 8:31); He also had authority and power over sin which men commit while under the influence of Satan, the prince of demons (Mark 2:7-12; 2:17). Since Jesus is in control, there is no need for any human being to go to the place prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41).

37. Q: We want to be baptized but how can we when we don't have a church? We plan to marry in July but want to obey God now. What should we do? Do we need to find a church? Do we need to find a minister?

A: Regarding "how to" be baptized, we suggest that you baptize each other. You may want to revisit some of the baptisms in the book of Acts (Pentecost – Acts 2:37, 38, 41, 47; the Ethiopian Nobleman – Acts 8:35-39; and the Philippian jailor – Acts 16:29-34). These are good examples of Bible baptism. It seems to us that what is important is the knowledge and motive of the one being baptized, not the one assisting. Since baptism is an emersion you will need a swimming pool or a bath tub, etc. Regarding finding a church or minister – that is an option if you can find one teaching the pure truth of the Bible or you may want to consider starting your own in your home. Perhaps you can draw others, who are also searching for the pure, unchanged truth of God's Word. Your journey has brought you to God's will for your lives; perhaps your journey for the future is to assist others in their spiritual journey.

38. Q: Why can't I get your audio?

A: We have changed our audio to Adobe Flash. If you have not downloaded Adobe Reader and Adobe Flash your computer is not equipped with the software to play our audio. Try downloading these free Adobe programs from their website.

39. Q: I love God, but don't believe all the Bible says. I know God can heal and help people, but I don't know whether He would or not. You see, I believe that God doesn't heal or help everybody. He just helps one here and one there. I don't believe I'm one that He does. My religion doesn't believe it. I just don't think it could happen. My preacher always says God only does things through the Bible, so it seems to me that it's only for those few who can know and understand it, and I'm not one of them. My preacher always makes me think such things as, "I better not slip up" or "I'd better read my Bible an hour a day or God won't bless me." Every time I hear him preach I think, "Man, I've messed up my life so bad and fallen so far there's no way God could ever be pleased with me again." I can't seem to shake this negative feeling.

A: You state: "Man, I've messed up my life so bad and fallen so far there's no way God could ever be pleased with me again." All of us have messed up. That is what sin does – it separates us from God. We can never do enough reading of the Bible or other good things to make our "mess ups" with God ok. That is why He gave His Son as the once and for all sacrifice for sin. Jesus paid the price to end the separation and bring us into relationship. Are you a Christian? If you are, God's grace keeps you in relationship as long as you are "walking in the light" – as long as you are truly *trying to walk in the light*. In this case, God has forgiven you, so you must learn to forgive yourself. If you are not a Christian (or you are not sure), let's discuss this further. You do not have to live with "negative feelings." Here are some freedom texts that may help, Romans 6:18, 20, 22; 7:1-6; 1 Corinthians 9:21; Galatians 5:1. If these Scriptures do not help you to understand freedom, we need to continue the discussion. You made the comment "I really love God, but don't believe all the Bible says" and you went on to talk about "help" and "healing" and who is helped and healed, etc. We believe the entire Bible to be the inspired Word of God. However, we do not always believe what some people say it means. Apparently, what some human has said about the Bible has stolen your joy and peace. If so, you can claim the joy and peace again. There is no fear in truth and truth can stand any scrutiny placed upon it. Regarding "help" and "healing:" (rather than entering into a discussion of miracles), let us just say that what God has promised is the eternal help and healing of eternal life in Heaven. Everyone will die and it does not matter whether one is rich or poor materially – when death comes all that is insignificant (John 14:1-4).

40. Q: Why does God allow cancer? Why did God let my little baby suffer so much and die?

A: We realize our words are so inadequate at times like this. Such email deeply touches our hearts, as we are confident it touches our Lord. So we attempt a response hanging on to the love of our Lord. Your question regarding cancer and suffering is one for the ages. There is no simple answer (in fact, there really is not a suitable answer), but maybe we can gain some insight and hopefully (eventually) peace. The book of Job in the Old Testament may help. Granted, we learn in the first chapter that the events that are about to unfold are the result of a wager of sorts between God and Satan. However, it is a study of suffering, disaster, and seeming unfairness. After reading it we offer these considerations. Is God unfair? That answer probably depends upon how closely we identify with God and life. Surely we would agree that this life, by its very nature, is unfair. In no way are we suggesting that losing a baby is comparable in any way to financial trouble, or relationship problems, etc. Rather, that this life on earth by its nature, is unfair and sometimes ultimately unfair. Perhaps here we need to remind ourselves that God is no stranger to suffering. Isn't that what He did at Calvary – the cross that held Jesus' scared body that had been exposed to the violence and injustice of this world. In that scene, the cross reveals what kind of world we live in and what kind of God we have – a world of gross unfairness and a God of sacrificial love. No one is exempt from tragedy or disappointment – not even God. Jesus offered no immunity, no way out of the unfairness, but a way through it to the other side. That is the road we must seek and travel. Sometimes we need more than a miracle. We need heaven and until we get it the unfairness will not disappear. We do not have an answer for the *why*. However, we know we were created in the image of God, purchased by the precious blood of Jesus, and offered the companionship of the King of Kings.

41. Q: What is intercessory prayer?

A: Perhaps the best answer is Romans 8:26 – in the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

42. Q: Should we sing a song during the Lord's Supper?

A: We do not know of a Bible answer to your question. In no way are we suggesting that your question is not timely or relevant, just that there is not a Biblical guide for us to follow.

43. Q: This material is excellent for Bible Study groups and personal Bible study within prison walls. I respectfully request if we may copy such and distribute it for that purpose only.

