Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?

SECOND PRINTING

Billy Crone

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Cover Design:
KEVIN BISH
To my parents, Jack and Marilyn.

Before the beginning of time and the foundations of this world, the Lord knew that you two were to be my caretakers. You have given me life and you have given me love. You have shaped me into the man that I am today.

Thank you Mom, for my sense of humor and instilling within me the ability to always look on the bright side of life. Little did you know that on the day you showed me how to feed those ants pieces of bread instead of smashing their home that you would also be giving me a heart of compassion.

Thank you Dad, for my attitude of being a responsible man and instilling within me the ability to work hard. Little did you know that seeing you remodel our house day after day, month after month, year after year, that you would also be showing me a living example of perseverance and dedication in finishing a project once you begin.

For these things and many more, I praise the awesome sovereignty and profound wisdom of God Almighty for both of you.

I love you.
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According to the Bible, every single one of us has a hole in our heart that only God can fill. Therefore, whether we recognize it or not, we all search for God in various ways. For some, it might be trying to fill that hole in our hearts with money or things. For others, it might be fame or prestige. And still for others it could be pleasure or even drugs. But whatever the “filler” may be, it’s simply an indicator of the universal truth that all of mankind is in search of their Creator. And I, like so many others, tried various ways to find out just Who this God is and this of course took me down many paths. I basically tried every “religion” on the planet until I discovered that God is not to be found in a religion. To my utter surprise and delight, I learned that God actually hates religion. And the reason why is because religion is something man-made. It’s not only phony, but it’s a false worship that leads to a dead end. You see, God never intended on having a religion with us, but rather He planned on having a relationship with us, which only begins one way, through Jesus Christ. And it was when I finally, by the grace of God, came to understand this, amongst other amazing things, that I realized the hole in my heart was gone. I not only knew Who God was but I knew and experienced a living breathing intimate and loving relationship with the Maker of the Universe! Needless to say, I’ve never been the same since and all I can think of doing is sharing this life-changing truth with as many people as possible.

But being a Child of God for sixteen years now, I’ve noticed a strange dilemma. Those Who know Who God is, that is, true Born-again Christians, are not only not sharing Who God is, but by the way they walk and the way they talk, they’re acting like they really don’t know Who God is after all! They’re acting like practical atheists! And this is not only obviously affecting their lives but sadly, it’s affecting the lives of those around them who are still in a search of God. Therefore, this book seeks to equip not only the Christian, but the non-Christian as well. It’s deliberately written without the big theological jargon. Instead, it’s a very practical, easy to read, and believe it or not, fun study on the Character of God. Oh, one last piece of advice. When you are through reading this book then will you please READ YOUR BIBLE? I mean that in the nicest possible way. Enjoy, and I’m looking forward to seeing you someday!

Billy Crone
2009
Part I

God is Real and Personal
Chapter One

A Real God Changes Your Life

It was a rather tough period in his life and here he was, having just moved again and starting a new school with his parents casually saying, “Oh, you’ll make new friends.” But, it was never that easy for a sixth grader. And to make matters worse, his mom, who was always at home, was now off to join the work force due to the strain of finances. His father worked harder than anyone he knew, but the 70’s gas scare had just hit and everybody was panicking.

It was this parental exodus that left him and his three siblings with a newfound freedom that they quickly demonstrated they didn’t know how to handle. As the fighting and the pressures increased, so did the pain in his heart. He was never the “praying type” for his family never got into that “church-going” business. But there was nowhere else to turn. He just had to know that everything was going to turn out all right in his crazy mixed-up world. “God, are you up there?” he inquired. “Do you really exist? If you’re really there, then send me a lightning bolt.” Silence. “Okay, God, I’m going to walk around this house and if You really exist, send me a lighting bolt so I’ll know.” Well, the next couple of hours involved a monotonous series of laps around the premises. So
now frustrated, he stopped and made his defiant declaration. “Fine, God! From now on I’m an atheist!” Now the boy didn’t really know what that word meant but he figured that it was used by those who didn’t like God.

And despite his childish rebellion, fifteen years later, out of love and mercy, God did send this boy a lightning bolt in the form of an encounter with His Son Jesus Christ, which pierced his broken heart. But rather than destroying him, this shocking encounter healed and restored his shattered soul.

Now, for those of you who may not have figured it out yet, the boy in the story was me. And the reason why I share my story is because I would venture to say that it’s a much more common scenario than we think. You see, the average person today, like I was, is flooded with questions like, “Where did I come from?” “What happens when I die” “Is there life after death?” and “Is there meaning and purpose to life?” It’s these questions that have driven our world into a frantic search for purpose, direction, and truth relating to their existence. Millions of people are on a quest for some secret “alien” book or some ancient “religious” writing that will somehow unlock the answers to life.

And here’s the irony of it all. This so-called mysterious book that everybody’s in search of, can actually be found on bookshelves, collecting dust, in virtually every home in America! Yeah, the truth is out there all right! It’s right under their noses! It’s called the Bible! But herein lies the problem. Nobody will read it! And it isn’t for a lack of Bibles.

“Among households which own a Bible, the typical count is 3 Bibles per household. Almost every household in America (92%) owns at least one Bible. This includes most homes in which the adults are not practicing Christians as well as the homes of hundreds of thousands of atheists.”

And because of this self-imposed ignorance of God, that comes from not studying the Bible, the lives of not only non-Christians but now even many
Christians are being filled with tons of questions and pain. And now we have Churches full of Christians who are living like practical atheists. Oh, we say we believe in God, but we act like He’s not there. And people, this is not only detrimental to your own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God.

Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christians living like practical atheists, by not knowing Who God Is, we’re going to begin a new study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, “Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?”

And people, the very first thing we need to know about God is simply this, that God Is Real. But hey, don’t take my word for it. Let’s listen to God’s.

Hebrews 11:1-6 “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead.

By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” (NIV)

Now according to our text, once we first believe that God exists, He will faithfully reward us as we seek Him. This is the Biblical definition of faith. But herein lies the big problem. You see, most people have a hard time believing that God Is Real because their version of faith is just the opposite of what is required. They don’t say, “I’ll see it when I believe it” but “I’ll believe it when I see it.” But as we read, this isn’t faith. And it’s this backwards faith that keeps
people from finding out just **Who God Is.** But fortunately, God is very merciful to us. Although we act like doubting Thomas, God also helps us in our unbelief. How? Great question. Thanks for asking. He does it by giving us logical evidences for His existence.

And people, the **first logical evidence** for the existence of God is called the **Ontological Argument** or the argument of **Being.**

**Exodus 3:13-14** “But Moses protested, If I go to the people of Israel and tell them, The God of your ancestors has sent me to you, they won’t believe me. They will ask, Which god are you talking about? What is his name? Then what should I tell them? God replied, I AM THE ONE WHO ALWAYS IS. Just tell them, I AM has sent me to you.” (NLT)

Now here we see the amazing truth that God declares that He just is. He’s the Great I Am. He’s always been and always will be Who He is, the Supreme One and Only Deity. He doesn’t have to prove His existence. He simply tells Moses that He just is and that He’s called His people to worship Him. And whether you realize it or not, this is the **Ontological Argument** or the evidence of **Being.**

And it goes like this. The very fact that anyone even considers that a Supreme Being exists, and we do, then this is in a way, admitting that there must be a God. Why? Because if God didn’t exist then we wouldn’t conceive of Him. And if there is no God then why else would every culture on the planet have an automatic desire to worship something or someone higher or above themselves? If there is no God, then why bother? Therefore, wouldn’t it be logical to say that people conceive of God and have an automatic desire to worship because God put it in their hearts to do so? Well gee, guess what? That’s precisely what the Bible says God did.
Ecclesiastes 3:11 “He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.” (NIV)

People, God put eternity in the hearts of all mankind first so that we might conceive of Him and then secondly to motivate us to seek out a relationship with Him. And believe it or not, it’s this universal and automatic desire to worship in the hearts of all mankind that shows us that yes, God Is Real.

Oh, but that’s not all. The second logical evidence for the existence of God is called the Cosmological Argument or the argument of Beginnings. Genesis 1:1 “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” (NIV)

Original Hebrew “At the beginning of (time), God created from nothing the heavens (space) and the earth (matter).”

Now here we see that the very first line in the Bible clues us in to the awesome truth that there really was a time when there was a beginning of time. And here’s the logical question. If something has a beginning then there must be an Ultimate Beginner. Why? Because if ever there was a time when there was nothing, then guess what we’d have today? Nothing! Why? Because nothing cannot produce something.

And people this is what makes evolution absolutely illogical. You see, in order to try to do away with the existence of God the evolutionist says the universe didn’t come from God, but from the Big Bang. But people, what’s funny about the Big Bang is that rather than disproving God, it actually proves His existence. How? Well, think about it. The Big Bang theory says that there was a beginning point in creation where all of life suddenly exploded into existence from a tiny ball of dirt. But logically, if there’s a beginning to something then
there must be an Ultimate Beginner. Why? Because something cannot come from nothing!

And then if you really want to get the evolutionist into a conniption fit then ask them this question, “Where did the dirt come from? Who made the dirt?” Something cannot come from nothing. **That’s illogical!** And believe it or not, scientists call this dilemma the “X Factor” which is a fancy way of saying, “We have no stinking idea.”

And then if you really want to ruin their day, ask them, “Where did the space for the universe come from? Where did matter come from? Where did the laws of the universe come from? How did matter get so perfectly organized? Where did the energy come from to do all the organizing? When, where, why, and how did life come from nothing?” Remember, if ever there was a time when there was nothing then what would we have today? Nothing! But people, since there **was a beginning** and **something does exist** then this shows is that yes, **God Is Real.**

Oh, but that’s not all. The **third logical evidence** for the existence of God is called the **Anthropological Argument**, or the argument of **Morals**.

**Romans 2:14-15** “Even Gentiles, who do not have God’s written law, show that they know his law when they instinctively obey it, even without having heard it. They demonstrate that God’s law is written in their hearts, for their own conscience and thoughts either accuse them or tell them they are doing right.” (NLT)

Now according to our text here, all mankind has an **automatic inward sense of right and wrong**. Even if someone never came across the Ten Commandments, they’d still inherently know that it’s wrong to murder or that it is wrong to steal, or that it’s wrong to lie, etc. So here’s the logical question. Why and how could there be a universal moral law on the hearts of all people? Do
universal morals just come out of the air? Or can we logically say that universal morals must have come from a Universal Moral Law Giver, i.e. God? And people, this is precisely what the Bible says God did.

But not only were morals given to man to show us that God Is Real but so were other personal attributes. Which by the way, the evolutionist seems to have a hard time explaining. For instance, “If God isn’t real then where, when, why, and how did man evolve feelings? How did thought ever evolve? Where did the ability to experience guilt or show love and mercy come from? Where did man’s ability to think abstractly or appreciate beauty come from? And if man is no different than animals then why can’t they do the same things? Why don’t we see peacocks painting portraits like Picasso? Why don’t we see chickens constructing massive skyscrapers? Why don’t we see dogs becoming doctors to help the dying? Well gee, I’ll tell you why. It’s because man was created morally in the image of God, to show us that yes, God Is Real?

Oh, but that’s not all. The fourth logical evidence for the existence of God is called the Teleological Argument or the argument of Design. Romans 1:19-20 “Since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.” (NIV)

Now according to our text, nobody on the planet has any excuse for not knowing that God Is Real. Why? Because God has revealed Himself in the complexity or design of creation. And this is the logical question. If the world shows intelligent design, and it does, then logically an Ultimate Designer must also exist. Why? Because just as we wouldn’t say that a wrist watch evolved accidentally over millions of years somewhere in a field formed from the mud, wind and rain, but that it must have had a watchmaker then how much more
should we **logically conclude** that the world with all its complexities must have been created by a “world-maker” or God? **Design implies a Designer!**

Therefore, for the diehard evolutionist, I want to look at just a smidgen of the proof out there that shows us how everything is a product of design not chance or luck. Let’s start with the **Design of the Universe & Earth.**

**THE FORCE OF GRAVITY:** If the force of gravity was 1% higher, our sun would be much bigger and life on earth would cook! If the force were 1% less than the sun would be too small and we would freeze! Either way, No Life!

**THE NUCLEAR FORCE:** If there were a very slight increase in nuclear force then the chemicals of life, oxygen, hydrogen, carbon, would be almost non-existent. And a very slight decrease in the force and the only element in the universe would be hydrogen. Either way, No Life!

**ELECTROMAGNETIC COUPLING CONSTANT:** If it were slightly stronger or weaker then molecules couldn’t exist. Either way, No Life!

**EXPANSION RATE OF THE UNIVERSE:** If this rate were a few percent slower, then all the matter in the universe would collapse into a ball. (By the way, this would seriously ruin your day.) And if it were slightly faster, then galaxies and stars would not have formed. Either way, No Life!

**DISTANCE BETWEEN STARS:** If the distance between the stars was just a few percent closer or further away, this would destabilize the planetary orbits around the sun and the earth would not be capable of supporting life. Either way, No Life!

**GRAVITY ON EARTH:** A slight increase in earth’s gravity and the atmosphere would retain too much ammonia and methane, which are toxic to life. A slight decrease in gravity and the atmosphere would lose too much water. Either way, No Life!

**EARTH’S DISTANCE FROM THE SUN:** If the earth was a few percent farther from the sun, the earth would be too cool and the entire planet would freeze over. If the earth were a few percent closer to the sun, the waters of the earth would boil. Either way, No Life!
**THE EARTH’S ROTATION TIME:** If the earth’s rotation were increased by a few percent, then temperature differences would be too great to support life. And if the rotation time were a little slower, then atmospheric wind velocities would wipe out all life. Either way, No Life!

**SIZE OF THE MOON:** If the moon were slightly smaller, then the tides and winds would be too small and the earth would overheat. And if the moon were slightly bigger, this would result in ferocious winds and massive tides that would flood the earth twice a day! (By the way, you can only comfortably drown once in a day!) Either way, No Life!4

Now people, please keep in mind that this is just the tip of the iceberg of the information that’s been discovered revealing that all of life is intricately designed. And remember, design implies a designer.

Oh but that’s not all. Let’s now take a look at the **Design of the Human Body.** Tell me this happened by chance.

1. The kidneys contain approximately 280 miles of tubes and filter 185 quarts of water a day from the blood.

2. The heart pumps 5,000 gallons of blood a day. It beats approximately 100,800 times a day or 2 billion 500 million times in an average lifetime.

3. The human skeletal structure is light and flexible yet can withstand enormous stress.

4. The eye has automatic aim, focus, and aperture adjustment. It provides color and 3-dimensional images and can function in darkness to bright light and makes 100,000 motions in a day.

5. The body replaces over 1 trillion cells in a day.

6. The lining of the digestive track turns over about every 2 days. (Faster if you eat spicy Mexican food.)

7. The body makes 2 to 10 million blood cells every second. If you lined up your red blood cells end to end they would go around the equator of the earth four times.
8. The lining of our skin turns over about every 2 to 4 weeks. We shed about 40 lbs. of skin in a lifetime. (This is why old sofas weigh so much.)

9. There is enough DNA data in a single human cell to fill an encyclopedia volume. And just as the words and letters in an encyclopedia volume are arranged in an intelligent pattern, the DNA in a cell is likewise perfectly formatted and constructed in an intelligent pattern.

10. Our most sophisticated computers are no match for the human brain. The brain stores so much memory data that by the age of 40 it would take the Empire State building full of computers just to store the same amount of information.\(^5\)

And people, to say that all these intricately designed features in the universe and human body happened by chance has the same “chance” of happening as if you were to say that if the Scrabble factory exploded enough times that the letters would eventually land so they spell out perfectly the book “War and Peace.” Or saying that a tornado can ever whip through a junkyard leaving behind a perfectly formed Boeing 747.\(^1\) Now that’s illogical!

Furthermore, it is just as illogical to say that our bodies evolved over millions of years because by their very design they have to appear on the scene as fully functioning or it would spell certain death. For instance, what good would half a lung be? How about half of an eye? How about half of a liver or maybe half of a heart?\(^7\) And I don’t know about you, but I’d say that somebody who thinks you can have design without a designer, might only have half a brain! Dr. J. Jastrow has this to say about the vain reasoning of the evolutionist. “For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries!”\(^8\)
People of God, how much money could we shave off the national deficit if we could get scientists to admit what they’re already finding out the hard way, that **God Is Real**? Not only that, how much pain and heartache could people avoid if they would apply faith and **reason** and see that God not only exists, but that He will faithfully reward those who seek Him?

But you might be asking, “Come on. Does knowing something as basic as the fact that **God Is Real** really help alleviate the pain and suffering in the hearts of people worldwide? Well, you tell me if the knowledge of God’s existence would have helped out in this girl’s life by listening to the words she wrote in this letter.

“Why’d he do this to me? He said he loved me and wanted to marry me. How could he spend so much time with her and not care how I feel? I can’t handle this. Classes are getting too much for me to cope with. I wish I could just die, then I wouldn’t be a problem to everyone.

Mom’s drinking is getting worse and I can’t handle it. I’m so confused all we do is fight. Whenever I’m in the house it’s always fighting. I want out of all of it. Please make it all stop. Take the confusion away. I’m all alone, nobody cares whether I live or die. All I ever do is cause problems for everyone.

I can’t make it through school, I cause my family problems and I can’t keep a man in my life. I’m a failure in everything that is important to me. The only way out of this is to die.

Mom I wish I could’ve been the person you and Dad wanted me to be. But I’m not smart, pretty, athletic, or skinny. And I know that you and Dad never wanted me when I was born, so I wish I never was born. I can’t do anything right and all I do is cause the rest of the family to fight.

Why can’t I have a talk with anyone? You’re all so busy and here I sit. Please someone do something so I can’t feel the hurt anymore. I hurt so bad, what can I do? It’s so lonely here. I want to sleep but it just won’t come. I’m so tired of hurting and being alone.
There is nothing for me here. I don’t want to go on. I’m so cold. Please do something. I can’t stand this empty feeling that I’m having. I have no control over anything in my life. I’m breaking into pieces. Somebody do something.”

Now for those of you who may not have already guessed, that was an actual suicide note. And for some reason, I have a sneaking suspicion that if this girl would have truly believed that God Is Real, things wouldn’t have gone as far as they did.