A: We always appreciate such kind words and have addressed this often asked question under "[Copyright Restrictions and Permissions.](#)"

44. Q: Should we be casting lots today to find out what God wants us to do?

A: In Acts 1:26 (NKJV) God's Word says, "And they cast lots, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles." The method of casting lots was a common Old Testament way of determining God's will (Lev. 16:8-10; Josh. 7:14; Prov. 18:18). "The normal way of doing it was that the names of the candidates were written on stones; the stones were then put into a vessel and the vessel was shaken until one stone fell out; and he whose name was on the first stone to fall out was elected to office" (William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible, The Acts of the Apostles*, Saint Andrew Press, Edinburgh, 1966). So, during their waiting period from the resurrection of Jesus until Pentecost, while waiting for the promised coming of the Holy Spirit, and in keeping with Old Testament custom, the Apostles cast lots. Acts 1:26 is the last Biblical mention of casting lots. The coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:38 made the Christian's need for and use of casting lots unnecessary. A Christian's belief in and use of casting lots reveals a serious lack of spiritual understanding and a serious need for deeper Biblical study regarding the nature, mission and work of God the Holy Spirit. Determining God's will in a Christian's life by casting lots comes close to nullifying the meaning and purpose of the death of Jesus – God's eternal plan and love. Christians no longer worship on Saturday, the Sabbath; no longer observe the Passover; no longer present burnt offerings to God; no longer speak in tongues; no longer perform miracles; and no longer cast lots. In fact, casting lots has no place in a Christian's life, because a Christian has been given the gift of the Holy Spirit. With God the Holy Spirit dwelling within; with direct contact to God the Father in prayer through Jesus Christ; with spiritual shepherds to confide in; and with God's Holy Word, what more does a Christian need? We live in a fast moving, need-to-know-now age. Yet, faith requires a Christian to wait on God, believing and accepting the unseen – always remembering that God's way is not our way.

45. Q: Finishing up my studies in Bible at [a Christian college], I am having problems with how forgiveness between fellow sinners can be compared to forgiveness of an offended deity. The Bible tells us to forgive in the same way we are forgiven, so I know there are similarities, but since God forgives only those who repent, shouldn't we also withhold forgiveness from those who are unrepentant?

A: Based on Ephesians 4:32 and Colossians 3:13, some believe and teach that forgiveness should always be conditional. That since God forgives only those who repent we should withhold forgiveness from all who are unrepentant. In his book, *From Forgiven to Forgiving*, (p. 34), Jay Adams writes: "It should go without saying that since our forgiveness is

modeled after God's (Eph. 4:32), it must be conditioned. Forgiveness by God rests on clear, unmistakable conditions. The apostles did not merely announce that God had forgiven me . . . Paul and the apostles turned away from those who refused to meet the conditions, just as John and Jesus did earlier when the scribes and the Pharisees would not repent." While respecting his work as a helpful study of the subject, we disagree with the position Adams takes on this issue. To make the gist of Christlike forgiving conditional misses the point of what Scripture is saying. The emphasis of Matthew 6:12, 14-15; James 2:13; Matthew 18:35; and Luke 6:36-38 is on forgiving freely, generously, willingly, eagerly, speedily – from the heart. In other words, the forgiver's attitude is the focus, not the terms of forgiveness. Conditional forgiveness portrays forgiveness as a formal transaction; the forgiven one must repent; the offended party promises in return never to bring up the sin again. Only after this transaction occurs can real forgiveness take place. In short, no act of forgiveness can occur until the offender asks for forgiveness. Sadly, some who hold this opinion become obsessive confronters and ultimately make themselves odious to friend and foe alike. Others nurse grudges, refuse to relinquish bitterness, and even sever friendships over relatively petty offenses – convinced they have no duty to forgive until the offender repents. It is obvious from Scripture that in certain cases the offender is to be confronted and ultimately even excommunicated from the church if he/she refuses to repent (Luke 17:3; Matt. 18:17). But does every offense call for confrontation, possibly leading to formal church discipline? Is there no place for simply granting unilateral forgiveness? Is there no time when the offended party should simply overlook a transgression, choosing to suffer wrong – forgiving without being asked or without formally confronting the offender? If you had a friend who scrupulously tried to confront you every time you committed a petty offense, wouldn't the friendship grow tedious? If marriage partners saw it as their solemn duty to confront each other for every offense, wouldn't the marriage relationship become difficult to endure? But, Luke 17:3 and Matthew 18:15 are not absolute prescriptions for every kind of transgression. If we were obligated to confront one another for every paltry misdeed, we would be doing little else. Scripture gives us another principle for dealing with the vast majority of petty infractions: simply overlook the offense. In other words, based on 1 Peter 4:8; Proverbs 10:12; 17:9; and 1 Corinthians 13:5, 7, love demands that we forgive unilaterally and unconditionally – granting pardon freely and unceremoniously. The New International Version renders 1 Corinthians 13:5: "[Love] keeps no record of wrongs." Jay Adams recognizes the Christian's duty to overlook petty offenses, citing some of these same texts. "But," he writes, "it is not . . . forgiveness." Having defined forgiveness as a two-way transaction, Adams has no room in his system for unilateral or unconditional forgiveness. So, he draws a distinction between forgiveness and overlooking another's transgression. If true, all the petty offenses we choose to overlook (or "cover," in Biblical terminology) are not to be regarded as forgiven. But, the Bible makes no such distinction. Psalm 32:1 refers to God's forgiveness, equating the concepts of forgiveness and the covering of sin. This is a Hebrew parallelism, employing two different expressions to designate the same concept. To cover someone else's sin is the essence of forgiveness.

Psalm 85:2 draws the same parallel. James 5:20 also equates forgiveness with the covering of sin. Holy Scripture also teaches that forgiveness can be unilateral and unconditional. Mark 11:25-26 speaks of unilateral and unconditional forgiveness, making it a condition for receiving God's forgiveness – a forgiveness granted to the offender without formal transaction. It describes a pardon that is wholly unilateral, because it takes place while the forgiver stands praying. Jay Adams cites this verse (p. 30), but argues that it only prepares the heart for forgiveness, suggesting that the command "forgive" in this verse means that the one praying should be "ready to forgive." In other words, actual forgiveness occurs only when the offender asks for forgiveness. The person who has "forgiven" in this manner cannot regard the forgiveness as complete until he confronts the offender, obtains that person's repentance, and formally grants forgiveness. But the Bible verse is clear – "forgive" is the command, and it is to take place on the spot. There is no mention of confrontation; no command to seek the offender's repentance. So, the forgiveness of Mark 11:25 differs from the forgiveness of Luke 17:3 – it is granted unconditionally and unilaterally. Are there clear Biblical principles that teach us when to confront, and when to forgive unilaterally? We believe there are. Re: unconditional and unilateral forgiveness, consider: (1) WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ESPECIALLY IF THE OFFENSE IS PETTY OR UNINTENTIONAL, IT IS BEST TO FORGIVE UNILATERALLY. This is the essence of a gracious spirit (a gracious forbearance ("tolerance") of others' faults) – the Christlike attitude called for in Ephesians 4:1-3. In other words, believers are to have a sort of mutual immunity to petty offenses. Love "is not easily provoked" (1 Cor. 13:5 KJV). If every fault required formal confrontation, the whole of a Christian's life would be spent confronting and resolving conflicts over petty annoyances. So, for the sake of peace and to preserve unity of the Spirit, we are to show tolerance wherever possible. Here is the governing rule: unless there is some reason that an offense requires confrontation, unconditional and unilateral forgiveness should cover the transgression. By suffering the offense, the offended one is following in the footsteps of Christ (1 Pet. 2:21-25). (2) IF YOU ARE THE ONLY INJURED PARTY, EVEN IF THE OFFENSE WAS PUBLIC AND FLAGRANT, YOU MAY CHOOSE TO FORGIVE UNILATERALLY. Examples of this abound in Scripture. Joseph, for example, held no grudge against his brothers. His forgiveness was unconditional and unilateral, not predicated on expressions of remorse. Shimei is another case in point (2 Sam. 16). On his deathbed, David instructed Solomon (1 Kings 2:9), and Solomon honored David's forgiveness of Shimei's insult (1 Kings 2:36-38) – until Shimei violated the terms (vv. 42-44). Stephen praying for those stoning him is yet another example of unilateral, unconditional forgiveness. It is important to keep in mind that even after we have forgiven offenders for transgressions against us, as Stephen did, God Himself may exact justice. In other words, we can forgive an offense against us, but we cannot grant forgiveness for a sin against God (Luke 5:21). Stephen forgave his killers, but that did not assure that their sins would go unpunished. In the case of Saul of Tarsus who stood by while Stephen was killed (Acts 7:58; 8:1), his offense was completely blotted out when he fully repented. We are never told what became of those who threw the stones, but if they never embraced Christ as Lord and Savior, they will suffer the wrath of God for the sin of killing

Stephen. Our forgiving an offense does not guarantee that the offender will receive judicial forgiveness from God. God, who knows the heart, always judges righteously. Our part is to be gracious, bear the wrong, and pray for the offender's full repentance. God Himself will see to it that justice is done, if the offender fails to seek divine forgiveness. In like manner, there are times when it is necessary to confront an offender. In such cases, unconditional forgiveness is not an option. Usually, these involve more serious sins, not petty or picayune complaints, but soul-threatening sins or transgressions endangering the fellowship of saints. In such situations Luke 17:3 applies – if a brother or sister refuses to repent, Matthew 18 applies. Re: conditional forgiveness, we suggest the following guidelines: (1) IF YOU OBSERVE AN OFFENSE THAT IS A SIN AGAINST SOMEONE OTHER THAN YOURSELF, YOU MUST CONFRONT. Justice does not permit a Christian to cover a sin against someone else. In other words, you can unilaterally and unconditionally forgive a personal offense when you are the victim, because it is you who then bears the wrong. But when you see that someone else has been sinned against, it is your duty to seek justice. The only exception to this would be if the offended person himself chooses to ignore a personal slight or insult, as David forbade Abishai to wreak vengeance against Shimei. While we are entitled, and even encouraged, to overlook wrongs committed against us, Scriptures such as Exodus 23:6; Deuteronomy 16:20; Isaiah 1:17; 59:15-16; Jeremiah 22:3; and Lamentations 3:35-36 forbid us to overlook wrongs committed against another. It is not our prerogative to 'forgive' someone for an offense against another. Therefore, those who witness such an offense have a duty to confront the offender with his/her transgression. (2) WHEN IGNORING AN OFFENSE MIGHT BE HURTFUL TO THE OFFENDER, CONFRONTATION IS REQUIRED. Sometimes choosing to overlook an offense might actually injure the offender. In such cases it is our duty to confront in love (Gal. 6:1-2 KJV). Some examples: serious doctrinal error, moral failure, repeated instances of the same offense, sinful habits or destructive tendencies, or any other transgression posing a serious danger to the offender's spiritual well-being. (3) WHEN A SIN IS SCANDALOUS OR OTHERWISE POTENTIALLY DAMAGING TO THE BODY OF CHRIST CONFRONTATION IS ESSENTIAL. Hebrews 12:15 warns of such dangers. The responsibility to stimulate one another to love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24) is incumbent on every member of the body, as is exhorting one another (Heb. 3:13). Paul rebuked failure to confront and deal with scandalous sin among the flock (1 Cor. 5:1-6). Open sin in the church must be confronted. (4) ANY TIME AN OFFENSE RESULTS IN A BROKEN RELATIONSHIP, FORMAL FORGIVENESS IS AN ESSENTIAL STEP TOWARD RECONCILIATION. An offense causing a breach in relationships cannot be overlooked. Both the offense and the breach must be confronted, and reconciliation must be sought. Whenever there is a broken relationship between Christians, both parties have a responsibility to seek reconciliation. If you are the offended party, Luke 17:3 applies. If you are the offender, Matthew 5:23-24 applies. Reconciliation of a broken relationship is a very high priority, taking precedence over worship! If you have committed a wrong, your duty is to seek reconciliation without delay (Matt. 5:25-26). The allusion is to divine chastisement, and Scripture implies that God Himself will enforce the penalty due those who defer such an urgent duty. Luke 6:27-28 speaks of