And people this is the awesome message we have the privilege to tell to the nations. “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people really can have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe!” But people, I’m telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then you and I must stop acting like practical atheists and start demonstrating by our lives that yes, wonder of wonders, God Is Real!
Chapter Two

A Personal God Changes Your Prayers

A recent homework assignment was given to third graders in Chula Vista, California that asked them to explain God. And here’s the actual essay from an eight-year old boy named Danny Dutton. Let’s see how well he did.

“One of God’s main jobs is making people. He makes them to replace the ones that die, so there will be enough people to take care of things on earth. He doesn’t make grown-ups, just babies. I think because they are smaller and easier to make. That way He doesn’t have to take up His valuable time teaching them to talk and walk. He can just leave that to mothers and fathers.

God’s second most important job is listening to prayers. An awful lot of this goes on, since some people, like preachers and things, pray at times besides bedtime. God doesn’t have time to listen to the radio or TV because of this. Because He hears everything, there must be a terrible lot of noise in His ears, unless He has thought of a way to turn it off.

God sees everything and hears everything and is everywhere, which keeps Him pretty busy. So you shouldn’t go wasting His time by going over your Mom and Dad’s head asking for something they said you couldn’t have.

Atheists are people who don’t believe in God. I don’t think there are any in Chula
Vista. At least there aren’t any who come to our church.

Jesus is God’s Son. He used to do all the hard work like walking on water and performing miracles and trying to teach the people who didn’t want to learn about God. They finally got tired of Him preaching to them and they crucified Him. But He was good and kind, like His Father and He told His Father that they didn’t know what they were doing and to forgive them and God said okay.

His Dad, God, appreciated everything that He had done and all His hard work on earth so He told Him He didn’t have to go out on the road anymore. He could stay in heaven. So He did. You can pray anytime you want and they are sure to help you because they got it worked out so one of them is on duty all the time.

You should always go to Church on Sunday because it makes God happy and if there’s anybody you want to make happy, it’s God. Don’t skip church to do something you think will be more fun like going to the beach. This is wrong. And besides the sun doesn’t come out at the beach until noon anyway.

If you don’t believe in God, besides being an atheist, you will be very lonely because your parents can’t go everywhere with you, like to camp, but God can. It is good to know He’s around you when you’re scared in the dark or when you can’t swim and you get thrown into real deep water by big kids.

But...you shouldn’t just always think of what God can do for you. I figure God put me here and He can take me back anytime He pleases.

And that’s why I believe in God.”

Now, ol’ Danny there seemed to have a pretty good grasp on just Who God Is, didn’t he? But unfortunately folks, boys like Danny are no longer in the majority. And do you know why? Because people, as ironic as it might sound, the one book that has all the answers to life and tells us Who God Is, is sitting on bookshelves collecting dust in virtually every home in America! Yeah, the truth is out there all right! It’s right under our noses! It’s called the Bible!

But the problem is that hardly anybody ever reads it and that even includes Christians. And because of this self-imposed ignorance of God that
comes from **not studying the Bible**, the lives of many Christians are now filled with just as many questions and just as much pain as the rest of the world. We are actually living in a time when many Churches are full of Christians who are living like **practical atheists**.

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our **lips** and by our **lives**, we act like He’s not there. And people, this not only keeps you from growing in your own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christian’s living like a practical atheists by not knowing **Who God Is**, we’re going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, “**Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?**”

In the last chapter we saw the very **first thing** we need to know about God is that **God Is Real**. And there we saw that God helps us out in our unbelief by giving us logical evidences for His existence. And the four logical arguments for His existence were the **Ontological** Argument, the **Cosmological** Argument, the **Anthropological** Argument, and the **Teleological** Argument.

But people, that’s not the only thing we need to know about God. The **second thing** about God is simply this, **God Is Personal**. But in order to appreciate the fact that **God Is Personal**, we need to **first** take a look at two other attributes. And the first attribute is that **God Is Independent**. But hey, don’t take my word for it, let’s listen to God’s.

**Acts 17:22-25** “Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.

Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human
hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.” (NIV)

Now according to our text here, we observe the incredible truth that we all seem to take for granted and that is this, “Did you know that God doesn’t need anything. There is nothing He lacks. There is nothing He needs, which includes you and I. And so here’s the humbling truth. People, did you know that God is perfectly fine without us? He really is. And you may not like this truth, but as we read in the Bible, it’s nonetheless true.

In fact, rather than admitting this humbling truth, some Christians try to come up with excuses like “Well, God needed to save us so He wouldn’t be lonely.” But people, God’s not lonely. He can’t be. That would be a need and God doesn’t need anything. Besides, God the Father has the Son and the Holy Spirit to commune with for all eternity. Therefore loneliness is never an issue.

The fact is, God does not have to have a personal relationship with any one of us. Yet, here’s the kicker. God, Who is absolutely Independent and doesn’t need a single thing, still chooses to have a relationship with get this, fallen sinful creatures! Isn’t that amazing? Think about it people. Of all things to have a relationship with, especially when you don’t need to, God has chosen people like you and I who have rebelled against Him. Isn’t that mind-boggling? Therefore, when we understand that God didn’t have to and certainly doesn’t need to but chooses anyway to provide a way to have a personal relationship with Him, it sure makes one grateful that God Is Personal.

But hold that thought and let’s move on to the second attribute of God. You see, in order to appreciate the fact that God Is Personal we need to realize that God is not just Independent but also that God Is Immense.

Psalm 139:7-10 “I can never escape from your Spirit! I can never get away from your presence! If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down to the grave, you
are there. If I ride the wings of the morning, if I dwell by the farthest oceans, even there your hand will guide me, and your strength will support me.” (NLT)

People, the Bible declares that God is not only Independent but He’s also **Omnipresent** or **Immense**. Or in other words, there’s no place in all of existence that a person could hide from Him. Why? Because, **wherever you go, there He is**! And when you keep in mind the enormous scope of the known universe while at the same time acknowledging that God is above and beyond it all and yet exists through it all, our brains begin to get lost in the immensity of God. And if that little mental exercise didn’t do the trick for you, let’s look at these facts.

If a person were able to travel at the speed of light it would take them 8 ½ minutes just to reach the sun which is 93 millions miles away. But if they wanted to reach the nearest star it would take them 4 ½ years traveling at the speed of light. But that’s nothing. If a person wanted to just make it across our galaxy, the Milky Way, it would take them 100,000 light years. That’s just one galaxy!²

But even if they could travel at the speed of light, he’d still never make it. Why? Because as you approach the speed of light, mass increases outwardly into infinity. Or in other words, you would physically begin to spread out and get bigger and bigger. And that’s why one guy said that, “This is why you shouldn’t let anyone call you fat. Just tell them you’re traveling too fast!”³

People, even if we wanted to try, it would still be **impossible to reach God**! But here’s the great news. The Bible says that if we want to reach God then we don’t need to go shooting off in a rocket to Him. No! We simply repent of our sins and He comes shooting down to us, **into our hearts**.

1 Corinthians 3:16 “Don’t you realize that you yourselves are the temple of God, and that God’s Spirit lives in you?” (J.B.P.)
People, this is the mind-boggling truth. When you get saved, Jesus isn’t afar off. He comes to live within your heart. Therefore, He’s intimately with us wherever we go. And I don’t know about you, but I’d say that’s pretty Personal! And people, I’m telling you, when we can finally can grasp the fact that God is Independent and Immense and yet He still chooses to be Personal, it’s going to change your life. How? Great question. I’m glad you asked.

People, the very first thing that’s going to change in your life when you realize that God Is Personal is this, It’ll Change How You Pray. You see, if we realize that God Is Personal then the first way we won’t pray to Him is by a repetition of pretty phrases. And to help illustrate the foolishness of doing this in our personal relationship with God let’s look at it through the eyes of another personal relationship, a marriage. For instance, you tell me what it would sound like if I were to communicate to my wife Brandie using these repetitions of pretty phrases.

“Oh Brandeth, I loveth youeth. Thou arteth the cooleth wifeth I could ever haveth.”

Or how about this one. “Hail Brandie, full of grace. Wife of Billy, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among wives.”

Now that was pretty goofy, wasn’t it? But people, how goofy is it when we do that in prayer to God? I mean, do we actually think we can impress God by our flowery words? Besides, if I did speak to my wife that way it would inhibit our relationship, right? But people, how much more is this behavior going to inhibit our personal relationship with God if we don’t realize He’s right here with us?
Oh, but that’s not all. If we realize that **God Is Personal** then the **second** way we **won’t pray to Him** is by a **marathon of words**. For instance, what if I were to come home and talk to my wife like this speaking as fast as I can?


Now that was pretty goofy, wasn’t it? But people, how goofy is it when we do that in prayer to God? I mean, do we actually think we can impress God by our **fast and furious words**? Besides, if I only spoke to my wife by cramming in as many words as I could in the shortest amount of time, then wouldn’t this be saying that she’s not important enough to me to take **quality time** to talk to her? So people, what kind of a message are we sending to God when we do that to Him? Have we forgotten that He’s right here with us?

Oh, but that’s not all. If we realize that **God Is Personal** then the **third** way we **won’t pray to Him** is by a **fantastic formula**. For instance, what if I were to come home and talk to my wife like this.

“Oh Brandie, I adore you. You are the greatest wife in the world.”

Okay, step two. “Oh Brandie, I confess that I’m an unworthy husband. How you could love me is beyond my comprehension.”

Um, oh yeah. “Oh Brandie, I thank you for all that you have done and for being the best wife ever.”

Uh, step four. “Oh Brandie, I humbly ask that you would provide a morsel of cow for me. And lead me not unto temptation, but deliver me from chicken!”

Now that was pretty crazy, wasn’t it? But people, how crazy is it when we do that in prayer to God? I mean, do we actually think we can impress God by our **religious formulas**? Besides, if I did speak to my wife that way it’d ruin all
the spontaneity in our relationship, wouldn’t it? But people, how much more is this behavior going to ruin the spontaneity in our relationship with God? Have we forgotten that He’s right here with us?

Oh, but that’s not all. If we realize that God Is Personal then the fourth way we won’t pray to Him is by a shot in the dark. For instance, what if I were to come home and talk to my wife like this.

Oh, Brandie, if only I could be with you. I miss you and want to be near to you. Oh, I hope you hear these cries of mine. Please come and be near me. If only I could feel your presence again!

Now that was nuts, wasn’t it? But people, how more nutty is it when we do that in prayer to God? Have we forgotten that He’s right here with us? Have we forgotten that God Is Personal?

But you might be asking, “Come on. Does knowing something as basic as God Is Personal really help alleviate the pain and suffering in the hearts of people worldwide?” Well, you tell me if it’s important to pay attention to your surroundings by what happened to these guys in this story.

“The Amazon River is the largest river in the world. The mouth of it is 90 miles across. In fact, so much water comes from the Amazon that it’s currents can be detected 200 miles out into the Atlantic Ocean.

And what’s ironic is that in ancient times many sailors would get caught in windless waters of the South Atlantic and would begin to drift helplessly, and start dying of thirst.

But sometimes other ships from South America who knew the area would come alongside and call out, ‘What is your problem?’

And the other ships new to the area would exclaim, ‘Can you spare us some water? Our sailors are dying of thirst.’

And from the other ship would come the cry, ‘Just lower your buckets. You are in the mouth of the mighty Amazon River. You’re surrounded by fresh water.’”
People, how ironic it was that sailors of long ago actually died of thirst even though they were completely surrounded by fresh water. But folks, I’m telling you that it’s not anymore ironic then many Christians today who are spiritually dying of thirst because they refuse to recognize that God, the **Fountain of Living Water**, completely surround us. And if we’d only drop our buckets of prayer to Him, He would instantly water our dry and dusty souls! People of God, when we get saved, God is not afar off hidden in some ivory castle. No! He’s with you wherever you go! God Is Personal.

And people this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people **really can** have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe!” But people, I’m telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we’ve got to stop acting like practical atheists. We’ve got to start demonstrating by our **lips** as well as our **lives** that God Is Personal!
“One day a lady surprised a burglar in her kitchen who was already loaded down with the things he was going to steal. And to make matter worse, she had no weapon and was all alone. The only thing that she could think to do was to quote Scripture. So, she held up a hand and said, ‘ACTS 2:38!’

Well at this the burglar quaked in fear and then froze to the point that she was able to get to the phone and call 911.

In fact, when the police arrived, the burglar was still frozen in place. And the police officers were very much surprised that a woman alone, with no weapon, could actually capture an imposing looking burglar.

So one of them asked the woman, “How did you do this?”

The woman replied, ‘Simple, I quoted scripture.’

So the officer turned to the burglar and asked, ‘What was it about the Scripture that had such an effect on you?’

The burglar replied, ‘Scripture! What Scripture? I thought she said she had an axe and two 38’s!’”
Now, that lady sure benefited from knowing her Bible, didn’t she? But that other guy paid a heavy price for not knowing his, didn’t he? But unfortunately, he’s not the only one. And you know why? Because people, as ironic as it might sound, the one book that tells us that it’s **not only wrong to steal** but also **Who God Is**, is sitting on bookshelves collecting dust in virtually every home in America! Yeah, the truth is out there all right! It’s right under our noses! **It’s called the Bible!**

But the problem is that hardly anybody ever reads it and that even includes Christians. And because of this self-imposed ignorance of God that comes from **not studying the Bible**, the lives of many Christians are now filled with just as many questions and just as much pain as the rest of the world. We are actually living in a time when many Churches are full of Christians who are living like **practical atheists**.

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our **lips** and by our **lives**, we act like He’s not there. And people, this not only keeps you from growing in your own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christian’s living like a practical atheists by not knowing **Who God Is**, we’re going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, “**Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?**”

We’ve already seen that the very **first thing** we need to know about God is that **God Is Real**. And in the last chapter we saw the **second thing** we need to know about God is that **God Is Personal**. And there we saw that if we truly understood that **God Is Personal**, it would forever change our life. How? Well, the **first thing** it would change is **How You Handle Your Prayers**. And there we saw that when we realize that God is with us wherever we go we’ll stop
praying to Him by a Repetition of Pretty Phrases, a Marathon of Words, a Fantastic Formula, or a Shot in the Dark.

But people, how you handle your prayers isn’t the only thing that’s going to change when you realize God Is Personal. The second thing it’s going to change is How You Handle Your Singing. But hey, don’t take my word for it, let’s listen to God’s.

Ephesians 5:15-19 “Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord.” (NIV)

Now according to our text, if we’re going to be wise Christians, then we shouldn’t get high on liquor, but high on the Lord. And one of the many ways we’re encouraged to do that is by singing to the Lord from our heart. And the key words are from the heart. You see, each time we come to a Church service and sing a hymn or a contemporary song, it’s to be sung from your heart as a love song to Jesus. The music is not for our personal entertainment but as a vehicle for personally expressing our love to the Lord. And it’s bad enough that we forget the purpose for singing in Church services, but we make things even worse when we forget that God is with us wherever we go.

And that’s why if we truly realize that God Is Personal then the first way we won’t sing to Him is as a source of entertainment. And to help illustrate the foolishness of doing this in our personal relationship with God let’s look at it through the eyes of another personal relationship, a marriage. I’m going to act like I’m singing this song to my wife Brandie in an entertaining fashion and you tell me how it sounds.
“I gave my love a chicken that had no bowowowowowne. I gave my love a cherry that had no stooooloone! Thank you thank you. Thank you very much.”

Now that was pretty goofy, wasn’t it? Oh, I was singing to my wife alright. But I wasn’t really singing praises for her. No! What was I doing? I was entertaining for the praises of others. So folks, what do we think we’re doing when we do that to God? I mean do we think He’s more impressed with a song from Hollywood or a song from our heart? Just who are we singing for anyway? I mean, have we forgotten that He’s right here with us? Have we forgotten that God Is Personal?

Oh, but that’s not all. If we realize that God Is Personal then the second way we won’t sing to Him is as a source of ritual. For instance, what if I were to sing to my wife as if just going through the motions in complete mindless boredom? Oh, I’d be singing alright. But it’s not from my heart, is it? No! I was just performing a boring ritual. So folks, what do we think we’re doing when we do that to God? I mean do we think He doesn’t know the difference? Do we actually think He’s pleased with a boring ritual? People, have we forgotten that He’s right here with us? Have we forgotten that God Is Personal?

Oh, but that’s not all. If we realize that God Is Personal then the second way we won’t sing to Him is as a source of manipulation. For instance, what if I were to sing to my wife this way.

“Oh Brandie, please come near me, please won’t you come to me again. Won’t you show me your presence. I’m so lonely without you. If only you could be here with me now.”

Now that was pretty goofy, wasn’t it? Oh, I was singing to my wife alright, but with my words I was acting like she was nowhere to be found. In fact, I was begging my wife to be near me when the whole time she was right there.
So folks, what do we think we’re doing when we do that to God? Why do many Christians sing songs like “I Just Want to be Where You Are” or “Holy Spirit Thou Art Welcome In This Place”? I mean, isn’t anyone paying attention to the lyrics? Don’t those lyrics assume that God isn’t with us? If I say the Holy Spirit is welcome in this place then am I not implying He left at some point and now I’m inviting Him to return? When did He ever leave? And if I want to be where God is, then shouldn’t I just acknowledge His presence that’s already there? He’s with me wherever I go! Stop and think about it!

And because people don’t understand that God Is Personal, we now have Christians no longer singing love songs to God from their heart. No! Now they’re singing to God to supposedly manipulate Him to be near them when the whole time He’s right there? Isn’t that crazy? People, have we forgotten that God’s right here with us? Have we forgotten that God Is Personal?

Oh, but praying and singing aren’t the only things that are going to change when we realize that God Is Personal. The third thing that’s going to change is How You Handle Your Walk.

Luke 24:13-16 “Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing Him.” (NIV)

Now according to our text, Jesus Himself was actually walking right beside these two disciples yet they had no idea that God Himself was right there with them. Isn’t that amazing? But people, did you know we do the same thing everyday? We say and do things all the time we know we shouldn’t and are oblivious to the fact that God sees it all.
And to show you what it looks like when we do this in our personal relationship with God let’s look at it through the eyes of another personal relationship. I’m going act like I’m carrying on a conversation with another man but it’s going to be done in front of both of our wives. You tell me how well it would go over with our wives.