willful, deliberate, rational acts, not reflex emotions. Obey Christ's commands to do such things and your anger will eventually give way to meekness; frustration will be overcome by peace; and anxiety will succumb to calm. Forgiveness results in the lifting of many burdens. To grant someone forgiveness when he/she repents is to lift the burden of guilt from that person. But to forgive, even when forgiveness is unilateral and unconditional, liberates the forgiver to enjoy the even greater mercies given in return by a generous heavenly Father Who promises to pour into our laps 'a good measure – pressed down, shaken together, and running over' (Luke 6:38).

46. Q: Can you give me some thoughts about how to convince my wife that being a Catholic is not what God wants?

A: We realize that your question comes from a deep love for your wife, but we seek to only answer Bible questions. We suggest you begin and end where the Bible does and avoid using any "names." When considering the Bible in total it is clear that God wants now what he has always wanted – the faith and love of His people. We suggest listening to the audio from two sections on the website. Start with "[The Greatest Love Story Ever Told;](#)" then "[The Way Home.](#)" These are compelling, yet non-threatening; covering what the Bible has to say about the life of Christ and the book of Acts. This approach allows the Bible to communicate its truth in its sequence. We pray it will help. Perhaps you could listen together or your wife may prefer to listen alone. Whatever is best in your specific situation.

47. Q: What are the nine major areas of the Old Testament?

A: Such "major areas" or major organizational divisions of the Old Testament often vary, depending on the thought process and personal study of an individual scholar(s) one might be using. For example, one scholar divides it into nine major areas; another ten; while Edward J. Young, in his book, *An Introduction of the Old Testament*, uses only three divisions – The Law of Moses, The Prophets, and The Hagiographa (Writings). No matter the scholarship one might follow to organize and structure the Old and/or New Testament, we strongly encourage maintaining a keen focus on the content of Holy Scripture. In other words, though we respect their work, we do not rely on the organizational divisions of the Bible developed by various scholars – but on God's Holy Word!

48. Q: Genesis 18 tells about God coming down to check out bad cities to decide if they should be destroyed or not, because they were real bad. Since God never changes, is He going to come down and check out America, because we are bad?

A: Here is what the Bible says. John 5:27-29, "and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. Do not

marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in graves will hear His voice and come forth – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.” Also, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (note verse 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.” Finally, 2 Peter 3:10: “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.” So when the Lord returns it will not be country by country, but the whole world.

49. Q: What were the social laws of the Old Testament and where in the Bible are they found?

A: The chart, “Major Social Concerns in the Covenant,” is located in the Deuteronomy section of the NASB Study Bible.

50. Q: Why are so many bad people allowed to live and so many good are taken away?

A: This question is one for the “ages.” Perhaps the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:45 will help. “. . . that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.” This verse is in the larger context of the “Sermon on the Mount” and more specifically the section on loving our enemies. For now evil and good remain here together. This concept is illustrated in the parable of the wheat and the tares in Matthew 13:24-30. Note verse 30, “Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: first collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.”

51. Q: If God hates divorce so much, why does He let divorce keep going on? My husband retired as a preacher and elder in the church and says that even though God doesn’t want us to divorce, He also doesn’t want us to lie about loving each other. What do you say?

A: Your husband’s service to the church as preacher and elder is noteworthy. His was not always an easy contribution and your support was essential. He could not have done it without you – you share this contribution. Unique stresses come from this type of work. A union that contributed to the church as you have is worth a second look at its value. So far, this is true, isn’t it? It is not a lie is it? You are correct when you state God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16). You are also correct when you state God does not want us to lie (Eph. 4:25, 29, among others). It is also clear and correct that God intended for marriage to last. It is a standard He set (Gen. 2:23-24). Here is the point where we could list a group of Scriptures on marriage and divorce that you, no doubt, already know. You

also know that your question defies an answer based upon the information given. We offer Christian compassion for the hurt you must feel in your marriage after many years and such wonderful contributions, only to feel emptiness and the perception you are living a lie. Don't give up on your marriage. It needs a Christian husband and wife. Don't give up on the standard God set. It is worth fighting for. A Christian counselor can help you fight for your marriage. Sometimes the printed word does not convey the empathy, compassion, and non-judgmental approach intended. We hope this is not the case as you read this.

52. Q: Do angels play a part in protecting our families? How do we know if God is speaking to us? How can I make my children be obedient?

A: The study of "angels" is fascinating. For example, we know that there "is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" indicating their knowledge of and interest in earthly affairs. Along the same line we read in 1 Peter 1:12: "through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven – things which angels desire to look into." Additionally, they (angels) were a medium of revelation in Acts 8:26: "Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Phillip . . ." Similarly, in Acts 23:9 we read: ". . . but if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God." There are many other references to angels. These are but a few that give insight to the question. Unquestionably, God speaks to us through His inspired Word, the Bible. Regarding "children," read Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Colossians 3:20; Ephesians 6:2, 3; Proverbs 10:1; 23:24; 29:17, as a start.