**Billy:** “Hey Mike, how you doing?”

**Mike:** “Oh, not too good.”

**Billy:** “Let me guess, it’s the ol’ lady, huh?”

**Mike:** “Yeah, it’s that old woman of mine!”

**Billy:** “What’d she do this time, make you eat chicken again?”

**Mike:** “No, it’s more evil than that!”

**Billy:** “Oh my goodness. Don’t tell me she’s making you go to one of those stupid Tupperware parties.”

**Mike:** “Yeah, how’d you guess?”

**Billy:** “Because my old lady tried to make me go too but I put my foot down and let her know just who wears the pants in the family. Who does she think she is?”

**Mike:** Humphh! Women. You can’t live with them and you can’t live without them.”

**Billy:** “Actually the saying goes, Women, you can’t live with them, you can’t live with them. Ha ha ha!”

**Mike:** “Boy, ain’t that the truth. Well, I guess I better get going.”

**Billy:** “Yeah, me too. I need to go get some aspirin. For some reason I don’t feel too good.”
Now how long do you think our wives would put up with that kind of behavior? Not for a second, right? In fact, if we did that it would be instant suicide, wouldn’t it? So folks, **what do we think we’re doing when we do that to God?** Do we think He’s going to put up with it forever? And people, I’m telling you, if we truly understood that God is with us wherever we go, then our behavior would change **instantly** overnight, like it did with this man.

“There was a very successful doctor who “had it all” fame, money, nice things, the party life, etc. But the stress of his vocation and the long hours he put in eventually led him to begin to drink. And what made matters worse was that every night his fellow doctors had a routine of going to a local bar and really boozing it up before facing another hectic day.

Finally, this kind of living began to take it’s toll on him and even though he had all the things people said would make him happy, he found himself totally miserable and all alone. And in the depth of his despair, the man cried out to God and there on the floor, gave his heart to Jesus Christ.

Well, the next day, the doctor was totally changed. He was no longer miserable and the deep loneliness had simply vanished. In fact, he found that money and fame wasn’t a primary concern for him and for two weeks straight he declined the nightly offer from his friends to go booze it up at the bars.

Finally, his co-workers couldn’t take it any longer and so they asked him what up, why the sudden change. And when he told them that it was because he became a Christian, the other doctors simply taunted him,

‘Hey, we know how much you loved to drink before. There’s no way you can give it up just like that. Why you mean to tell us that if you came home from work one day totally stressed out and no one was around to watch and no one would ever find out, that you wouldn’t have just one little drink for ol’ time’s sake?’

And the doctor simply replied, ‘Well that’s where you got it all wrong. You see, since I became a Christian, I realize that I’m never alone.’”²
Now that doctor was never the same once he realized he was never alone, was he? But folks, it’s not only true for him, but for every single Christian. Don’t we realize that **every word we say** and **every deed we do** is actually done in front of God Almighty? Have we forgotten that He’s right here with us? Have we forgotten that **God Is Personal**?

Oh, but that’s not all. The **fourth thing** that’s going to change when you realize that **God Is Personal** is **How You Handle Loneliness**.

**Matthew 28:20** “And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (NLT)

Now according to our text here, Jesus makes the incredible promise that He’s going to be with us **always**. And notice He didn’t say once in a while or only two weeks at a time, but **always**. And people, this should not only comfort our hearts but the hearts of our lonely world.

Today, sociologists are saying that we’re approaching a **societal epidemic of loneliness** that’s spiraling out of control. Whether it’s due to death, divorce, or decaying marriages, our society is filled with more loneliness than ever before. And to make matters worse, many of today’s so-called “advances” are actually advancing loneliness.

“In this age of Communication, we can send e-mail quickly around the world. We can visit with someone in another country in a chat room. We can see world events live without ever leaving our living room. But now our interpersonal contact has diminished.

We’re spending our time with impersonal machines rather than people. The age of technology promised more free time but what has happened is that less time is spent in building relationships and more time is invested in using those impersonal conveniences like TV.

Medical advancement has increased the length of life but in spite of longer lives we find less meaning in it. And even with all our advances never before has a
generation lived on so many antacids and antidepressants in an effort to calm their troubled spirits.

And the media has presented so many unrealistic expectations in life that most people are feeling cheated, unsatisfied, and downright lonely.”³

People, stop and think of the awesome message we get to declare to our lonely world. That when you get saved, you’re not only on your way to heaven, but before you get there, no matter what happens in you life, you’ll never ever ever be alone again! Why? Because God Is Personal.

But you might be asking, “Come on. Does knowing something as basic as God Is Personal really help alleviate the pain and suffering in the hearts of people worldwide?” Well, you tell me if paying attention to your surroundings doesn’t save you from a lot of wasted time and energy by what happened to this guy.

“There was a wealthy merchant on a long journey who was carrying with him his most valuable jewels. And along the way, another traveler befriended him, making it look like a chance meeting but he really planned to steal the rich man’s jewels.

And at the end of each day when they arrived at a local inn, they shared a room together and each night the men would wash up before going to bed. Now the merchant was somewhat suspicious of his newfound friend’s real motives so devised a scheme to safeguard his valuables. Before they turned in for the night, he offered the thief the privilege of washing up first.

And as soon as the thief left the room, the rich man would take his bag full of precious stones and hide them under thief’s pillow. And sure enough, when it was the rich man’s turn to wash up, the thief would plunge into the rich man’s belongings feverishly looking everywhere for the jewels, but to no avail. So each night the thief would lay his sleepless head on his pillow, angry at his failure to locate the treasure.

Finally, as it came time to part and they were saying their good byes, the rich man informed the thief that he’d been aware of his motives all along.
And then came the horrible revelation. The rich man said, ‘You poured all you energies into looking everywhere – except under your own pillow. The wealth was nearer to you than you realized.’”

People, how crazy was it for that guy to spend all that energy and sleepless nights looking everywhere for a treasure that was actually right under his nose. It was closer than he could ever imagine. But folks, I’m telling you that it’s not anymore crazy then many Christians today who are spending all kinds of money, energy, and sleepless nights in search of some hidden treasure to soothe their souls when all the while the greatest Treasure of all, Jesus Christ, is right before them! People of God, when we get saved, God isn’t afar off hidden in some ivory castle. No! He’s with you wherever you go! Why? Because God Is Personal.

And people this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people really can have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe!” But people, I’m telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we’ve got to stop acting like practical atheists. We’ve got to start demonstrating by our lips as well as our lives that God Is Personal!
Part II

God is Wise
To begin this chapter, I’m going to share a sad but true story of a man who almost lost it all due to an addiction problem. And please pay attention to the details, because this could happen to you!

“It started out innocently enough. I began to think at parties now and then to loosen up. But the next thing I knew, one thought led to another, and soon I was more than just a social thinker.

I began to think alone, ‘to relax’ I told myself. But I knew it wasn’t true. Thinking became more and more important to me, and finally I was thinking all the time.

I began to think on the job. I knew that thinking and employment don’t mix, but I couldn’t stop myself. I began to avoid friends at lunchtime so I could read Plato and Kamu. I would return to the office dizzied and confused, asking, ‘What is it exactly we are doing here?’

And things weren’t going so great at home either. One evening I had turned off the TV and asked my wife about the meaning of life. She spent that night at her mother’s.

And soon I had a reputation as a heavy thinker. One day the boss called me in and he said, ‘Skippy, I like you, and it hurts me to say this, but your thinking has
become a real problem. If you don’t stop thinking on the job, you’ll have to find another job.’ Well, this gave me a lot to think about.

So I came home early after my conversation with the boss and I confessed to my wife, ‘Honey, I’ve been thinking...’

And she said, ‘I know you’ve been thinking, and I want a divorce!’

‘But honey, surely it’s not that serious’ I said.

‘But it is serious,’ she said, her lower lip starting to quiver. ‘You think as much as college professors, and college professors don’t make any money, so if you keep on thinking we won’t have any money!’

Impatiently I replied, ‘That’s a faulty syllogism,’ She began to cry.

I’d had enough so I snarled, ‘I’m going to the library,’ and I stomped out the door.

I headed for the library, in the mood for some Nietzsche, with a PBS station on the radio. After I roared into the parking lot and ran up to the big glass doors, but to my dismay, they didn’t open. The library was closed!

To this day, I believe that God was looking out for me that night. As I sank to the ground clawing at the unfeeling glass, whimpering for Aristotle, a poster caught my eye that asked, ‘Friend, is heavy thinking ruining your life?’

Now, you probably recognize that line. It comes from the standard Thinker’s Anonymous poster. Which is why I am what I am today: a recovering thinker.

I never miss a TA meeting. At each meeting we watch a non-educational video; last week it was ‘Caddyshack.’ Then we share experiences about how we avoided thinking since the last meeting.

Today, I still have my job, and things are a lot better at home. Life just seemed easier, somehow, as soon as I stopped thinking. Now that makes you think, doesn’t it?”1
Now, that guy almost lost it all from his thinking problem, didn’t he? And I think the reason why that joke’s so funny is because there’s actually an element of truth to it, especially in our world today. Now more than ever people are turning off their brains, especially when it comes to the spiritual things, and they wonder why their lives are falling apart. And it’s not because they’re thinking too much; it’s because of this. People, as ironic as it might sound, the one book that requires us to do some thinking and also tells us Who God Is, is sitting on bookshelves collecting dust in virtually every home in America! Yeah, the truth is out there all right! It’s right under our noses! It’s called the Bible!

But the problem is that hardly anybody ever reads it and that even includes Christians. And because of this self-imposed ignorance of God that comes from not studying the Bible, the lives of many Christians are now filled with just as many questions and just as much pain as the rest of the world. We are actually living in a time when many Churches are full of Christians who are living like practical atheists.

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our lips and by our lives, we act like He’s not there. And people, this not only keeps you from growing in your own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christians living like practical atheists by not knowing Who God Is, we’re going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, “Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?”

And we’ve already seen that the very first thing we need to know about God is that God Is Real. And the last two chapters we saw the second thing we need to know about God is that God Is Personal. And there we saw that if we truly understood that God Is Personal, it’s going to change How You Handle

But people that’s not the only thing we need to know about God if we’re going to refrain from being practical atheists. The third thing we need to know about God is that God Is Wise. But hey, don’t take my word for it, let’s listen to God’s.

Isaiah 42:8-9 “I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols. See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you.” (NIV)

Now according to our text, God is so Wise that He not only knows the past but He even knows the future before it happens. And people that’s why the first reason why we know God Is Wise is because God Knows the Beginning from the End. How do we know? Through Bible Prophecy. People, throughout the Bible we see evidence of God’s wisdom by His predictions of specific events, some of them hundreds of years in advance that have literally been fulfilled, right down to the tee.

So just what are some of these specific prophecies that have literally been fulfilled showing us that God alone Is Wise? Great question. I’m glad you asked. The first fulfilled prophecies showing us that God Is Wise is concerning The Rise and Fall of Nations.

Daniel 2:36,38,39-40,45 “That was the dream, and now I’ll tell you what it means…You are the head of gold. After you are gone, another kingdom will rule, but it won’t be as strong. Then it will be followed by a kingdom of bronze that will rule the whole world. Next, a kingdom of iron will come to power, crushing and shattering everything…God has told you what is going to happen.” (CEV)

And folks, boy did God ever tell Nebuchadnezzar what was going to happen. People, what we see here is Daniel’s amazing prophecy of the rise of four totally different nations existing hundreds of years apart from each other.
The first nation was Nebuchadnezzar’s or Babylon, the second was the Medo-Persian empire, the third was the Grecian empire with Alexander the Great and the fourth empire was the Roman empire which will be revived in the last days.

And you may not think this is a big deal but the skeptics sure do. You see, even the skeptics readily admit that Daniel accurately predicted the rise of these four empires, right down to the tee. In fact, so much so do they believe it that they try to deny it’s supernatural origin by claiming that the Book of Daniel was written after the events took place. But of course, this doesn’t hold up to the textual evidence and it only reveals that the skeptics are really saying, “Don’t confuse me with the facts.”

But people, the Bible not only accurately predicted the rise of nations but it also predicted their downfall. And by the way, many of them were destroyed because of their ill-treatment of the Jewish people. I think there’s a lesson there. For instance, the Bible specifically predicted in the Book of Nahum that the nation of Nineveh would be permanently destroyed, be destroyed by fire, would easily be captured, their army officers would desert, and that they’d even be drunk in their final hours. So did God get it right? Of course, God Is Wise. Not only did Nineveh cease to exist shortly after this prophecy, but just like Nahum said, archaeologists have uncovered a layer of ash in its ruins showing it was destroyed by fire. Ancient Babylonian records reveal that Nineveh was easily overtaken and that their officers fled the scene, and a Greek historian even records for us that “The king gave much wine to his soldiers that night” which caused them to be drunk.²

Oh, but the fall of Nineveh isn’t the only fallen nation predicted in the Bible. The Book of Isaiah predicted that the nation of Babylon would specifically be overthrown and attacked by the Medes. Their gates would open
for a guy named Cyrus, and they would be reduced to swampland. So did God get it right? Of course, God Is Wise. Today it’s common knowledge that the Medes joined with the Persians and conquered Babylon. Despite Babylon’s incredible defenses, history records that a guy named Cyrus diverted the flow of the Euphrates River and marched into the city via the riverbed, and archaeological excavations reveal that parts of Babylon cannot be dug up because its now under the water, making it swamp-like.³

Oh, but that’s not all. The Books of Ezekiel and Amos predicted that the city of Tyre would specifically be attacked by many nations. It’s fortresses would fail, their stones, timber and soil would be thrown into the sea, and the remains of the city would be used “to spread fishing nets.” So did God get it right? Of course, God Is Wise. Babylon was the first to overthrow the city of Tyre but the people retreated to an island fortress away from the mainland escaping total destruction. So did God get it wrong? Nope, He wasn’t done yet. Almost 250 years later, Alexander the Great attacked the city of Tyre. When he did, the people did the same thing. They ran out to their island fortress. But as history records, Alexander the Great took the rubble from Tyre’s mainland ruins, “the stones, timber and soil,” cast them into the sea to make a land bridge to the island and conquered the people. In fact, the city Tyre was repeatedly destroyed by the Phoenicians, the Romans, the Crusaders, and even the Muslims. And today Tyre is nothing but a barren flat rock that people only use “to spread their fishing nets.”⁴

Now folks, I’m not a rocket scientist, but I’d say there’s no way somebody could know in advance all that specific information about the rise and fall of all those nations without some outside help. That can’t happen by chance. Why the only way they could know is if somebody who was above and beyond
time and knew the beginning from the end personally told them about it. Hmmm.

I wonder who that might be? A Wise God maybe?

Oh, but that’s not all. The second fulfilled prophecies showing us that God Is Wise is concerning The Coming of the Messiah.

Isaiah 7:14 “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.” (NIV)

Now, we’re all very familiar with Isaiah’s prophecy that the Messiah would be born of a virgin. I mean, we hear about it every single Christmas. In fact, we hear about it so much, that I think we have lost it’s significance. You see, as amazing as the virgin birth is, that’s only one of hundreds of prophecies that Jesus fulfilled proving that He was indeed the Messiah. Let’s take a look at just thirty of them.

1. Born of a virgin
2. Born of the seed of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob
3. Descended from the tribe of Judah
4. Heir to the throne of David
5. Born in Bethlehem
6. Slaughter of the innocents
7. Flight to Egypt
8. Proceeded by a forerunner
9. Declared the Son of God
10. Galilean ministry
11. Came to heal the brokenhearted
12. Rejected by His own
13. Triumphal entry
14. Betrayed by a friend
15. Sold for 30 pieces of silver
16. Accused by false witnesses
17. Silent to accusations
18. Spat upon and smitten
19. Hated without reason
20. Hands pierced
21. Crucified with transgressors
Scorned and mocked
Given vinegar and gall
Prayer for His enemies
Soldiers gambled for His coat
No bones broken
Side pierced
Buried with the rich
Rose from the dead
Ascended to God’s right hand

Now folks, for one person to specifically fulfill all those prophecies is pretty amazing, don’t you think? But I still don’t think we’ll catch just how amazing it really is until we take a look at the odds of this taking place.

“By using the modern science of probability, we find that the chance that any man might have lived down to the present time and fulfilled just eight prophecies is 1 in $10^{17}$.

In order to help us comprehend this staggering probability, it can be illustrated by taking $10^{17}$ silver dollars and laying them on the face of Texas, which would be enough to cover the state 2 feet deep.

Now mark one of these silver dollars with a “red X” and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one.

What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing just 8 prophecies and having them all come true in any one man.

Furthermore the odds of just 48 prophecies being fulfilled in one man would be 1 in $10^{157}$. And to give you an idea of just how big of a number that is, the estimated number of electrons in the whole universe is around 1 in $10^{79}$."

Now folks, I’m not a rocket scientist, but I’d say it’s pretty obvious that there’s no way that Jesus fulfilled 48 prophecies by accident. And by the way, He didn’t fulfill just 48 but over 300. That can’t happen by chance. In fact, the only
way it **could happen** is if somebody was above and beyond time and knew the
beginning from the end and orchestrated the whole thing. Hmmm. I wonder who
that might be? **A Wise God maybe?**

But you might be asking, “Come on. Does knowing something as basic
that **God is Wise** really make a difference in lives of people worldwide?” Well,
you tell me if it wouldn’t save us from a whole lot of trouble. For instance, if you
realize that **God Is Wise** the **first thing** it’s going to save you from is **being led
astray**. One of the biggest trends today is for people to go to a so-called psychic
and pay them to tell them their supposed future. But little do people know that
they’re not only being ripped off, they’re being led astray. How do I know? Well,
let’s examine their track record.

“Amid hundreds of prophecies, Biblical prophets are not known to have made a
single error. However, a study of the prophecies made by psychics showed that
of the 72 predictions, only 6 were fulfilled in any way. However, 2 of these were
vague and 2 others were hardly surprising, that the U.S. and Russia would remain
leading world powers.

Another study of the top 25 psychics and 72 of their predictions revealed that
92% were totally wrong. And the remaining 8 percent could easily be explained
by chance and general knowledge of circumstances. In fact, in 1993 the psychics
missed every single unexpected news story like Michael Jordan’s retirement and
the flooding in the Midwest.

And among some of their false prophecies that year were that Kathy Lee Gifford
would replace Jay Leno as host of **The Tonight Show** and the Queen of England
would become a nun.”

Oh but that’s not all. If you realize that **God Is Wise** it’s not only going
to save you from being led astray, the **second thing** it’s going to save you from is
**being a blasphemer of God**. Our society today **not only** plays fast and loose
**with the Words of the Bible** but they do the same thing with the **words of their
mouth**. Many people don’t even think twice about saying such statements as,
“The Lord told me this” or “God told me to tell you this” etc. But if a person actually believes this, they need to know **three things. One** if what they said supposedly came from God did not come to pass, it didn’t come from God. **Two**, claiming to have a “word from God” that doesn’t come to pass makes God out to **look stupid** or a **big liar**. Neither of which I recommend you do. And that’s why **three**, the penalty for this behavior is **death**!

**Deuteronomy 18:22,20** “You will know, because if the LORD says something will happen, it will happen. And if it doesn’t, you will know that the prophet was falsely claiming to speak for the LORD. Don’t be afraid of any prophet whose message doesn’t come from the LORD. But if I haven’t spoken, and a prophet claims to have a message from me, you must kill that prophet.” (CEV)

Now I don’t know about you, but I think I’d rather just keep my mouth shut and read my Bible, instead of flirting with the death penalty, how about you?

Oh but that’s not all. If you realize that **God Is Wise** it’s not only going to save you from being led astray and from being a blasphemer of God, it’s also going to save you from **being left behind**. People, the same wise God who predicted all those past events also predicted **future events**. Why? To lovingly warn us of when the 7 year Tribulation and Christ’s second Coming was near.

So what are these future prophecies? Hey, I’m glad you asked! The Bible specifically says that in the last days **leading up to the 7 year Tribulation** we would see Israel being reborn, amazing technology, worldwide disturbances, people getting more wicked, a flood of false teachers, the Church flooded with phony believers, a push for a One-world Religion, Government, and Economy, and the ability for one person to monitor and control people and their buying all over the world.⁸

Now folks, I’m not a rocket scientist, but if we already see **every single one of those** events being put into place **right now** then how much closer is the
rapture of the Church which takes place **prior to the Tribulation**? I mean, wouldn’t it be safe to say that **God Who Is Wise** might be trying to lovingly show us that the time is near? That would be, uh huh! And people that’s why Bible Prophecy is one of God’s many ways to warn us of the dangers of **being left behind**. But still, you might be asking, “Left behind? Left behind for what?” Oh, only to face hell on earth when His wrath is poured out on this wicked and rebellious world. That’s all! Therefore, yeah, I’d say knowing something as basic that **God is Wise** really does make a difference in lives of people worldwide, how about you?

And people this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people **really can** have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe **before it’s too late**!” But people, I’m telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we’ve got to stop acting like practical atheists. We’ve got to start demonstrating by our **lips** as well as our **lives** that **God is Wise**!
In the last chapter I shared the story of a man who almost lost it all due to his addiction problem. And so now, I’m going to share a story from a girl who shares how her mother’s **drug problem** actually helped to change her life for the better!

“Mamma DRUG me to Church services on Sunday, and told me God was real. And she DRUG me to the Wednesday night prayer meeting where she’d show me how to kneel.

Then she DRUG me back to Sunday School, to be taught to live the life I should. And I NEVER sassed a teacher cause I knew that I’d be DRUG into Momma’s bedroom and be given a switch picked from a piece of wood.

Mamma DRUGGED me to Church services three times a week and then DRUG me to Bible School. And I was DRUGGED inside and chastised well when I acted like a fool.

Now I’m all grown up today and I teach to make a living. But I see kids every single day, and no DRUGS their momma’s giving.

And I think back to the lessons learned when I was at her knee, and I thank God for the DRUGS that my Momma gave to me.”

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Chapter Five

God’s Wisdom Allows Suffering 1-3
Now how many of you guys know of a few people who could use a little more drugs in their life? Drug to Church services that is. And people, this is actually a bigger problem than we realize. Now more than ever people are turning away from the Church and turning on to other things and then they wonder why their lives are falling apart. Yeah, they got a drug problem all right and it’s this. As ironic as this might sound, people today want answers to their problems but they refuse to be drugged to the one book that not only provides the answers but also tells us Who God Is. And because of this self-imposed ignorance of God that comes from not studying the Bible, the lives of many Christians are now filled with just as many questions and just as much pain as the rest of the world. We are actually living in a time when many Churches are full of Christians who are living like practical atheists.

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our lips and by our lives, we act like He’s not there. And people, this not only keeps you from growing in your own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christians living like practical atheists by not knowing Who God Is, we’re going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, “Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?”

And we’ve already seen that the very first thing we need to know about God is that God Is Real. The second thing we need to know about God is that God Is Personal. And in the last chapter we saw the third thing we need to know about God is that God Is Wise. And there we saw one reason why we know that God Is Wise and that’s because He Knows the Beginning from the End. And it’s by knowing this that saves us from being led astray, from being blasphemers of God, and from being left behind.
But people that’s not the only reason why we know that **God Is Wise**. The **second reason** why we know **God Is Wise** is because **God Is Above and Beyond Time**. But hey, don’t take my word for it, let’s listen to God’s. **Revelation 4:8-9** “Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come. Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever.” (NIV)

Now according to our text, one of the things that makes God so Wise is that He not only exists forever and ever, but He’s eternal which means He’s **above and beyond time**. And because God’s above and beyond all time, this enables Him to get an **eternal perspective** on all things at all times simultaneously. And you may not think this is a big deal. But I’m telling you, if you follow the logical train of thought here, it’s going to revolutionize your life! You see, because God alone sees all things this means that He also **knows all things**. Therefore, He’s not just wise, but He’s **infinitely wise**! And people if we truly understand that **God Is Wise**, it’s going to reveal several things we’ve never even thought about. What things? Great question, I’m glad you asked.

The **first thing** knowing that **God Is Wise** is going to reveal is that **There’s No Such Thing As An Accident**. **Proverbs 16:9,33** “A man’s mind plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps and makes them sure. The lot is cast into the lap, but the decision is wholly of the Lord, even the events that seem accidental are really ordered by Him.” (AMP)

Now according to our text, even though we personally live out each day and make our individual plans, **behind it all**, God in His infinite wisdom is directing our steps. People, did you know that **God is so Wise** that nothing ever
catches Him off guard? Did you know He never has a “plan B.” In fact, He never says “oops” and He never has to say “Sorry! I didn’t see that one coming.” Therefore, nothing happens by accident. And people, this is the great news. Because God Is Wise and there are no accidents, then this means that there must be some sort of a wise purpose behind all things, even our difficulties.

But instead of being comforted by this truth, we often label our difficulties as being bad luck or an unexpected encounter with no rhyme or reason. But people, this not only denies God’s infinite wisdom, it also causes a whole lot of unnecessary pain. Therefore, since we seem to have such a hard time seeing this, we’re going to look at just a few of the wise reasons that God allows difficulties to occur. And the first reason why God allows difficulties to occur is To Expose Our Sin Nature.

Romans 7:7 “Well then, am I suggesting that the law of God is evil? Of course not! The law is not sinful, but it was the law that showed me my sin. I would never have known that coveting is wrong if the law had not said, Do not covet.” (NLT)

Now according to our text, the Apostle Paul had no idea of the sin in his life until he came face to face with the Law of God. It was God’s Law that forced the sin in Paul to “spring to life.” And people, if we’re honest with ourselves, it is when you and I encounter the difficulties of life that we also see what we’re really made of, isn’t it? You see, when life is going “great” according to our definition anyway, we can appear to be calm, cool, and collected and act like we have it all together. When everything is going “our way” we think we got this sin thing mastered and being a Christian is a “piece of cake” when all the while we’ve got major problems.

So out of mercy, do you know what God does? He orchestrates a few difficulties or a few difficult people to come our way and voila! Our sin nature
rears its ugly head. And we find out with the Apostle Paul just how sinful we
really are. So is God being a big ol’ meany? No, not at all. In His wisdom He’s
orchestrating events so our sin can be exposed and hopefully done away with like
this story reveals. The following story is from a Christian brother in China about
the war with Japan.

“During the first three months of the Japanese War in China we lost a great many
tanks and so were unable to deal with the Japanese armor, until the following
scheme was devised.

A single shot would be fired at a Japanese tank by one of our snipers in the
ambush. After a considerable lapse of time the first shot would be followed by a
second.

Then, after a further silence, by another shot; until the tank driver, eager to locate
the source of the disturbance, would pop his head out to look around.

The next shot, carefully aimed, would put an end to him. As long as he remained
under cover, he was perfectly safe. The whole scheme was devised to bring him
out into the open.”

People, when the shots of life come flying at you and I, a lot of the times
our flesh is tricked into coming out into the open, isn’t it? And even though it’s
humbling to see and painful to endure, the poison becomes the cure. Whether
we like it or not or whether we want to admit it or not, our difficult circumstances
have actually just served as an opportunity to deal with the sin in our lives. And
if we take advantage of the opportunity and surrender it over to God, we’ll
find that we have actually grown closer in our relationship with Him. And isn’t
that what we all pray for? Of course it is! And it’s all because God Is Wise.

Oh, but that’s not all. The second reason why God allows difficulties to
occur is To Keep Us From Becoming Spiritually Lazy.

Judges 2:18,19 “Whenever the LORD placed a judge over Israel, he was with
that judge and rescued the people from their enemies throughout the judge’s
lifetime. But when the judge died, the people returned to their corrupt ways.” (NLT)

Now according to our text, whenever the Israelites would stop seeking God they would start getting into trouble. And so they’d cry out to God to save them and out of mercy God would save them by sending them a judge. But as soon as the troubles were over and the judge was gone, what did they do? They went right back to their evil ways. And folks, if we’re honest with ourselves, we do the very same thing. If things are going smoothly in our lives, we have a tendency to start slacking off in our relationship with God. We start getting spiritually lazy, don’t we?

So out of mercy, do you know what God does? That’s right, He orchestrates a few difficulties and voila! Spiritual laziness goes right out the window! Joni Eareckson Tada talks about God’s wisdom in allowing this to occur.

“In God’s wisdom and love, every trial in a Christian’s life is ordained from eternity past, custom made for that believer’s eternal good, even when it doesn’t seem like it. Nothing happens by accident…not even tragedy…not even sins committed against us.

Our pain, poverty, and broken hearts are not His ultimate focus. He cares about them, but they are merely symptoms of the real problem. God cares most – not about making us comfortable – but about teaching us to hate our sins, grow up spiritually, and love Him.

Every sorrow we taste will one day prove to be the best possible thing that could have happened. We will thank God endlessly in heaven for the trials He sent us here. This is not Disneyland – it is truth.”

People, whether we like it or not or whether we want to admit it or not, many times our difficult circumstances are God’s loving way to shake us out of our spiritual laziness and get us back on track seeking Him. So is God being a big
ol’ meany for allowing us to go through difficult times? No, not at all. **God is so Wise** that He can even use unpleasant circumstances to get us on our knees to start seeking Him. Therefore, the challenge is to seek God at **all times**, not just when things are difficult. And people, this is the great news. Once we’re back on track, we find that we’ve actually grown closer in our walk with God. And isn’t that what we all pray for? Of course it is. And it’s all because **God Is Wise**.

Oh, but that’s not all. The **third reason** why God allows difficulties to occur is **To Cause Us To Be A Blessing to Others**.

**2 Corinthians 1:3-4**  
“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of compassion and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.” (NIV)

People, did you know that we’re not the only ones who benefit from our personal suffering? You see, many times it’s **also meant** for the comfort or blessing of another person. And people, I’ve learned this truth time and time again in my own life. For instance, I would never wish upon anyone the hellish life of drugs, sexual immorality, and selfishness that I lived before becoming a Christian. But I can honestly look back **now** and thank God that I went through it all because when it was all said and done I got saved. And if that wasn’t cool enough, I’ve watched how God has not only comforted me in my pain but He has even used my wretched past over and over again to bring comfort to others who may be struggling with the very same things that I went through. And it’s a level of comfort that only one who has been there done that, wish they **wouldn’t** have bought the T-shirt, can give to another person like this guy was able to do.

“There was a boy who had lost his right hand and he felt so badly about it that he did not want to see anyone. His father said, ‘I’m going to bring the minister in to see you.’ The boy said, ‘I don’t want to see him.’
But out of his concern for his son, the father brought the minister anyway. When the minister had arrived, the boy looked up and noticed that the man had no right arm; there was an empty sleeve.

The minister came over to the boy and said, ‘I haven’t any hand, either. I lost mine when I was a boy, and I know how it feels.’ And because of this, it wasn’t hard for the boy to get acquainted with the minister who knew how it felt.”

People of God, every single one of us have the ability to be a tremendous blessing to another person in distress that the rest of us may not be able to. Why? Because every single one of us have our own unique set of difficulties which means that every single one of us can uniquely comfort others with the same comfort God has extended to us. Therefore, working together, we can comfort a multitude of people in a multitude of situations. People, whether you believe it or not, God is so Wise that He can actually recycle our tears and turn them around to be a tremendous blessing for others. And isn’t that what we all pray for? Of course it is. And it’s all because God Is Wise.

But you might be asking, “Come on. Does knowing something as basic that God is Wise really make a difference in lives of people worldwide?” Well, you tell me if it wouldn’t save us from a whole lot of unnecessary pain.

“You are walking down the street, minding your own business, when you are assaulted and forced to carry a huge and heavy basket on your back. You’re ordered to walk three blocks, turn left, go two blocks, turn right, then proceed straight on. Staggering under the weight, you stumble on bewildered and angry.

The weight of the basket is crushing. Your back is breaking. The whole thing is meaningless and haphazard. You resent how the heavy burden consumes you, becoming the focal point of your entire existence. When your halfway down the third block, reeling under the burden, you finally cry out, ‘What gives!’

Then the truth is revealed. The burden you are carrying is your child, injured and unconscious. ‘What?’ And on top of that, you discover you’re not trudging
through a meaningless rat-maze but the most direct route to a hospital emergency room.

Immediately you straighten. You inhale new vigor. Your knees quit buckling. Adrenaline and fresh energy quicken your pace, and you move forward with a new attitude.

So why the sudden change? Because the suffering you’re going through involves a relationship. Not just any relationship, but one with your child. It is the love you have for your child that quickens your step and buoys up your heart. Your relationship gives your burden meaning.

Even your twisted path makes sense. You know where you are going. Your journey has a positive end – the hospital – and this instills hope. Suffering has no meaning in itself.

Left to its own, it is a frustrating and bewildering burden. But given the context of relationship, suffering suddenly has meaning.5

People, there’s nothing worse than having to go through a bunch of difficulties thinking there’s no rhyme or reason to them. Therefore, what a healing balm to a broken heart when we learn that in our relationship with God that there are no accidents and there’s always a reason. What an incredible truth to redeem the pain of all life’s trials when we can see that God is so Wise that He can actually create value and purpose even in our sufferings. Therefore, yeah, I’d say knowing something as basic that God is Wise really does save people from a lot of unnecessary pain, how about you?

And people this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people really can have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe before it’s too late!” But people, I’m telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we’ve got to stop acting like practical atheists. We’ve got to start demonstrating by our lips as well as our lives that God is Wise!
Chapter Six

God’s Wisdom Allows Suffering 4-6

I’m going to start this chapter off by looking at a sobering statistic of America’s current behavior and I want you to tell me how well we’re doing.

1. Violent Crimes up 995%.
2. The inmate population has grown from about 200,000 to about 2 million.
3. Unmarried couples living together up 725%.
4. Illegitimate births up 400%.
5. The divorce rate is now 60%.
6. A murder occurs every 23 minutes.
7. A rape occurs every 6 minutes.
8. An aggravated assault occurs every 48 seconds.
9. An abortion takes place every 20 seconds.
10. A burglary occurs every 8 seconds.
11. Sexually transmitted diseases (10-14 yr. olds) up 385%.
12. Unwed pregnancies (10-14 yr. Old) up 553%.
13. Teenage suicide up 200%.
14. Every day 13 youths commit suicide, 16 are murdered, 1,000 become mothers, 100,000 bring guns to school, 2,200 drop out of school, 500 begin using drugs, 1,000 begin drinking alcohol, 3,500 are assaulted, 630 are robbed, and 80 are raped.
15. More people have died in America in the last 30 years from murders and suicides then from all the wars in the history of the United States.¹

Now I don’t know about you guys, but I’d say we’d better find some answers quick to our societal problems or our country is going to be in a heap of trouble, don’t you think? And people, here’s the irony of it all. We already have the answers to society’s problems right in front of us. It’s called the Bible.

But the problem we’ve been seeing is hardly anybody will even pick it up. And it’s because of this self-imposed ignorance of God that comes from not studying the Bible, the lives of many Christians are now filled with just as many questions and just as much pain as the rest of the world. We are actually living in a time when many Churches are full of Christians who are living like practical atheists.

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our lips and by our lives, we act like He’s not there. And people, this not only keeps you from growing in your own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christians living like practical atheists by not knowing Who God Is, we’re going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, “Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?”

And we’ve already seen the very first thing we need to know about God is that God Is Real. The second thing we need to know about God is that God Is Personal. And in the last two chapters we saw the third thing we need to know about God is that God Is Wise. And there we saw that we know that God Is Wise because He Knows the Beginning from the End and He is Above and Beyond Time. And it’s by knowing this that shows us that there’s no such thing as accidents. Therefore since God Is Wise then everything we go through must
also be for a wise purpose, even our difficulties. And there we saw that some of the wise reasons why God allows difficulties were To Expose Our Sin Nature, To Keep Us From Becoming Spiritually Lazy, and To Cause Us To Be A Blessing To Others.

But people that’s not the only wise reasons why God allows difficulties to occur. The fourth reason why God allows difficulties to occur is To Learn That God is God and We Are Not. But hey, don’t take my word for it. Let’s listen to God’s.

Matthew 11:1-6 “After Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in the towns of Galilee. When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples to ask him, Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?