53. Q: Our preacher compared Deuteronomy 13:12 (where God commands tithing "year by year") with a verse in Malachi that he said was a 2nd tithing "every third year." Our family gives more than a tenth of what we earn, but now we are confused. Does God expect us to double our giving every third year? We have talked about all you provide online, but never ask for money.

A: The Bible contains a number of references about tithing. You specifically asked about the concept of the 2nd tithe in the 3rd year. There are two sections of Scripture which will aid your study. (1) Deuteronomy 12:6, 7, 17-19; 14:22-27 – deals with the 2nd tithe in the 3rd year which was brought to the tabernacle and eaten before the Lord. (2) Deuteronomy 14:28, 29; 26:12-15 – deals with the 2nd tithe in the 3rd year to promote hospitality and charity. A careful study of these Bible texts will hopefully help to answer the question, especially when compared to the verses in the New Testament regarding giving.

54. Q: Why are there so many faults in the church today? Why is the church so narrow minded, so Bible bound, so introspective, so sectarian, and why is the church today so segregationist in practice? The church today is not

inclined to a life of sacrifice and suffering and is weak because of opulence, materialism and pleasures. It is not inclined to a life of study and worship making it vulnerable to unstable doctrine and guilty of superficial and stereotyped worship. Also, it is not inclined to a life of personal evangelism, almost totally unaware of the lost. And last but not least, I sense that the church today is not inclined to a life of benevolent involvement, compartmentalizing Christianity. We have lost sight of the footprints of the One who went about doing good and who said, "Come, follow Me."

A: Such responses about the church of our Lord give us much pause and much prayer and thought, believing that such comments about the church must surely be deeply troublesome and heartbreaking personal feelings for anyone to express. So, we ask for understanding as we seek to address these serious thoughts about the church. First, it is difficult for us to be objective or analytical about the church – any more than a husband can be objective about his wife whom he loves dearly. For example: if one says a man's wife is too short, the husband will probably say, "No, she is petite and lovely." Or, on the other hand, an objective person may say of someone else's wife, "She is extremely tall and unsightly." The husband says, "No, she is stately and possesses classical beauty." The loving husband is not looking at his wife through objective eyes, but through eyes of love. When that occurs, beauty is in the eye of the beholder! This is the way we are about the church – when we look we see loveliness, beauty, and grandeur. We are not objective because we are part of the church. And, when we hear criticisms about the church we find it difficult not to become militantly defensive. For instance: When one says the church is *narrow minded* our reaction is, "We must earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 3). When one says the church is too *Bible bound* our reaction is, "All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteous" (2 Tim. 3:16). When someone criticizes the church for being too *introspective* our reaction is, "Do good to all men, but especially to those who are of the household of the faith" (Gal. 6:10). When one says the church is *sectarian* our reaction is, "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, says the Lord" (2 Cor. 6:17a). When someone says the church is *segregationist* in practice our reaction is, "But the segregation is de facto, not de jure." While there is merit in some of these criticisms, we believe that such criticisms would be misdirected if applied generally to the church at large. In other words, such faults might reflect local, provincial, or regional traits instead of a general church characteristic. For example, the "Bible bound" charge may reflect the way outsiders see the church in the "Bible belt" across the South. The "sectarian" charge may reflect the way outsiders view the church in the North or Northwest, where mainline denominations have been entrenched so long. However, we, too, see four of the faults mention as generally characteristic of the 21st century church, thus becoming the bases for more valid criticisms of the church at large. As suggested, they are: (1) the church at large is not inclined to a life of sacrifice and suffering, meaning we are being weakened by opulence, materialism and the pleasure syndrome. (2) The church at large is not inclined to a life of study and worship, meaning we are becoming vulnerable to unstable doctrine and guilty of superficial and stereotyped

worship. (3) The church at large is not inclined to a life of personal evangelism, meaning we have not yet caught the personal joy of salvation in Christ and we are not yet conscious that every accountable person is lost, if not in Christ. (4) The church at large is not inclined to a life of benevolent involvement, meaning we have compartmentalized our Christianity. In other words, “We have lost sight of the footprints of the one who went about doing good – and said, ‘Come, follow Me.’” So, the question is: How do we face and overcome these four basic faults? We humbly suggest the following for consideration: (1) Lack of sacrifice and suffering may be overcome by denying self (Luke 9:23) and serving all (Mark 10:43-45). (2) Lack of study and worship may be overcome by hungering and thirsting after righteousness (Matt. 5:6) and longing for God (Ps. 42:1-2). (3) Lack of personal evangelism may be overcome by developing the concern that Jesus showed (Matt. 23:37) and cultivating a love for the lost, as Jesus demonstrated (Matt. 9:36-37). (4) Lack of benevolent involvement may be overcome by having the compassion that Jesus had (John 11:35), using what we have to help others (Matt. 10:42), and remembering to whom Jesus made the statement, “Come, O blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 25:34). Correcting these four faults (and others) is not easy – to do so requires changing our attitudes (Phil. 2:4) and our priorities (Matt. 6:33). We pray that our love and commitment to God, Jesus Christ and His Church may be so captivated by His Spirit that we shall go on unto perfection to become a church without blemish and without spot.

55. Q: What does it mean in the Bible when it says “trial by fire”?

A: The question about “trial by fire” is best answered by three Scriptures: Numbers 31:23; 1 Peter 1:7; and Revelation 3:18. A trial in this context is a “test.” “Fire” is used in the Bible in a variety of ways but in this context it is used as a 'purification' process. These three Scriptures amplify this concept.