Jesus replied, Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me.” (NIV)

Now according to our text, John the Baptist was having a problem with the way things were turning out in his life. He just came off of a fruitful ministry in the desert preparing the way of the Lord, but now he was in prison. John assumed that Jesus would usher in His Kingdom right then and there, but He didn’t. And because life wasn’t meeting up to John’s expectations, he began to doubt God’s plan and sent his disciples to check things out. And if we’re honest with ourselves, we do the exact same thing in our relationship with Jesus, don’t we? Many times we also assume that we know what’s best for us. We think we know better than God. But people, we don’t have the ability to govern our own lives let alone the universe. Therefore, who do we think we are? Besides, God has a better way. It’s called trust. And we can either trust that He knows what He’s doing or we can give into doubt and start demanding that life should go our
But folks, once we start demanding that life goes our way, guess what happens? We set ourselves up for some serious heartache.

So out of mercy, do you know what God does? He orchestrates a few difficulties to come our way and voila! We find out real fast that we’re not God and we’re not in control. And hopefully over time we start to realize that by cracky, maybe we don’t know what’s best for us after all. So is God being a big ol’ meany? No, not at all. Rather He is teaching us a very valuable lesson in life. That He knows what’s best for us, not ourselves. And so we can either doubt His love and care for us when life doesn’t go our way and get mad at God or we can trust in His wisdom even when life doesn’t make sense at all, like this lady found out.

“Years ago a fishing fleet went out from a small harbor on the East Coast of Newfoundland. In the afternoon there came up a great storm. When night settled down not a single vessel of all the fleet had found its way into port.

All night long wives, mothers, children, and sweethearts paced up and down the beach, wringing their hands and calling on God to save their loved ones. To add to the horror of the situation, one of the cottages caught fire. Since the men were all away, it was impossible to save the home. When the morning broke, to the joy of all, the entire fleet found safe harbor in the bay.

But there was one face, which was a picture of despair—the wife of the man whose home had been destroyed. Meeting her husband as he landed, she cried, ‘Oh husband, we are ruined! Our home and all it contained was destroyed by fire!’ But the man exclaimed, ‘Thank God for the fire! It was the light of our burning cottage that guided the whole fleet into port!’”

Now that lady found out that God was in full control all the time, didn’t she? When all was said and done, by cracky, God really did know what was best for everyone, didn’t He? And people this is the same choice that we all have in all our everyday trials. We can either doubt God and begin to question His goodness when our lives aren’t living up to our expectations, or we can trust God
no matter what happens and sit back, relax and enjoy the ride of life even in the midst of the worst of storms. Therefore, whether we like it or not or whether we want to admit it or not, our difficult circumstances are serving as an opportunity to give up the reins of our life, trust God, and receive His peace. And isn’t that what we all pray for? Of course it is! And it’s all because God Is Wise.

Oh, but that’s not all. The fifth reason why God allows difficulties to occur is To Make Us More Like Jesus.

Ephesians 4:11-13 “The gifts he gave are these: some are to be apostles; some prophets; some evangelists; some pastors and teachers. These gifts are to make God’s people better able to do their work for him and to make the body of Christ become stronger. The gifts are given so that we will all believe the one way and all know the Son of God. They are given so that we will be really grown-up Christians, like Christ himself.” (WE)

Now according to our text here, God didn’t save you and I just so we could get our fire insurance and sit around on our blessed assurance doing nothing until we get to heaven. Hello! People, God also plans for us to become mature or in other words, to become a little more like Jesus before we get to heaven. And hopefully that’s what we’re all praying for, to be more like Jesus, right? But here’s our problem. We make the mistake thinking that this process of becoming more like Christ comes naturally or that we have the ability to live just like Jesus on our own. But people, stop and think about this attitude. If you and I could live the Christian life on our own, then why would we need a Savior in the first place? This is nothing more than spiritual pride.

So out of mercy how does God rid us of this arrogance? Hey, that’s right! He orchestrates a few difficulties and voila! We find out real fast that we don’t have a knack for living like our Savior. We have a knack for sinning! In fact, we also learn real fast that the only way to be rid of our sinful behavior is...
from the purifying hand of God, which sometimes comes in the form of difficulties. This is what Peter was saying.

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

Now this “testing by fire” that Peter is talking about here is an illustration of a smelting furnace. A smelting furnace was a red-hot furnace for putting in raw gold after it was mined. And as the raw gold was melted down, the impurities would rise to the top and be skimmed off. And when the goldsmith 

**saw his reflection in the liquid** gold, he knew at that point that he had pure gold.

And people, here’s the point. The gold wasn’t put into the furnace to destroy it but to purify it, to make it better. This is what Kenneth Wuest talks about concerning the Christian life and our difficulties.

“Christian suffering, whether it be in the form of persecution because of a Christlike life, or whether it comes to us in the form of trials, and testings which are the natural accompaniment of a Christlike life, such as illness, sorrow, or financial losses, is always used by a God of love to refine our lives. It burns out the dross, makes for humility, purifies and increases our faith, and enriches our lives.

And like the goldsmith of old, God keeps us in the smelting furnace until He can see the reflection of the face of the Lord Jesus in our lives. God is not so much interested in how much work we do for Him, as He is in how much we resemble His Son.”

Now people, is God being a big ol’ meany by allowing us to go through difficulties? No, not at all. As we’ve seen, He uses our everyday difficulties to get rid of the **crud in our hearts** and replace it with the image of Christ. Therefore, whether we like it or not or whether we want to admit it or not, our
difficult circumstances are serving as an opportunity to become a little more like Jesus. And isn’t that what we all pray for? Of course it is. And it’s all because God Is Wise.

Oh, but that’s not all. The sixth reason why God allows difficulties to occur is To Keep Us From Wasting Our Lives.

1 Corinthians 10:31 “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” (NIV)

Now according to our text, we’re to glorify God with our lives every single day in everything we do. Why? Because this not only shows our love for Him but it also ensures that our lives are not wasted. How? Well, it works like this. When we glorify God we store up treasure in heaven. And since heaven lasts forever, so does our act of glorifying God. Therefore, our temporary lives here on earth become eternally significant. But, in case you haven’t noticed there’s somebody out there who doesn’t want us to invest our lives for God but wants us to waste our lives for him. This being is none other than satan. And one of the many ways he tricks us into wasting our lives is by our wicked world system. People of God, we desperately have to wake up to the fact that this wicked world system is one of our biggest enemies. Does not our society seduce us to live only for ourselves and the things of this world? Does not our society entice us to indulge our every whim in all the glamour and glitz they have to offer? And people, the Bible gives a stiff warning to those who would live like this.

1 John 2:15 “Stop loving this evil world and all that it offers you, for when you love the world, you show that you do not have the love of the Father in you.” (NLT)

So why does God give such a harsh warning? Because He knows that if we live only for this world then our lives will be utterly wasted. Why? Because this world isn’t going to last forever. In fact, it’s going up in smoke!
2 Peter 3:10  “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.” (NAS)

People, how stupid is it for someone to invest their whole life into something that one day is going to be burned to smithereens? Do you see the cunningness of the enemy?

So out of mercy, do you know what God does? Hey, that’s right! He orchestrates a few difficulties and suddenly the world starts to lose all its glamour and glitz. It’s not so wonderful after all. And by cracky, we start to get steered towards that which is important in life. We start living for heavenly things instead of earthly things. So is God being a big ol’ meany? No, not at all. Rather He’s protecting us from the enemy! He’s protecting us from wasting our lives by running after the things of this world. Therefore, whether we like it or not or whether we want to admit it or not, our difficult circumstances are serving as an opportunity to ensure that when all is said and done our lives have actually counted for something! And isn’t that what we all pray for? Of course it is. And it’s all because God Is Wise.

But you might be asking, “Come on. Does knowing something as basic that God is Wise really make a difference in lives of people worldwide?” Well, you tell me if knowing there’s a purpose in all our pain doesn’t help.

“In the northeastern United States codfish are a big commercial business. But the public demand posed a problem to the shippers. At first they froze the cod, then shipped them elsewhere, but the freeze took away much of the flavor. So, they experimented with shipping them alive, in tanks of seawater, but that proved even worse. Not only was it more expensive, the cod still lost its flavor and, in addition, became soft and mushy. The texture was seriously affected.
Finally, some creative person solved the problem in a most innovative manner. The codfish were placed in the tank of water along with their natural enemy—the catfish.

From the time the cod left the East Coast until it arrived at its westernmost destination, those ornery catfish chased the cod all over the tank. And, you guessed it, when the cod arrived at the market, they were as fresh as when they were first caught. There was no loss of flavor nor was the texture affected. If anything, it was better than before.

Each one of us is in a tank of particular and inescapable circumstances. It is painful enough to stay in the tank. But in addition to our situation, there are God-appointed ‘catfish’ to bring sufficient tension that keeps us alive, alert, fresh and growing.

It’s all part of God’s project to shape our character so we will be more like his Son. Understand why the catfish are in your tank. Understand they are part of God’s method of producing character in your life and mine.”

People of God, whether you believe it or not, it’s precisely because God loves us that he allows those catfish to come into our lives. And what we’ve got to understand is that yes, our problems might be ornery, but God’s not! Yes, He accepts us for who we are and where we are. But He loves us so much that He is not going to leave us there. God is more concerned about our character then our overall comfort. Therefore, out of love, God will use whatever He can, even difficulties, to help us grow deeper in our relationship with Him, which really is the solution, the answer to all our problems and societies problems as well. Therefore, yeah, I’d say knowing something as basic that God is Wise really does make a difference in people’s lives, how about you?

And people this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people really can have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe.” But people, I’m telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we’ve got to stop
acting like practical atheists. We’ve got to start demonstrating by our **lips** as well as our **lives** that **God is Wise!**
You know, as we continue to study God’s wisdom, I think there’s one wise lesson we all need to learn and that is this. None of us are born with perfect knowledge like God. How many of you can figure that out without any help? Therefore, sooner or later all of us are going to run into some things in life that are pretty hard to understand, right? But just to make sure we’re all on the same page and since I had lots of time to let my brain wander at conference, I’m going to share with you a few of the things I personally find hard to understand.

1. Why can’t women put on mascara with their mouths closed?

2. Why do people who spend all their money on beer, cigarettes, and lottery tickets always complain about being broke and not feeling well?

3. If a man saw a woman wearing a sweatshirt with ‘Guess’ on it and he said, ‘Thyroid problem?’ would he be stupid or insane?

4. If a pig loses its voice is it disgruntled?

5. Do jellyfish get gas from eating jellybeans?
6. Do you think that when they asked George Washington for ID that he just whipped out a quarter?

7. If swimming is good for your shape, then why do the whales look the way they do?

8. If you choke a smurf, what color does it turn?

9. If the professor on Gilligan’s Island can make a radio out of a coconut, then why can’t he fix a stupid hole in a boat?

10. If women can have PMS, then can’t men have ESPN?¹

Yes, as you can see there are lots of things in life that are hard to understand aren’t there? But you know, I think one of the biggest things I have a hard time understanding has got to be this. Why is it that people, even Christians are willing to spend countless hours and tons of cash in a frantic search for answers to all their problems when the whole time the answers are right in front of them in the Bible! And because people refuse to study the Bible, this has produced a generation of Churches that are full of Christians acting like practical atheists.

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our lips and by our lives, we act like He’s not there. And this not only keeps us from growing in our own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christians living like practical atheists by not knowing Who God Is, we’re going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, “Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?” We’ve already seen that the very first thing we need to know about God is that God Is Real. The second thing we need to know about God is that God Is Personal. And the last three chapters we saw the third thing we need to know about God is that God Is Wise. And there we saw since God Is Wise this means that
everything we go through must serve for a wise purpose, even our difficulties. And some of those wise reasons why God allows difficulties were **To Expose Our Sin Nature**, **To Keep Us From Becoming Spiritually Lazy**, **To Cause Us To Be A Blessing To Others**, **To Teach Us That God Is God And We Are Not**, **To Make Us More Like Jesus**, and **To Keep Us From Wasting Our Lives**.

But people that’s not the only wise reasons why God allows difficulties to occur. The **seventh reason** why God allows difficulties to occur is **To Make Us More Humble**. But hey, don’t take my word for it. Let’s listen to God’s.

2 Corinthians 12:7-9 “To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.” (NIV)

Now according to our text, God not only **permitted** Paul to have a few difficulties in his life but He **purposely allowed** Paul to be tormented by an actual demon. Why? To keep Paul from becoming conceited or in other words prideful. Why? Because if Paul became arrogant it would ruin the work God was going to do through him. Therefore, **out of love**, God kept Paul humble **for his own benefit**. How? Through a serious difficulty, **even a demonic one**.

But here’s the kicker. Did you know that God also allows difficulties to humble you and I today? He really does. And people, whether you like it or not or whether you believe it or not, **being humbled** is one of the best things that could ever happen to us. Why? Because that’s when we receive God’s grace. And people, that’s why Paul could rejoice through all his pain because he saw the higher purpose through it all. He knew it was the grace of God that gives us the **power of God**. And how many of us want to be a more powerful Christian? But
herein lies our problem. **We don’t like being humbled do we?** No! We scream at the very thought of being humbled.

So out of mercy do you know what God does? Hey, that’s right! He orchestrates a few difficulties and voila! Our pride and self-love goes right out the window and humility starts coming in like a flood! Why? Because folks, how do we react to difficulties most of the time? **Not very loving, do we?** No!

Therefore, we’re humbled **by having to see ourselves for who we really are.**

This person makes this amazing observation.

“Always guard yourself from being anxious because of your faults. Most of the time your distress really springs from a secret root of pride. To put it in other words, you are simply hurt and upset at seeing yourself for who you really are.

If the Lord should be so merciful as to give you a true spirit of His humility, you will not be surprised at your faults, your failures, and even your own basic nature.

The more clearly you see your true self, the clearer you will see how miserable your self nature really is; and the more you will abandon your whole being to God.”

So is God being a big ol’ meany? No! He’s allows difficulties **not to torture us** but to humble us so that we’ll abandon ourselves to Him. Why? Because that’s when we grow in God’s grace. And **unless we grow in God’s grace** we won’t grow in His power. And if we don’t grow in His power we’ll end up being weak and ineffective Christians all the days of our lives. Therefore, whether we like it or not or whether we want to admit it or not, our difficult circumstances are serving as an opportunity to humble us **and** to make us more **powerful** Christians for the glory of God. And isn’t that what we all pray for? Of course it is! And it’s all because **God Is Wise.**
Oh, but that’s not all. The eighth reason why God allows difficulties to occur is To Make Us More Joyful.

**Acts 20:35** “In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: It is more blessed to give than to receive.” (NIV)

Now according to our text here, Jesus, in one sentence reveals the secret to a truly joyful life. And that is this. If you want more joy in your life then don’t get more things in your life but give away more of your life. What? Hey, wait a second that’s not what society says is it? And people this is precisely the problem. It sounds foreign today because we live in a society that declares just the opposite of what Jesus says to do for joy, right? And we wonder why everyone’s so unhappy all the time! They’ve got it backwards!

People of God, whether you realize it or not, our world is now consumed with me, myself and I, the unholy trinity. We live in a world of unprecedented selfishness. We want our fast food even faster. We want our paychecks paid on demand. And we want to be pampered with all the so-called comforts of life and we want them NOW! Our society is pumping out a whole new generation of people who have thankless attitudes and could care less about the needs of others let alone getting around to serving their fellow man. In fact, our society has now created a subculture out of selfishness and we usually call them snobs, like this lady.

“There was a self-centered snobbish lady who was visiting a modern art museum one day, and while she was there gazing at a particular picture, she turned to an attendant standing nearby and said, ‘This, I suppose, is one of those hideous representations you call modern art?’

‘No, Madam,’ replied the attendant, ‘That one’s called a mirror.’”³
You know, there’s a lot of truth to that joke. That lady thought she was high and mighty but by looking in the mirror she saw just how ugly her selfishness and snobbery really was didn’t she? And I don’t know about you guys, but I’ve yet to run into a selfish person who’s just bubbling with joy wherever they go. No. They’re usually full of emptiness and bitterness, aren’t they? So people, is it any wonder that a society who lives for nothing but serving themselves is full of people, even Christians, who are empty and bitter about life?

So out of mercy do you know what God does to protect us from a life of selfishness? Hey, that’s right! He orchestrates a few difficulties and voila! We find out real fast that life doesn’t revolve around me myself and I after all. And we see that it’s an illusion to think that you’re always going to get what you want out of life.

So is God being a big ol’ meany? No! He’s teaching us a powerful lesson. He trying to get us to see that a life of selfishness is a one-way ticket to a life of emptiness! People, listen clearly to the words of Jesus. True joy comes NOT by having others serving us as society would say. That’s not reality. It’s a lie and that sets people up for a life full of heartaches and broken dreams. True joy comes in serving others! Why? Because it’s more blessed to give than to receive! Therefore, whether we like it or not or whether we want to admit it or not, our difficult circumstances are serving as an opportunity to insure that we learn to give away our lives and thus be filled with the joy of the Lord. And isn’t that what we all pray for? Of course it is. And it’s all because God Is Wise.

Oh, but that’s not all. The ninth reason why God allows difficulties to occur is To Make Us More Loving.

Matthew 5:43-44,46 “You have heard the law that says, Love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute
you! If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much.” (NLT)

Now according to our text, the most effective way of getting rid of our enemies is not by hating them, but by what? By loving them, right? And how many of us would like to have more friends and less enemies?
But herein lies our problem. We don’t want to love our enemies, do we? No! In fact, if we’re honest with ourselves, half of the time if we do get around to praying for them, we’re praying that God would destroy them! But people, what did we read? Anybody can hate an enemy, that’s no big deal. Therefore, Jesus challenges us to do what? To show this world that we’re true disciples. How?

By loving those who don’t love us. And folks, whether you realize it or not, every time we refuse to love the stinkers in life, we’re acting no different than the world. And nobody’s going to believe us when we talk about the love of Jesus. Why? Because we refuse to demonstrate His love by our actions. We refuse to give it out!

So out of mercy, do you know what God does? Hey, that’s right! He orchestrates a few difficulties and a few difficult people to come our way and voila! We get to practice loving people, again and again and again until we get it right. It’s kind of like that movie “Groundhog Day”. You know, where that guy had to live the same day over and over again until he got it right. People, it’s the same thing with us. God will allow us to keep on taking laps with difficulties and difficult people until we learn how to love.

So is God being a big ol’ meany? No, not at all. Rather He’s trying to use us to show His love to an unloving world. Why? Because that’s what our world needs. If our society is going to get out of the pit of despair it’s in, it will not be from talking about love, but in doing something about it like Jesus did.
“A man fell into a pit and couldn’t get himself out. So a subjective person came along and said, ‘I feel for you down there.’

Then an objective person walked by and said, ‘It’s logical that someone would fall down there.’

A Pharisee said, ‘Only bad people fall into pits.’

A mathematician calculated the precise angle in which he fell into the pit.

A news reporter wanted the exclusive story on the pit.

An IRS agent asked if he was paying taxes on the pit.

A self-pitying person said, ‘You haven’t seen anything until you’ve seen my pit!’

A psychologist noted, ‘Your mother and father are to blame for your being in that pit.’

A self-esteem therapist said, ‘Believe in yourself and you can get out of that pit.’

An optimist said, ‘Things could get worse.’

A pessimist claimed, ‘Things WILL get worse.’

And Jesus, seeing the man, took him by the hand and loved him by lifting him out of the pit.”

People of God, if we really want to show the world that we’re true Christians, then we’re going to start loving people, even the stinkers. And if we really want to lift our society out of the pit it’s in, then we’ve got to take them by the hand, just like Jesus did with us, and not pound them down with hate, but pull them up with love. Therefore, whether we like it or not or whether we want to admit it or not, our difficult circumstances are serving as an opportunity to
ensure that God’s love is displayed in an unloving world so that others might be saved. And isn’t that what we all pray for? Of course it is. And it’s all because **God Is Wise**.

But you might be asking, “Come on. Does knowing something as basic that **God is Wise** really make a difference in lives of people worldwide?” Well, you tell me if knowing that God is in full control of **all our problems** doesn’t help soothe things over.

“Do we find repulsive a God who gives the nod to our tragedies? Think about the alternative. Imagine a God who *didn’t* deliberately permit the smallest details of your particular sorrows.

What if you’re trials *weren’t* screened by any divine plan? What if God insisted on a hands-off policy towards the tragedies swimming your way? Think what this would mean.

First, the world would be worse, much worse, absolutely intolerable – for everyone – every second. Try to conceive of lucifer unrestrained. Left to his own, the devil would make Jobs of us all.

The Third Reich would have lasted forever. Your head would be mounted on satan’s wall above his fireplace. Human sacrifice would entertain basketball crowds at halftime. ‘Child Molesting Techniques’ would be taught at community colleges.

The only reason things aren’t worse is that God curbs evil. ‘satan had *asked* to sift you like wheat,’ Jesus told Peter – we can be certain the old snake didn’t check in with God out of politeness. He *had* to get permission, which means that he operates under constraints.

Evil can only raise its head where God deliberately backs away – always for reasons that are specific, wise, and good, but often hidden during this present life. If God didn’t control evil, the result would be evil uncontrolled. God permits what He hates to achieve what He loves.”5
People of God, I don’t know about you, but there’s nothing more comforting to me than knowing that no matter what I go through in life, it has occurred because and only because God has filtered it for my highest good. Therefore, even though I may not see it or understand it at that time it must serve a good and loving purpose. Why? Because it came directly from the hand of a good and loving God. Therefore, yeah, I’d say knowing something as basic that God is Wise really does make a difference in people’s lives, how about you?

And people this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people really can have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe.” But people, I’m telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we’ve got to stop acting like practical atheists. We’ve got to start demonstrating by our lips as well as our lives that God is Wise!
“A man passed away and went to heaven and upon arriving at the Pearly Gates, St. Peter said, ‘Come on in. I’ll show you around. You’ll like it here.’

So the man walked through the gates, and the first thing noticed was clocks. Clocks everywhere! There were grandfather clocks, wall clocks, watches and clocks in every corner, each ticking away at different rates and each of them having a name engraved on them.

So the man asked St. Peter what the deal was. St. Peter replied, ‘The clocks keep track of things on Earth. There is one clock for each person. Every time a person on earth sins, the hands on the clock made a complete revolution.

And upon closer examination the man began to recognize a few names. So he decided to look for a particular friend of his but after searching he simply could not find it.

So the man asked St. Peter for the location of his friend’s clock. And St. Peter replied, ‘Oh, his clock! Well, we moved his into the office and are using it for a fan.’!

Yes, when we get to heaven, we’re going to see a whole different side of things that took place on earth, aren’t we? But I think one of the biggest things
our eyes are going to be opened to is not merely the amount of sins we committed. Nope. It’s this. The amount of unnecessary pain we caused ourselves by not studying the Bible. And now because people are refusing to study the Bible, this is producing a generation of Churches that are full of Christians acting like practical atheists.

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our lips and by our lives, we act like He’s not there. And this not only keeps us from growing in our own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christians living like practical atheists by not knowing Who God Is, we’re going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, “Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?”

We’ve already seen that the very first thing we need to know about God is that God Is Real. The second thing we need to know about God is that God Is Personal. And the last four chapters we saw the third thing we need to know about God is that God Is Wise. And there we saw since God Is Wise this means that everything we go through must serve for a wise purpose, even our difficulties. And in the last chapter we saw three more wise reasons why God allows difficulties and that was To Make Us More Humble, To Make Us More Joyful, and To Make Us More Loving.

But people, that’s not the only wise reasons why God allows difficulties to occur. The tenth reason why God allows difficulties to occur is To Produce A Powerful Testimony. But hey, don’t take my word for it. Let’s listen to God’s.

**Genesis 50:15-21** “When Joseph’s brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him? So they sent word to Joseph, saying, Your father left these instructions before he died: This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you
to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly. Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father.

When their message came to him, Joseph wept. His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. We are your slaves, they said. But Joseph said to them, Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don’t be afraid. I will provide for you and your children. And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.” (NIV)

Now according to our text, after having his brothers try to kill him and over many many years of suffering, Joseph learned one of the most powerful lessons in life. And that is this. God will use even the pain other people cause us, and turn it around for our highest good. And when all was said and done, Joseph testified to this truth and thus his words became a powerful testimony, even to this day, right? I mean, how many of us have benefited from reading this passage of Scripture? It’s very encouraging, isn’t it?

But people, here’s the kicker. Did you know that God allows painful circumstances so that we too can testify to the Lord’s goodness? He really does. But herein lies our problem. We love to hear about other people’s testimonies but we don’t want to become one ourselves, do we? No! And so we miss out on being a powerful source of encouragement to others.

So out of mercy do you know what God does? Hey, that’s right! He orchestrates a few difficulties and voila! We learn that we can either pout because of our pain and throw a big pity party or we can be patient and wait for God to produce a powerful testimony. People, whether you like it or not or whether you believe it or not, going through rough times are some of the best things that could ever happen to us. Why? Because that’s where a powerful testimony comes in!
And since we have a hard time believing this, I’m going to share a few testimonies from this life. For instance, when I first got saved, after I paid all the bills, I only had $80 dollars a month to live on. That included gas, clothing, entertainment, emergencies, and food. Consequently, I didn’t have money for food. But for three months in a row, I never once had to go to the store and I never went hungry. It was the strangest thing. I never asked for food but I had people out of the blue giving me food, inviting me over for supper or taking me out to eat. It was totally cool. In fact, I wish they would have kept doing it. And until I could get on my feet, God still provided for me against all odds. And I don’t know about you, but I’d say that is a powerful testimony for those who are concerned about their provisions, how about you?

Oh, but that’s not the only testimony. One time I had a car whose driver’s side window would never work right. If you rolled it down, it wasn’t going back up. You had to disassemble the whole door to get it back up. It was a pain in the neck so I always left it up, even in the summer. Then one night at Bible College, the car got stolen. For almost three weeks I heard nothing from the police and people were saying it was gone, totally stripped, write it off. But twenty days later I was told the news, the car was found. And apparently, the person who stole the car had rolled down the window and since it wouldn’t go back up, they just ditched it at an apartment complex. And when all was said and done, there was not a scratch on the car, I ended up with a better stereo, and I gained about two hundred dollars. Now, I don’t know about you but I’d say that’s a powerful testimony for those who have experienced a sudden calamity, how about you?

Oh, but that’s not all. One time, overnight, my wife Brandie and I found ourselves in a financial pitfall of $4,000 dollars. And for some people, that may
not sound like a big deal, but to us at that time, you might as well said four million dollars. But lo and behold, out of the blue, God provided not only $4,000 dollars but $5,000 dollars. Not a loan either. But a gift. And the person specifically requested to never be paid back. And they weren’t even a Christian! Now I don’t know about you but I’d say that’s a powerful witness to those who are concerned about their finances, how about you?

Oh, but the testimonies continue! One time Brandie and I were at a 50th year celebration for a company I worked for. And when it was all over, we agreed to meet that next morning with my other fellow employees in the lobby. But when we got there, we waited and waited until it dawned on us after wasting precious time that they ditched us. So now we’re all alone in Chicago not knowing where we are and trying to make a mad dash to the airport because the plane was leaving very shortly. Well, we finally made it to the airport by the skin of our teeth and when we get there we discover that they had Brandie and I sitting apart in different rows. But since it was no longer a great desire to sit with my fellow employees, we told the people to put us anywhere on the plane, just make sure we’re sitting together.

So we sat way in the back and it just so happened that across the isle from me was a guy reading Hebrew. I thought either this guy’s Jewish or a Christian. As it turned out, he was Dr. Desmond Ford from Auburn, California and we proceeded to talk about the Lord for the next couple of hours. And during our conversation, he repeatedly challenged me to go back to school and finish my graduate studies.

Well, that rolled around in my head for a while and about three months later I resigned from the Pastorate I was in, in Sacramento and took a sabbatical for a little over a year to complete my graduate studies. And it just so happened
that right after completing my graduate studies the opportunity came to take on another Pastorate in Northern California in which I did and then **totally unplanned** by us, led to the development of an Internet media teaching ministry. Well, as it turned out, this all led to the formation of a **global** teaching ministry called Get A Life! Ministries which now reaches 100’s of countries all over the world 24/7 in which God is using to bless and or save people all over the world!

But then out of the blue, God put it on our hearts to go back into a local Pastorate and then **it just so happens** that one day I get an email from this lady called **Mary Bugay** saying her Church wanted to talk to me. And when all was said and done I ended up being called to Pastor that Church, maybe you’ve heard of it, it’s called Niagara Frontier Bible Church, but the strange thing is it just so happens to located right next to the **one guy** who used to witness to me back on the West Coast **now lives** and the first sermon I preached there, was the first time I got to see him **since before** I even got saved. And now other people are getting saved and the Church is growing strong! Why? All because we we’re ditched at an airport. Now, I don’t know about you, but I’d say that’s a powerful witness for those wondering why God is **leading them in the direction He is**, how about you?

So is God being a big ol’ meany? No! He’s showing us a powerful truth in life. **That every pearl begins as a pain in the oyster’s stomach**! And therefore, even if you can’t see it now, be rest assured of this fact. As a child of God, the pain you may be experiencing today, **really is** going to turn out to be a priceless treasure in the form of a powerful testimony. **You can bank on it**! Therefore, whether we like it or not or whether we want to admit it or not, our difficult circumstances are serving as an opportunity to create a powerful testimony that becomes a **powerful source of encouragement** to those around
us. And isn’t that what we all pray for? Of course it is! And it’s all because **God Is Wise.**

Oh, but that’s not all. The **eleventh reason** why God allows difficulties to occur is **To Produce a Powerful Character.**

**Romans 5:1-4** “By faith we have been made acceptable to God. And now, because of our Lord Jesus Christ, we live at peace with God. Christ has also introduced us to God’s undeserved kindness on which we take our stand. So we are happy, as we look forward to sharing in the glory of God. But that’s not all! We gladly suffer, because we know that suffering helps us to endure. And endurance builds character, which gives us a hope.” (CEV)

Now according to our text here, one of the biggest things that should be a source of joy to us in life is what? **Suffering**, right? And no, Paul was not on drugs here when he wrote this, folks. No! He knew that our difficulties help us to learn endurance and endurance is what is needed to **build our character.** But wait a second, that’s not what society says is it? And people this is precisely the problem. We live in a world today that sees **no value** in our difficulties. In fact, we’re told to avoid pain at all costs and instead **pamper yourself.** And now the average person’s goal in life today is to tip toe through life with as much cushion as possible just so they can arrive at death safely! But people, what did we read? **We need difficulties.** Why? Because they shape us into a people of character. And a person full of character has the necessary strength to make it through a world **full of suffering.**

People of God, it’s a lie to say you can tip toe through life with no pain at all. Hello! We live in a fallen sinful world. Therefore, sooner or later, you’re going to experience some pain. And when people buy into this lie to do nothing but pamper yourself, it only sets them up for a life of needless heartaches!

So out of mercy do you know what God does? Hey, that’s right! He orchestrates a few difficulties and voila! We learn that pouting will get us
nowhere fast and hopefully, **over time**, we begin to appreciate the **value of our difficulties**. And since we have a hard time believing this, I want to share some proof.

For instance, both of my grandmothers are women of character. Why? Because they had a pampered life. Are you kidding! No way! They had a **painful life**. For instance, one grandmother lived ten miles from town and had to give birth **by herself** to one of her kids. And afterwards, she cleaned up the baby, and proceeded to get the food ready for the men when they came in from the fields. Another time, during the depression, her family lost it all and had to live in a cook shack. You know, the old chuck wagon that they used to haul food out to the men in the fields during harvest time? **That was their house.** And so I asked her how long they lived in it and she said, “Oh, until the tornado blew it away!” In fact, twice in her life, her house burnt down and they were left with nothing but the shirts on their backs. **Twice**!

And then my other grandma’s **daily routine** during some rough times back in the Midwest, was to milk the cow with one hand and with the other she’d pick up rocks and bean rabbits in the head for food that night!

Oh, but that’s not all! I also greatly admire my Dad. Why? Because he was born with a silver spoon in his mouth? NO! **He was born with a shovel in his hand!** My dad at the **age of seven** went to work. And not just any old work, mind you. It was heavy construction, pouring concrete. My grandfather had my dad work after school, on every weekend, and every summer. Holidays were just another workday. Later, when he married my mom, they moved to Kansas to farm. They had no running water and had to pump it manually out of a well to do all the cooking and washing. When I grew up I asked my Dad why they moved back to California when I was still a baby. And he said it was because they got
tired of “starving to death.” And he wasn’t joking! Apparently they had two bad winters in a row and were totally wiped out financially. They had no money and nobody would give them credit. So the last winter in Kansas, my Dad fed our family with rabbits and milo. And then to make things worse, halfway into the winter he ran out of bullets so he had to use box traps to keep the rabbit meat coming.

Now I don’t know about you but I don’t think the average person today could survive a week under those conditions. Why? Because we’re being pampered to death and it’s killing our character! People the reason why I admire so many people in my family is because they have a strong character. And the reason why they have a strong character today is because they had ton of troubles yesterday. But people, my family isn’t the only one who benefited from a life of difficulties. So was this man.

“When he was seven years old, his family was forced out of their home on a legal technicality, and he had to work to help support them. At age nine, his mother died. At twenty-two, he lost his job as a store clerk. He wanted to go to law school, but his education wasn’t good enough.

At twenty-three, he went into debt to become a partner in a small store. At twenty-six his business partner died, leaving him a huge debt that took years to repay. At twenty-eight, after courting a girl for four years, he asked her to marry him. She said no. At thirty-seven, on his third try, he was elected to Congress, but two years later, he failed to be reelected.

At forty-one, his four-year-old son died. At forty-five, he ran for the Senate and lost. At forty-seven, he failed as the vice-presidential candidate. At forty-nine, he ran for the Senate again and lost.

At fifty-one, he was elected President of the United States. His name was Abraham Lincoln, a man many consider the greatest leader the country ever had. Some people get all the breaks.”
So is God being a big ol’ meany? No! He’s teaching us a powerful lesson. He’s trying to get us to see that a pampered life leads to a lazy life. And a lazy life leads to weak life. Why? **Because you never had to build character.** Where have the great leaders-of-old like Abraham Lincoln gone? Where are the Patrick Henrys who cry out “Give me liberty or give me death!” Instead we have a pampered society who cries out, “**Give me hot french fries or I’ll tell the manager!**” People, what America really needs is more shortages. Americans have always been great at handling adversity. Prosperity is what’s been doing us in. **We’re turning into people with no character.**

Therefore, whether we like it or not or whether we want to admit it or not, our difficult circumstances are serving as an opportunity to ensure that we learn to **endure** and start producing a **powerful character.** And people, when we develop a powerful **character,** whether we realize it or not, we gain the power needed to soar above any and all problems in life, **no matter what comes our way.** And isn’t that what we all pray for? Of course it is. And it’s all because **God Is Wise.**

But you might be asking, “Come on. Does knowing something as basic that **God is Wise** really make a difference in lives of people worldwide?” Well, you tell me if knowing every time that God takes away something **it’s always because** there’s a **wise reason** behind it, helps things out. Like this story reveals.

“A medieval man of God went on a journey one day and he took along with him all that he owned, a scroll, a candle, and a rooster. The scroll he read and loved, the candle provided him light, and the rooster crowed to wake him up in the morning.

One evening, he arrived in a small town. He asked for hospitality from home after home but was rudely refused both food and lodging. But the believing man didn’t let this get him down for he was fond of saying, ‘God in his mercy and wisdom does all things well.’
Later that day, the wind began to pick up and the man sought protection from the harsh wind by hiding in a clump of high bushes. And there he tied up his rooster nearby and with praise in his heart, he began to read his scroll.

But a sudden gust of wind blew out his light and the man found himself without the means to relight his candle. But the trusting man simply replied, ‘God in his mercy and wisdom does all things well.’

So the man prepared to go to sleep but suddenly a fox charged out of the darkness and snapped away the man’s rooster. But the man said, ‘God in his mercy and wisdom does all things well.’

So the man laid down and went to sleep. In the morning, when he awoke, he gathered his scroll to his heart and walked back to the unfriendly village. To his horror he saw that robbers had come in the night. The village had been plundered and burned and the villagers had all been murdered.

And suddenly it dawned on the man of God. If he would have been granted hospitality, he too would have died. And if his light had shone or his rooster had crowed, the robbers would have been led right to him.