56. Q: Do I have to speak in tongues to get the Holy Spirit? Can I be saved without being able to speak in tongues?

A: The Bible speaks of three measures of the Holy Spirit: the baptismal measure (Matt. 3:11) – conferred by Christ; the miraculous measure (Acts 8:15-17) – conferred by the Apostles; and the normal measure (Acts 2:38) – conferred by the Lord. The BAPTISMAL MEASURE was given to the apostles (Acts 2); the MIRACULAS measure was given to selected Christians (Acts 8:12-18; 19:6); and the NORMAL measure was given to all Christians (Acts 2:38; 5:32; Gal. 5:4). The *baptismal measure* was not to save (Acts 2:1-4), but to reveal truth (John 13:16) and confirm truth (Acts 1:8; 2:43; Mark 16:20). The *miraculous measure* was not to save (Acts 8:12-18; Rom. 1:11, 8:9). The *normal measure* dwells in the church (1 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:20-22; 1 Cor. 12:13; 2 Pet. 1:4). The normal measure gives no miraculous power (Romans 8:9; Luke 1:15; John 10:41). So we

are not baptized of the Spirit (Luke 1:15; Rom. 8:9; Luke 1:67; John 7:39). The normal measure continues to this day (Acts 2:38; 5:32; Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:9). The baptismal measure had ceased by 64 A.D. (Eph. 4:5). The miraculous measure had ceased by 96 A.D. (1 Cor. 13:8-13). The normal measure continues to this day (Acts 2:38; 5:32; Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:9). Speaking in tongues was part of the miraculous measure of the Holy Spirit that ended about 96 A.D. The tongues (languages) in the first century were known languages (not unknown or known only to the Spirit. (Note: there are no recorded exceptions) and an interpreter of the known language was to interpret. The Bible teaches that we receive the NORMAL measure of the Holy Spirit at our baptism (Acts 2:38), along with remission of sins, etc.

57. Q: I have been reading about Joseph in the Bible. Last Saturday night I think I had a vision from God, too. I dreamed that I was walking in the desert. Then last night I had another dream. This time I was walking in the desert and talking to somebody about Jesus. Does this mean that I am going to grow up and be a preacher in some desert area? Is that what God is telling me to do?

A: Your question about dreams is a good one but difficult to answer. Your desire to consider becoming a preacher is a great idea. We hope you do. We know for sure that God speaks to us through the Bible. In the past God spoke through dreams, patriarchs, prophets, spiritual gifts, etc. The thought on your heart of becoming a preacher is a good one. Your study of Joseph is worthwhile. There are many good lessons in his life story. Keep studying your Bible and seeking God's will for your life and the way you should go will eventually become clear.

58. Q: Does God still choose people today for things to do for Him like He did John the Baptist? Can God use 10 year old girls?

A: Yes, God can use 10 year old girls. In fact, He can use all of us no matter what our age. The key is for us to be willing to serve. Take a look at 1 Peter 2:18-19. This Scripture talks about being willing to serve when it's easy and also when it is hard. In 2 Kings 5:2-4 we read of a servant girl who was probably near your age. She had been captured in a battle and forced to serve. Even under these very difficult circumstances she spoke up for God and Naaman was healed of leprosy because she told of the true God of Israel. She is a great example. You can read more about it in the rest of the chapter.

59. Q: Does anyone – man or woman – deserve to be “higher” in the church? Will God cast us into the fiery pits of hell if women served communion? Do you think women ought to be recognized as at least having the right to serve communion? Do you think women ought to be respected in the church? Do you think our ideas and opinions ought to be

taken into consideration when making decisions? Do you think women in the church should be included? Growing up I was never told I could not do this or could not be that because I was a woman. I have always had every opportunity open to me. Do you think it should be the same in the church? I do not want to live in a world, when my daughter asks me the same question I asked at age three, I have to tell her, "It just simply isn't done." What do you think?

A: Regarding the role of women in the church, we can understand your frustration with the answer "It simply isn't done." Let's take a look at what the Bible says. (1) During the wilderness wanderings Miriam was a prophetess – Exodus 15:20, Numbers 12:2 and as such was a leader of the people – Micah 6:4. (2) During the period of the judges Deborah was a prophetess – Judges 4:4 and was also the leader of the nation – Judges 4:5. (3) During the period of the kingdom, Huldah gave instructions to the king, high priest, and other leaders of Judah – 2 Kings 22:14-20. (4) During the exile, both the prophets and prophetesses among the Babylonian exiles were hampering Ezekiel's work. The point is not whether they were good or bad prophets or prophetesses, but that prophetesses were accepted as a matter of course by the Israelites – Ezekiel 13:17. (5) During the reconstruction of Jerusalem, among the prophets who opposed Nehemiah's reforms was a prophetess named Noadiah, who appears to have been the leader – Nehemiah 6:14. (6) Prophetesses seem to have been taken as the norm in the early church – Acts 21:9 and 1 Corinthians 11:4, 5. The apostle Paul does address the issue of order in the assembly in 1 Corinthians 14. The problem was that there was so much confusion that edification was impossible. Women speaking in the assembly were causing confusion much like that of too many people speaking in tongues – vv 22-25. In verses 33 and 34 he addresses women and silence. Three points need to be made: God is not a God of disorder but of order as in all congregations of the saints; "Congregations" can be translated "assemblies" and may be referring to all the assemblies of the Corinthian church rather than to all the congregations throughout the world; Paul's appeal to the Law ("Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says" v 34) does not refer to speaking specifically, but to a woman's being in submission. The Law nowhere forbids a woman to teach publicly. Paul placed limits on all those who would speak in the assemblies: The tongue speaking prophets were only to speak with an interpreter; only two or three prophets may speak at the service. If a prophet received a message from the Spirit, the one currently speaking was to get quiet and let the inspired messenger have the floor; Prophetesses were not to interject and try to "take the floor;" Prophetesses were not to cross-question the speakers. This is certainly not simple. And to say regarding women's roles, "It simply isn't done" lacks scholarship and answers the question from tradition rather than from the Bible. Obviously, there is more but hopefully this offers a study guide from the Bible to answer questions based on what the Bible says. This is not an easy question. The Bible clearly respects women. God looks upon the heart not the gender. There is no fear in the truth of the Bible.