So the godly man declared, ‘God in his mercy and wisdom does all things well.’ And in the light of day, he read his scroll and praised God.”

People of God, if the Lord is leading you down a path you currently don’t understand, or if He has taken away some things in your life that has left you bewildered, then be rest assured that when all is said and done, you’ll discover that it was one of the best things he could have ever done to you. Why? Because “God in his mercy and wisdom does all things well.” Therefore, yeah, I’d say knowing something as basic that God is Wise really does make a difference in people’s lives, how about you?

And people this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people really can have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe.” But people, I’m telling
you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we’ve got to stop acting like practical atheists. We’ve got to start demonstrating by our lips as well as our lives that God is Wise!
“I was sitting at a stop light this morning. The lady in front of me was going through papers on the seat of her car, and when the light changed to green she did not obey its command – a green light is a commandment – NOT a suggestion.

When the light turned to red, and she still hadn’t moved, I began, with my windows up, screaming strange words and beating on my steering wheel. My expressions of distress were interrupted by a policeman, gun drawn, tapping on my window.

Even though I protested by saying, ‘You can’t arrest me for hollering in my car,’ he ordered me into the back seat of his. So after about two hours in a holding cell, the arresting officer advised me that I was free to go.

So I said, ‘I knew you couldn’t arrest me for yelling in my own car. You haven’t heard the last of this.’

And the officer replied, ‘I didn’t arrest you for shouting in your car. You see, I was directly behind you at the light. I saw you screaming and beating your steering wheel, and I said to myself, ‘What a loser.’ But there is nothing I can do to him for throwing a fit in his own car.”
But then I noticed the ‘Cross’ hanging from you rear view mirror, and the bright yellow ‘Choose Life’ license tag, and the ‘Jesus is Coming Soon’ bumper sticker, and the Fish symbol, and I thought for sure you must have stolen the car.”

Now that guy wasn’t being a very good witness for Jesus was he? No! Oh, he had all the right external signs but his heart was internally wrong, wasn’t it? And sooner or later it caught up with him, didn’t it? But unfortunately, this kind behavior from so-called Christians is on the rise. And do you know why? It’s because so-called Bible-believing Christians are refusing to study the Bible. And now because people are refusing to study the Bible, this is producing a generation of Churches that are full of Christians acting like practical atheists.

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our lips and by our lives, we act like He’s not there. And this not only keeps us from growing in our own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christians living like practical atheists by not knowing Who God Is, we’re going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, “Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?”

We’ve already seen that the very first thing we need to know about God is that God Is Real. The second thing we need to know about God is that God Is Personal. And the last five chapters we saw the third thing we need to know about God is that God Is Wise. And there we saw since God Is Wise this means that everything we go through must serve for a wise purpose, even our difficulties. And in the last chapter we saw two more wise reasons why God allows difficulties and that was To Produce a Powerful Testimony, and To Produce a Powerful Character.

But people, that’s not the only wise reasons why God allows difficulties to occur. The twelfth reason why God allows difficulties to occur is To Get You
Steered Into A New Direction. But hey, don’t take my word for it. Let’s listen to God’s.

Acts 16:6-10 “Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas.

During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, Come over to Macedonia and help us. After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.” (NIV)

Now according to our text, Paul and his companions had intentions of preaching the gospel to a certain area, but what happened? The Spirit of the Lord kept them from doing so. Why? Isn’t that a good thing to do? Well, as Paul found out later, even though it may have been a good idea at the time, it wasn’t God’s time. So God steered Paul into the direction He wanted Paul to go.

And people, here’s the kicker. Did you know that God also allows resistance to come our way so that we too, like Paul, get steered into the right direction? He really does. But herein lies our problem. We all say that we want to know and follow God’s will, right? But when His plans don’t line up to our plans, we start to rebel. But once we do that, we not only go down roads that are harmful for us, but we miss out on the fruitful ministry the Lord has designed for us in the new direction.

So out of mercy do you know what God does? Hey, that’s right! He orchestrates a few difficulties and voila! We learn real fast that we can either follow our own plan and experience nothing but pain, or we can submit to God’s plan and trust that He indeed knows what’s best for us. And people, isn’t this the same choice that Paul had to make? And what was his response? Did Paul freak
out? Did he cry and moan? Did he blame the devil or other people for the resistance he was experiencing? No! He knew that God in His wisdom was in full control and therefore God had a wise reason for changing the direction, like Wallace Johnson learned.

“Wallace Johnson, builder of numerous Holiday Inn motels and convalescent hospitals said, ‘When I was forty years old, I worked in a sawmill. One morning the boss told me, ‘You’re fired!’

I was depressed and discouraged and felt like the world caved in on me. It was during the depression and my wife and I greatly needed the small wages I had been earning.

So I went home and told my wife what happened and she said, ‘What are you going to do now?’ So I replied, ‘I’m going to mortgage our little home and go into the building business.’ My first venture was the construction of two small buildings. Within five years I was a multi-millionaire!’

Today, if I could locate the man who fired me, I would sincerely thank him for what he did. At the time it happened, I didn’t understand why I was fired. Later though, I saw that it was God’s unerring and wondrous plan to get me into the way of His choosing!”

So is God being a big ol’ meany? No! He’s trying to get us to see that trouble is only opportunity in work clothes! And sometimes God will allow difficulties to get us steered into a new and better direction to receive a new and better opportunity! And when we resist God’s leading, we’re not only missing out on some grand opportunities, but we’re headed down a destructive road. Why? Because when we resist God’s plan for our plan then are we not in essence saying that we know what’s best for us, not God! Uh huh. And that’s one place you don’t want to go. Why? Because it leads to a life of heartaches.

For instance, what if Wallace Johnson had insisted on getting his job back at the saw mill? Granted, he didn’t understand it at the time, but when all
was said and done, he was very thankful that that man had fired him, even to the point of wanting to shake his hand. And folks, even though you may not see it now, the difficulty you may be experiencing today, may very well turn out to be the very best thing that could’ve happened to you. Why? Because God Is Wise!

Therefore, whether we like it or not or whether we want to admit it or not, our difficult circumstances are serving as an opportunity to get us steered into a new direction to produce even more fruit for the glory of God. And isn’t that what we all pray for? Of course it is! And it’s all because God Is Wise.

Oh, but that’s not all. The thirteenth reason why God allows difficulties to occur is To Get You to Build Your Faith.

1 Samuel 17:8,32-33,37 “Goliath stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, Choose a man and have him come down to me. David said to Saul, Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him. Saul replied, You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a boy, and he has been a fighting man from his youth. The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.” (NIV)

Now according to our text here, against all odds, David was chomping at the bit to take down Goliath. And keep in mind here that at this point David was probably about twelve to fourteen years old. So how could such a young boy have such a great faith to take on such a huge warrior? Well, what did he say? This giant was no different than the lions and the bears he already fought for many years. Therefore, David had built a strong faith over the years by having to face many difficulties over the years.

But here’s the kicker. Did you know that God also allows difficulties to come our way so that we too like David can have a strong faith? He really does. But herein lies our problem. We all want a strong faith, right? It’s just that we
don’t want to **pay the price to get one**, do we? No! And so we never build the faith we need to face the Goliath’s that come our way.

So out of mercy do you know what God does? Hey, that’s right! He orchestrates a few difficulties and voila! We learn that we can either run and hide and blame others for all our problems or we can hit ‘em head on and become stronger people **because of our problems**, like these boys learned.

“Researchers studied two young boys who were raised in the home of an alcoholic father. As young men, they each went their own way. Years later, one had turned out to be like his father, a hopeless alcoholic. But the other had turned out to be an upright citizen who never touched a drop of liquor.

So the first one was asked why he became and alcoholic and the second one was asked why he became a teetotaller. And oddly enough, they both gave the same identical answer in these words, ‘What do you expect when you had a father like mine?’”

So is God being a big ol’ meany? No! He’s teaching us a powerful lesson. That a David-like faith only comes by **battling your Goliaths**, not blaming others for your Goliaths! People of God, every one of us have troubles. And therefore, just like those two boys, we all have a choice to make. We can either groan about our problems or grow. We can either whine or we can shine. Or we can become bitter or we can become better. Shining and becoming better **is precisely what God intends for us** in all our trials. What makes the difference is hope! And hope only comes **when your faith is strong**. And your faith only gets strong by facing years of difficulties, like David did.

Therefore, whether we like it or not or whether we want to admit it or not, our difficult circumstances are serving as an opportunity to ensure that **our faith is built up high** to keep the Goliaths from dragging us down! And isn’t that what we all pray for? Of course it is. And it’s all because **God Is Wise**.
Oh, but that’s not all. The **fourteenth reason** why God allows difficulties to occur is **To Get You to Appreciate Fellowship**.

**Hebrews 10:23,25** “We must hold tightly to the hope that we say is ours. After all, we can trust the one who made the agreement with us. Some people have gotten out of the habit of meeting for worship, but we must not do that. We should keep on encouraging each other, especially since you know that the day of the Lord’s coming is getting closer.” (CEV)

Now according to our text here, one of the biggest dangers we face as Christians is this: the **temptation to stop meeting together on a regular basis**. Why? Well, first of all, it has nothing to do with man-made legalism or dry stale religious ceremony. But it does have everything to do with our **spiritual well-being**. You see, if we don’t meet together on a **regular basis**, we’re going to miss out on a **regular source** of encouragement. And people, I don’t know if you’ve realized this yet, but **we need to be encouraged**. Why? Because we live in a wicked and discouraging world. And it’s only going to get more and more wicked **especially** as we see the Day of the Lord getting closer. Therefore, we need each other!

But herein lies our problem. We’re tempted to not encourage ourselves in the things of the Lord. NO! But the **things of this world**. And once we spend less time with the Lord and more time with the world, **our zeal and passion for the Lord, will slowly start to die out**. It happens every time.

So out of mercy do you know what God does? Hey, that’s right! He orchestrates a few difficulties and voila! We learn real fast to appreciate the love and encouraging support of fellow Christians. Why? **Because it sure ain’t coming from the world**. And then hopefully our eyes are opened to the danger of living a life of isolation, like this guy learned.

“A member of a certain Church, who previously had been attending services regularly, stopped going. After a few weeks, the Pastor decided to visit him. It
was a chilly evening and the Pastor found the man at home alone, sitting before a blazing fire. Guessing the reason for his Pastor’s visit, the man welcomed him, led him to a big chair near the fireplace, and waited.

The Pastor made himself comfortable but said nothing. In grave silence, he contemplated the play of the flames around the burning logs. After some minutes, the Pastor took the fire tongs, carefully picked up a brightly burning ember and placed it on one side of the hearth all alone. Then he sat back in his chair, still silent.

The host watched all this in quiet fascination. As the one lone ember’s flame diminished, there was a momentary glow and then its fire was no more. Soon it was cold and ‘dead as a doornail.’ Not a word had been spoken since the initial greeting. But just before the Pastor was ready to leave, he picked up the cold, dead ember and placed it back in the middle of the fire.

Immediately it began to glow once more with light and warmth of the burning coals around it. As the Pastor reached the door to leave, his host said, ‘Thank you so much for your visit and especially for the fiery sermon. I’ll be back at the Church service next Sunday.’

So is God being a big ol’ meany? Is He trying to torture us by having to go to Church services? No! He’s trying to protect us from a spiritual danger. He knows if we isolate ourselves or get distracted by the things of this world, our zeal for Him and the lost will start to die out! And if He has to allow a few difficulties to come our way to get us to appreciate the need for fellowship, which is for our own benefit, then so be it!

People, this is no time to be playing games with God. If we stop meeting together as some are in the habit of doing then not only is our spiritual growth in jeopardy but so are the spiritual destinies of those around us. People of God, our society is going to hell in a Ferrari and if we really want to make a difference while we can then we better get serious in our walk with God. Especially since we see the Day of the Lord approaching! And if we really love the Lord and want
our loved ones to be saved then we’re not going to spend all of our time in the things of this world. No! We’re going to meet together and work together to get the gospel out to this world! Amen?

Therefore, whether we like it or not or whether we want to admit it or not, our difficult circumstances are serving as an opportunity to help us to encourage one another in our own walk with God, and to work together sharing the gospel so others might be saved. And isn’t that what we all pray for? Of course it is. And it’s all because God Is Wise.

But you might be asking, “Come on. Does knowing something as basic that God is Wise really make a difference in lives of people worldwide?” Well, you tell me if knowing that God is so Wise that He never makes a mistake, doesn’t minister to your heart, like this lady discovered.

“A certain missionary found herself seriously ill where the Lord had stationed her. And to add to her sorrow, her check had not arrived and she was forced day after day to do without the good food she needed and instead had to live on a miserable diet of oatmeal and canned milk.

But in spite of everything, the lady missionary got better, and after 30 days of a steady oatmeal diet, she finally got her check and was able to get something different on the table. But during her illness, she thought the Lord was not doing her right.

So she finally got to go home on furlough and she of course told of her great trial to an eager audience. However, at the close of the meeting, a doctor inquired as to the nature of her ailment.

And upon hearing what the digestive malfunction was, he said this, “Well, if you’re check had arrived, you would not be here talking to me today, you’d be dead. You see, the diet we prescribe for that particular fatal illness is a 30-day oatmeal diet.”

People of God, if it seems like God’s been giving you nothing but a yucky bowl of oatmeal in life lately, day after day after day, then don’t think
God’s not doing you right. Give it some time and you’re going to see that that bowl full of difficulties was one of the best things He could’ve ever given to you. Why? Because **God is so Wise** He never ever makes a mistake, and that includes our difficulties. Therefore, yeah, I’d say knowing something as basic that **God is Wise** really does make a difference in people’s lives, how about you?

And people this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people **really can** have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe.” But people, I’m telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we’ve got to stop acting like practical atheists. We’ve got to start demonstrating by our **lips** as well as our **lives** that **God is Wise**!
“A Police officer pulls over a speeding car and the officer says, ‘I clocked you at 80 mph. sir.’

And the driver says, ‘Gee, officer, I had it on cruise control at 60, perhaps your radar needs calibrating.’

And not looking up from her knitting the man’s wife says sweetly, ‘Now don’t be silly dear, you know that this car doesn’t have cruise control.’

So as the officer writes out the ticket, the driver looks over at his wife and growls, ‘Can’t you keep your mouth shut for once?’

But the wife just smiles and says, ‘You should be thankful your radar detector went off when it did.’

So now the officer writes out a second ticket for the illegal radar detector and the man glares at his wife and says through clenched teeth, ‘Come on, woman, can’t you keep your mouth shut!’

So the officer frowns and says, ‘And I notice that you’re not wearing your seatbelt, sir. That’s an automatic $75 fine.’
But the driver says, ‘Yeah, well you see officer, I had it on, but took it off when you pulled me over so I could get my license out of my back pocket.’

And the wife says, ‘Now dear you know very well you didn’t have your seat belt on. You never wear your seat belt when you’re driving.’

So as the police officer is writing out the third ticket the driver turns to his wife and barks, ‘WHY DON’T YOU JUST BE QUIET?’

And the officer looks over at the woman and asks, ‘ Ma’am, does your husband always talk to you this way?’

And the wife sweetly replies, ‘Oh heavens no, officer, only when he’s been drinking.’

Now that man’s lying finally caught up with him, didn’t it? His wife made sure of that. And his behavior was straining their marriage, wasn’t it? But people, did you know that lying isn’t the only behavior harmful to relationships? So is a lack of Bible study. And it not only affects your marital relationship, but it affects you relationship with God. How? Well, because people are refusing to study the Bible, it’s produced a generation of Churches that are full of Christians acting like practical atheists.

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our lips and by our lives, we act like He’s not there. And this not only keeps us from growing in our own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christians living like practical atheists by not knowing Who God Is, we’re going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, “Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?”

We’ve already seen that the very first thing we need to know about God is that God Is Real. The second thing we need to know about God is that God Is Personal. And the last six chapters we saw the third thing we need to know
about God is that **God Is Wise**. And there we saw since **God Is Wise** this means that everything we go through must serve for a wise purpose, even our difficulties. And in the last chapter we saw three more wise reasons why God allows difficulties and that was **To Get Us Steered Into A New Direction**, **To Get Us To Build Our Faith**, and **To Get Us To Appreciate Fellowship**.

But people, that’s not the only wise reasons why God allows difficulties to occur. The **fifteenth reason** why God allows difficulties to occur is **To Teach You the Power of Praise**. But hey, don’t take my word for it. Let’s listen to God’s. 

**Hebrews 13:15-16** “Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that confess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.” (NIV)

Now according to our text, the writer of Hebrews instructs on some practical ways in which we can please God. **One**, we can do good things, **two**, we can share things, and **three** we can **continually** offer up to God a sacrifice of praise. But notice the **two things** about this kind of praise that pleases God. One is it’s **continual** and two it’s a **sacrifice**.

But herein lies our problem. You see, we love to praise God when things are looking up but we don’t want to praise Him when things are looking down, do we? No! I mean, to praise God when things are looking creepy, **why that would be a sacrifice**. Uh huh. And that’s precisely the point. You see, God makes it very simple for us. There are only two times we should praise the Lord. When you’re alone, and when you’re with somebody. But since we don’t want to do this, we miss out on the **power of praise**.

So out of mercy do you know what God does? Hey, that’s right! He orchestrates a few difficulties and voila! We learn that we can either **pout because of our pain** or offer up a sacrifice of praise **in spite of our pain**. And
people, once you learn to praise God at all times, not just in the good times, you just discovered the power to overcome your pain in the bad times!

Psalm 42:5 “Why are you so downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.” (NIV)

People, the power to make it through disturbing circumstances and even a deep dark depression comes not by getting rid of your problems. No! Sometimes you can’t. It comes when you praise God in spite of your problems! Let me show you what I mean.

For instance, one time I was seriously down in the dumps. I mean I had the spirit of Hee Haw all over me. You know, gloom, despair, and agony on thee. How many of you’ve been there? So here I was, severely depressed for two days. It was like a big, heavy, dark cloud moved in over the top of me. You may say, “Whip dee doo dah, so what.” But for my personality, it is not normal. I am usually pretty goofy and chocked full of corny humor on a consistent basis. It’s only if I’m sick that I “wind down.” And for some reason, my wife enjoys those times. Go figure! Therefore, I knew something was up when the depression persisted.