60. Q: Can we burn CDs of The Way Home and use them in our work? Can we give them away? Can we make CDs of other sections of your website? Do we need to pay for the use of the material? How else can we let people know about www.StudyJesus.com?

A: You are welcome to burn CDs of any material on the StudyJesus.com website and use them in your work as per our "[copyright restriction and permissions](#)." We appreciate your thoughtfulness in asking, but you need not pay us anything. Word of mouth and email to your friends is the best way to let others know. You can also find some online advertising help here: "[V^||ÁÇÇ a } áÁB * Áææ&@ ^} • D](#)" (illustrations which can be attached to email).

61. Q: Can the Antichrist be biblically identified?

A: First let's be sure on the definition. The answer is based upon the definition as being "against Christ, or an opposition Christ, a rival Christ." The word "Antichrist" is used only by the apostle John. Referring to false teachers, John says, "Even now are there many antichrists" (1 John 2:18, 22; 2 John 1:17). This name has also been applied to the "little horn" of the "king of fierce countenance" in Daniel 7:24, 25; 8:23-25. Also, this name has been applied to the "false Christ" spoken of by our Lord in Matthew 24:5, 23, and 24. Additionally, it is attached to the "man of sin" described by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4, 8-10. Finally, there is the reference to the "beast from the sea" in Revelation 13:1; 17:1-18.

62. Q: Does this stated in a science magazine have theological implications? "Eventually the sun ignited . . . No planet would therefore be able to grow larger than Jupiter, and with its tremendous mass Jupiter could gravitationally dominate the further growth of its siblings."

A: Yes, we do agree and believe that God created such things, as Genesis 1:2-3 puts it: "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep . . . And God said, Let there be light: and there was light."

63. Q: Here in prison, I've been listening and thinking a lot about The Way Home stories from the book of Acts. Is the first story about Pentecost speaking to me? I wasn't there when Jesus was crucified, but after listening to the lady tell the story I had this urge to do what Peter told those people to do. Can you explain it for me?

A: You ask, "Is the first story about Pentecost speaking to me? I wasn't there when Jesus was crucified, but after listening to the lady tell the story I had this urge to do what Peter told those people to do." Perhaps the best answer to such a question is found in Acts 2:39. This is right after verses 37 & 38 where Peter is answering the question of what to do to be saved. Acts 2:39 reads, "For the promise is to you and to your children,

and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.” That certainly covers us. The answer is the same today as it was over 2,000 years ago – nothing more, nothing less. When the people asked what they should do in verse 37, Peter told them in verse 38: “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” – nothing more, nothing less. It is speaking to us and to those who will come after us just as it has for over 2,000 years.

64. Q: How does God use someone? Is God going to talk to me and tell me what to do?

A: God’s Holy Word is filled with true, real life events in the lives of people being used by God. We trust that God is using us to assist with an answer to your questions. In no way do we mean for this comment to be self-serving – we seek only to serve Him. God speaks to us (and you) through the Bible. When we read God’s Holy Word we come to understand His will for our lives, thus preparing ourselves for His “use.” This is consistent with the true personal stories of “use” and sacrifice found in the Bible. In Hebrews 11 there is a great list of people God used. Confusion is understandable, but one will never go wrong going to the Bible for answers. And we can all be assured, if we continue studying His Holy Word, preparing for His service, He will “use” us for good.

65. Q: Are all churches part of God’s church? Are all religions from God?

A: To be fair and balanced, it should be pointed out that we are obviously bias, believing the Bible to be the only inspired Word of God. Thus, our answers to these questions are based upon this bias. Therefore, God’s church is Bible based and its members know when it began and practice only what God instructs. So, the “template” to use in making a determination is Acts 2. Of particular note is verse 47, “. . . praising God and having favor with all people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” In other words, the Lord does the adding, not man. There is no spiritual power in a membership list developed by man. Obviously, the Lord knows who is and who is not in His church. If we follow the Bible example of Acts 2 we have the assurance by His grace that we, too, are added. Regarding “religions from God” – when religion is defined as an outward expression of worship, the answer is linked to the above answer regarding “God’s church” – where God’s people worship. The outward expression of that worship is what God’s people do (religion). The foundational basis for all that is done in matters of the church and religion is God’s Holy Word.

66. Q: What is the mark of the beast?

A: We read about the “mark of the beast” in Revelation 13:16, 17; 14:9, 11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20; and 20:4. Simply by reading these verses one will

learn a great deal. Some think that the “mark” referred to slaves in the Roman Empire who in those days sometimes received actual marks on their hands or forehead. Ancient records do specifically mention disobedient slaves and defeated soldiers being branded. Others think that the “mark” was the images on coins or stamps placed on documents. In recent years, a variety of interpretations have been given to the “mark.” Some think it is a literal marking where followers of the beast are depicted with the number “666” prominently painted or tattooed on their foreheads. Since the “mark” has to do with buying and selling (Rev. 13:17), some have identified it as a symbol used in commercial life, such as bank numbers, bar codes at the supermarket, social security numbers, and the like. During World War II, some in America were convinced that ration stamps were “the mark of the beast.” But we question these modern-day interpretations because they would not have been meaningful to the early Christians. Going back to the 7th chapter of Revelation, one can study more about the “mark” of the beast as the counterpart – and counterfeit – of the “seal” of God. There we learn that God’s 144,000 were sealed “on their foreheads,” and in Revelation 13:16 the beast’s followers were to be given a mark “on their right hand or on their forehead.” The mark stamped earth-dwellers as the property of the beast, as those under his protection, and as those who were assimilating his character. Being marked on the forehead indicated that their thoughts were affected; being marked on the hand indicated that their actions were affected. Seals had many purposes in Bible times, but in chapter 7 of Revelation the purpose for them was protection. Even so, when men received the mark of the beast, it implied that the beast would provide for them and protect them. But one must always keep in mind that the devil invariably makes promises that he cannot deliver. Some believe that the “beast” in Revelation 14:9 is a reference to Rome – a fallen secular society that worshiped false gods. In other words, they believe the “mark” is characteristic of a false worshiper. In this context, when someone uses “the mark of the beast” referring to another, they are basically calling them “a secular ancient Roman who worships false gods.” Still others believe that the “mark” is not literal.

67. Q: What is heaven and where is it? Can angels be in a disguise? Is Satan locked away?

A: Heaven is a wonderful place. Hebrews 11:14, 16 calls it a better country. Jesus refers to it as “His father’s house” in John 14:2. The Bible does not tell us exactly where it is but tells enough to make us want to live there. Regarding angels in disguise: In Hebrews 13:2, the Bible says that we can “entertain them unaware,” so it is safe to assume that angles can be in disguise. Unfortunately, Satan is not locked away. In Matthew 4:1-11 he tempted Jesus at the beginning of His ministry. We are also warned of his devices in 2 Corinthians 2:11. But we should not be afraid of him because our Father in heaven is much stronger than Satan – God will always protect us.

68. Q: Why did God let Jesus be killed so terribly?

A: There are two important Bible truths: Our ways are not God's ways (Is. 55:8-9), and God's love for us far exceeds our understanding (John 3:16). What God has done for us is very powerful. The price for freedom from sin was high, very high. Philippians 2:6-8 says it best, giving us the best insight into the mind of God, "Who, being the very nature of 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. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross."

69. Q: Is it possible that the devil has overtaken me? Can he control my life like that?

A: The question is about the devil and his control. In Matthew 4:1-11, he tempts Jesus at the first of His ministry. 1 Peter 5:8 compares Satan to "a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." In 2 Timothy 2:26, we read that men are said to be "taken captive by him." Christians are warned against his "devices" in 2 Corinthians 2:11. So, yes he can take control; if we allow him to do so by not staying close to our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

70. Q: Can God heal me? Can you tell me what to do to get healed?

A: These are good questions but are difficult to answer. We don't have all the answers. Sometimes bad things happen to good people. We would say that sickness is a bad thing that happens to good people. In the Bible, Job had some really bad things happen to him and he did not understand why they were happening. Turns out, Job was in a unique position that is described in the first chapter. You can read his life story in the Old Testament book of Job. Here is what we know. "God created the heavens and the earth." (Gen. 1:1). Ok, so God created everything. When He did, He set in motion certain natural laws like the law of gravity. That law does not change. (If it did, we would all be floating around in space with nothing holding us to the earth.) There are also laws of physics (mass and motion) and biology (how germs grow and spread, etc.) among others. These laws don't change either. If we happen to contact them we experience their result. Doctors are really good helping out with sickness but sometimes they don't have all the answers either. God always answers our prayers. Sometimes He says "yes," sometimes "wait," sometimes "no." But one thing we know: God loves us very much and He has a plan for each of us.

71. Q: I work very hard, so why isn't God blessing me? I'm so far in debt. Is there any hope for me?

A: We realize that we cannot fully comprehend your situation from one email message, but we want to help and encourage. The burden of debt is a heavy one, and we all should pay attention to Matthew 11:29-30 where Jesus Himself says: "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." If each of us claimed this verse we would be led toward a solution. There is hope and blessing in Jesus Christ. If our goal is to get out of debt, then we need a serious plan – requiring a change in behavior.

72. Q: I want to be baptized like the Bible says, but my church does not believe in it. What should I do? Why does my church or any church refuse something so clear in the Bible as baptism?

A: The Bible does not specify the qualifications of a person assisting in baptism nor does it specify the location. So you are free to choose who will assist you and the location. Perhaps you have a Christian friend who could assist. Perhaps there is a swimming pool or another source of water deep enough for emersion (Acts 8:38 – they went down into the water). What the Bible specifies in great detail is the knowledge and purpose of the one being baptized. Such e-mail is a beautiful expression of how one comes to Christ based upon the study of the book of Acts. Here are some related Scriptures for further study and preparation. Your e-mail describes the change (or repentance – Acts 17:30) from sin that you have already made in your life. Your confession that Jesus is the Lord of your life (Romans 10:8-9) is apparent from the thoughts you shared. And your desire to be baptized shares the common response with those in the first century who heard the first Gospel sermon (Acts 2:38). You can read more about "baptism" in the following Scriptures: Romans 6:3-6 (what it is); Mark 16:15-16 (who is to be baptized); Acts 22:16 & 1 Peter 3:21 (the necessity). You are correct when you state that the teaching of the Bible on baptism is clear.

73. Q: I was looking on your website to determine who wrote articles. Could you please include that?

A: Thank you for writing. Our mission and philosophy is located at <http://www.StudyJesus.com/mission.htm>. In an age of self-gratification and the glorifying of personal achievements, we are attempting to solely honor the Word of God (1 Cor. 1:31), determining not to measure or commend ourselves by ourselves or compare ourselves among ourselves (2 Cor. 10:12). Therefore, at the beginning we determined not to be recognized, remaining unidentified under the shadow of the cross – placing emphasis on God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit, and the inspired writers of Holy Scripture. While we respect and credit the scholarly Biblical writings of others, it is by prayerful choice that our contributors seek anonymity, desiring that anyone *looking on* the website will see JESUS CHRIST.