So on the second day I was taking a shower and I think I was even getting depressed about being depressed all that time. Then the thought came to me, “Can’t you still praise the Lord?” Now even the very thought of praising God at that moment really was a sacrifice because I sure didn’t like what I was experiencing and I didn’t feel like praising God. But I had nothing to lose. So, I started singing to the Lord out of sheer determination, no enthusiasm. And it was all I could do to just spit out the first verse of a song. In fact, the whole first song was very mechanical. But as I moved into the second song, something began to change. My spirit began to lift. My attitude began to change. And by the third
song, I was praising God at the top of my lungs! And I’m sure the people below our apartment loved it too!

But here’s the point. It was the **sacrifice of praise** that **returned my focus on the Lord**. And once I became focused on Father instead of my feelings, I was able to transcend the situation. The dark cloud was gone! Why? **Because I was experiencing the power of praise.** People, it’s impossible to avoid problems or pain in this life. And fortunately God doesn’t leave us hanging high and dry. He shows us the way to make it **through our problems** is by praising Him, in spite of our problems! And people, this power of praise not only works with a momentary depression, but even with a mournful death, like Horatio Spafford learned.

“Horatio Spafford and his family were members of the Fullerton Avenue Presbyterian Church. And Spafford and his wife had learned what it meant to completely trust God in every situation.

First, The Spaffords’ only son was killed by scarlet fever at the age of four. And a year later, Horatio had invested heavily in real estate on the shores of Lake Michigan but every one of these holdings was wiped out by the great Chicago Fire.

So aware of the toll that these disasters had taken on his family, Horatio decided to take his wife and four daughters on a holiday to England and then travel throughout Europe.

Yet just before they set sail, a last-minute business issue forced Horatio to delay. So not wanting to ruin the family holiday, he told his family to go on ahead as planned. He’d catch up to them on the other side of the Atlantic.

However, their ship, never made it. It collided with an English sailing ship, and sank within twenty minutes. And even though Horatio’s wife, Anna, was able to cling to a piece of floating wreckage, all four of their daughters were killed. And the next thing you know, Horatio received the horrible telegram from his wife, only two words long, ‘saved alone.’
So Spafford immediately boarded the next available ship to be near his grieving wife. And during the voyage, the captain of the ship had called him and said, ‘I believe we are now passing the place where the ship was wrecked.’ So Horatio then returned to his cabin and penned the lyrics of his great hymn of praise to God in the midst of his pain. Maybe you recognize it

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way, When sorrows like sea-billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, It is well, it is well with my soul.

Though Satan should buffet, tho’ trials should come, Let this blest assurance control, That Christ has regarded my helpless estate, And hath shed His own blood for my soul. It is well, it is well with my soul.”

So is God being a big ol’ meany? No! He’s trying to teach us a powerful lesson. That true praise doesn’t depend on our feelings, but in spite of our feeling! True praise is not centered on ourselves, but on our Savior. And Horatio’s hymn brings us back to the bottom line, that at the end of the day, come hell or high-water, it is our relationship with God that holds us fast in all our trials, nothing else!

Therefore, whether we like it or not or whether we want to admit it or not, our difficult circumstances are serving as an opportunity to show us the uplifting power of praise so the problems of life won’t drag us down! And isn’t that what we all pray for? Of course it is! And it’s all because God Is Wise.

Oh, but that’s not all. The sixteenth reason why God allows difficulties to occur is To Take You To Heaven.

Romans 2:4-5 “Don’t you realize how kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Or don’t you care? Can’t you see how kind he has been in giving you time to turn from your sin? But no, you won’t listen. So you are storing up terrible punishment for yourself because of your stubbornness in refusing to turn from your sin.” (NLT)

Now according to our text here, God obviously wants all of us to be saved and He demonstrates this by showering us with His kindness, tolerance,
and patience, right? But folks, if we’re honest with ourselves, we usually don’t respond to God’s call to heaven by His acts of kindness, do we? No! Are you kidding! Why, when things are going great, we don’t need God! But folks, the reality is that if we refuse to turn from our sin and get saved, we’re not on the highway to heaven. No! **We’re on the highway to hell.** And I’d say that’s kind of a big problem, how about you?

So out of mercy do you know what God does? Hey, that’s right! He orchestrates a few difficulties and voila! We learn that we can rebel against God because of our difficulties and stubbornly go to hell, or we can repent and receive His grace and go to heaven. Which one would you rather have? And so people, hello, if it takes a few difficulties to open our eyes to our spiritual need, then so be it! It’s precisely because God loves us that He’ll do whatever it takes to take us to heaven. And believe it or not, this loving gesture of God of allowing difficulties to get us saved is a much more common scenario than you might think.

For instance, this is what it took for the mighty Apostle Paul. If you recall, Paul was stubbornly on the road to Damascus getting ready to imprison and maybe even kill some more Christians. So what did God do? He knocked Paul off his high horse and struck him with blindness. Why? Was He being a big ol’ meany and was trying to torture Paul? No! When all was said and done, Paul got saved. And now he was no longer on the highway to hell, he was on the highway to heaven.

Oh, but this not only worked for the mighty Apostle Paul to get saved, it worked for my Dad. Over the years my Dad stubbornly refused to see His need of Christ. So it took the death of my Dad’s sister before his eyes were opened. And in his moment of grief and despair, the Pastor who was visiting prayed that
God would touch my dad with His love. And my Dad said that **right when the Pastor finished praying** that it was like a lightning bolt went from the top of his head all the way through his body and he felt a wonderful sense of God’s peace and he knew from that point on that God was real. So was God trying to torture my Dad by allowing the death of his sister? No! When all was said and done, my Dad got saved. And now he’s not on the highway to hell, he’s on the highway to heaven.

Oh, but this not only worked for my Dad, it worked for **my Uncle**. He didn’t see a need for God. He was perfectly fine without Him. So over several years it took the death of his 4-year old daughter, his 21-year old son, and his wife before his eyes were opened. So was God trying to torture my uncle by allowing the death of his loved ones? No! When all was said and done, my Uncle got saved. And now he’s not on the highway to hell, he’s on the highway to heaven.

Oh, but this not only worked for my Uncle, it worked for **me**. I didn’t need God. I was my own god. Besides, Christians were a bunch of idiots who needed a book to tell them what to do. Not me! So over the years it took getting strung out on **demonic drugs**, getting involved in **demonic teachings**, and nearly going out of my mind by **demonic attacks** before my eyes were opened. So was God trying to torture me by allowing me to go on the verge of insanity? No! When all was said and done, I got saved. And now I’m not on the highway to hell, I’m on the highway to heaven.

Oh, but this not only worked for me, it worked for **my friend**, Bob Franklin. Bob didn’t need God. He was too busy making a living. So one day it took Bob coming down with a severe case of **pneumonia** in which he was slowly starting to lose his breath to the point that he started to choke to death. And when
Bob could no longer breathe, he couldn’t speak, so in his mind he cried out to God for help and instantly he was able to take a deep breath. Shortly thereafter, with the help of his neighbor, he made it to the hospital. Shortly after that, I received the phone call that Bob was in the hospital and I went up there and in the hospital room and right there in bed Bob gave his heart to Jesus Christ. And now Bob is heading up our video duplication department copying videos as fast as he can, which are going all over the world. Why? Because he’s thankful that God saved him and he wants others to be saved too! So was God trying to torture Bob by allowing him to literally choke to death? No! When all was said and done, Bob got saved. And now he’s not on the highway to hell, he’s on the highway to heaven.

But people, my family and friends aren’t the only ones who spiritually benefited from a life of difficulties. So did this man.

“Adoniram Judson was the son of a minister, in Malden, Massachusetts. And early on in life he showed that he was a brilliant child. When he was 12 years old he was teaching the Adult Sunday School class the Book of Revelation from the original Greek. But his intelligence got the best of him and he decided he was smarter than God and didn’t need Christianity.

And soon he was terrorizing his Christian college classmates at the age of 16 with his anti-Christian debates. And at college, Judson had a roommate by the name of Jacob Eames. When Eames entered college he did so professing to be a Christian but by the time he graduated college he professed being an atheist and he gave the credit to Adoniram Judson.

Well, Judson kept his atheistic beliefs concealed from his parents until his 20th birthday, when he broke their hearts with his announcement that he had no faith and that he intended to go to New York and learn to write for the theater.

But this life of a playwright didn’t prove to be the life of his dreams. So one night he found himself staying in a small village inn that he’d never been in before. And the innkeeper apologized to Judson because he only had one room left and
warned him that his sleep might be interrupted because there was a man critically ill in the next room.

But Judson was tired and said it didn’t matter to him. And throughout the night Judson heard comings and goings and low voices and groans and gasps from the man in the next room. And periodically the man shouting horrible profanities as he cried out for help.

And it bothered Judson to think that the man next to him may not be prepared to die. And this of course made him wonder about himself and he started to have terrible thoughts of his own dying. But he felt foolish because atheists weren’t supposed to have these kind of struggles.

So the next morning as Judson was leaving he asked if the man next door was better. And the innkeepers said, ‘He’s dead.’ So Judson, shocked, asked, ‘Do you know who he was?’ And the innkeeper replied, ‘Oh yes. His name was Eames, Jacob Eames.’

Judson could hardly move as he pondered the horrible death of his atheist friend whom he himself had turned away from Christ. Judson knew that this was not a meaningless event. That hell should open up in that country inn and snatch Jacob Eames, from the next bed and not him, could not be by chance.

So Judson left the inn, hopped on his horse and rode hard down the dusty trail with tears streaming down his face and the words pounding over and over again in his mind, ‘Death, hell, death, hell, death, hell.’

Soon, his heart was broken and convicted, and Judson hopped off his horse, dropped on his knees and there in the dust, he gave his heart to Jesus Christ.”

So is God being a big ol’ meany? No! He’s actually being very merciful to us! You see, in your difficulties, God may not be so much trying to scare you into heaven as **He’s trying to scare the hell out of you**!

Therefore, whether we like it or not or whether we want to admit it or not, our difficult circumstances are serving as an opportunity to open our eyes
and soften our hearts so **God can take us to heaven**! And isn’t that what we all pray for? Of course it is. And it’s all because **God Is Wise**.

Oh, but people, it gets even better. Not only will God use our difficulties to get us saved, but after we’re saved, He’ll keep the difficulties coming so that others might get saved too. Now let’s read the rest of the story.

“After being saved, Adoniram Judson became a missionary to Burma. But he and his first wife soon discovered that there was no glamour in the life of a missionary.

They were barraged with constant struggles, sicknesses, and interruptions. They endured a life-long battle in the 108 degree heat with cholera, malaria, dysentery, and unknown miseries that would take 2 of Judson’s wives, 7 of his children, and colleague after colleague in death. He never saw his father or Mother or brother again and didn’t return for 33 years.

But during this time Judson translated the Bible into the Burmese language. And little did he know just how mightily God was going to use his translation. You see, Judson was coming back on a ship to the states to be treated for an illness, but he died en route and so he never got to see to totality of the fruits of his labor.

You see, it just so happened, unbeknownst to Judson, that there was an old, old Burmese legend that said one day a man was going to come with a book which was going to have the truth in it and it just so happened that Judson spent years and years of suffering to translate that book called the Bible.

And as a result, the Burmese people began to come to Christ in mass. Within 25 years there were 11,878 baptized believers and today there are close to 3,700 congregations of Baptists who trace their origin to this one man’s labors of love. Why?

Because God cared enough to let a man suffer, so that he not only could be saved, but so that 1,000’s of others could be saved as well.”

People of God, it is **precisely because God is Wise AND because He loves us** that He allows many difficulties to come our way. Why? You see, He
not only loves you and wants to take you to heaven, but He wants **to use you** to take others to heaven as well! And if difficulties make this possible, then so be it!

And people this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people **really can** have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe.” But people, I’m telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we’ve got to stop acting like practical atheists. We’ve got to start demonstrating by our **lips** as well as our **lives** that **God is Wise**!
Chapter Eleven

God’s Wisdom Prevents Chance

“It was a sunny morning in the Big Forest and the Bear family is just waking up. So Baby Bear goes downstairs and sits in his small chair at the table. But he looks into his bowl and notices that it’s empty.

So he squeaks, ‘Who’s been eating my porridge?’

Well, next Poppa Bear arrives at the table and sits in his big chair. And he too looks into his big bowl and sees that it’s empty as well!

So he roars, ‘Who’s been eating my porridge?’

Well, at this, the Momma Bear puts her head out from the kitchen and yells, ‘For Pete’s sake, how many times do we have to go through this?

It was Momma Bear who got up first. It was Momma Bear who unloaded the dishwasher from last night and put everything away. It was Momma Bear who set the table. It was Momma Bear who put the cat out, cleaned the litter box and filled the cat’s water & food dish.

And now that you’ve decided to come down stairs and grace me with your presence. Listen good because I’m only going to say this one more time. I haven’t made the porridge yet!’”
Now how many of you would say that Mommy Bear was just a little bit on the edge? And it was starting to wreak havoc in her household, wasn’t it? But people, did you know that Mommy Bears aren’t the only ones behaving like this? Unfortunately, so are many believers. Why? Because they are refusing to study the Bible! And people, if this wasn’t bad enough, because people are refusing to study the Bible, it’s also producing a generation of Churches that are full of Christians acting like practical atheists.

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our lips and by our lives, we act like He’s not there. And this not only keeps us from growing in our own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christians living like practical atheists by not knowing Who God Is, we’re going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, “Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?”

And we’ve already seen that the very first thing we need to know about God is that God Is Real. The second thing we need to know about God is that God Is Personal. And in the last seven chapters we saw the third thing we need to know about God is that God Is Wise. And there we’ve been seeing that since God knows the beginning from the end and is above and beyond time that this makes Him infinitely wise. Therefore, there’s no such thing as an accident, even in our difficulties.

But people, that’s not the only thing knowing that God Is Wise is going to reveal to us. The second thing knowing that God Is Wise is going to reveal to us is that There’s No Such Thing As Chance. But hey, don’t take my word for it, let’s listen to God’s.

1 John 3:16-20 “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has
material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?

Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.” (NIV)

Now according to our text, we see the amazing truth that God doesn’t just know some things or a few things or even most things. Hello! God knows everything! Therefore, the logical conclusion is that there’s no such thing as chance. I mean, how could there be when God knows everything, right? Besides, when you stop to think about it, chance is nothing. Chance is only a word to describe a mathematical probability. For instance, if I flipped a quarter in the air, what are the chances it will land on heads? 50/50 right? But did chance make the quarter do anything? No! It has no creative power! It’s only a word that describes a mathematical probability. And when a person says an event took place by chance, they’re assuming God didn’t know about it.

And people, hello! This not only denies God’s Wisdom but it also creates a whole lot of problems. How? Well, think about it. It’s one thing to have problems in life, but what makes them worse is to think that there’s no rhyme nor reason for those problems, that it’s all by chance. But people, here’s the great news. Since there is no such thing as chance then this means that not only do our difficulties serve a wise purpose but so does our everyday life, right down to the intimate details. And it’s by knowing this that not only helps us make it through our problems but it saves us from creating even more problems on top of our problems!
Therefore, if we’re going to avoid creating unnecessary problems in life then the **first thing** we need to remind ourselves is that **It’s not by chance where you work.**

**Acts 15:18** “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.” (KJV)

Now according to our text here, God is so Wise that He knows everything that would ever happen from the beginning of the world. So the point is this. If God knew all the works that He was going to do from the beginning of the world then don’t you think He knows **where in the world we would work?** Therefore, there must be a **wise reason** for working where we do, right?

But here’s our problem. Because we think it’s by chance that we work where we do our priorities get all messed up and we think our main reason for being at work is just to **get a paycheck.** And so when something happens that we don’t like with our employer or employees and since it’s all just about **money,** we get upset and start creating even more problems, don’t we?

But people, it’s not by chance that you work where you do, and it’s not just about money. The **first wise reason** why God has you working where you do is for a **mission field.** So if you work with non-Christians, then guess why God put you there? To share the love of Jesus with them so they can be saved. That’s pretty wise, huh?

Oh but that’s not all. The **second wise reason** God has you working where you do is as a **training ground.** Hey, if you study the Bible and want it to move from your head to you heart then guess what needs to happen? You need some sort of training ground, some place to put it into practice, right? And so what better place to learn how to love like Jesus, then in a workplace full of people **who don’t love Jesus,** right? Do you see the wisdom of God?
People, it’s not by chance you work where you work. It’s by the Creator of the universe. And once you start seeing the wise reasons why He’s got you there, then your work is no longer just a paycheck, it’s become a **powerful ministry**!

Oh, but that’s not all. The **second thing** we need to remind ourselves is that **It’s not by chance where you live.**

Matthew 10:29-30 “What is the price of two sparrows – one copper coin? But not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it. And the very hairs on your head are all numbered.” (NLT)

Now according to our text here, God is so Wise that He knows everything about us even to the point of every hair on our head. Now, granted for some people that’s not that big of a feat than for others, but the point is this. If God knows every hair on our head then don’t you think He knows **every place we’d ever live**? Therefore, there must be a **wise reason** for living where we do, right? Absolutely!

But here’s our problem. Because we think it’s by chance that we live where we do our priorities get all messed up and we think our main reason for living where we do is just to have a **place to relax**. And so when something happens with our home or neighbors that we don’t like and since it’s all just about **my own comfort**, we get upset and start creating even more problems, don’t we?

But people, it’s not by chance you live where you do, and it’s not just about your own comfort. The **first wise reason** God has you living where you do is for a **mission field**. So if you live next to non-Christians, then guess why God put you there? To share the love of Jesus with them so they can be saved. That’s pretty wise, huh?
And but that’s not all. The **second wise reason** why God has you living where you do is as a **training ground**. Hey, if you want to become a doer of the Word and not just a hearer of the Word, then guess what needs to happen? Hey that right! You need some sort of training ground, some place to put it into practice, right? And so what better place to learn how to love like Jesus then in a neighborhood full of people **who don’t love Jesus**, right? Do you see the wisdom of God?

People, it’s not by chance you live where you live. It’s by the Creator of the universe. And once you start seeing the wise reasons why He’s got you there, then your home is no longer just a place to relax, it’s become a **powerful ministry**!

Oh, but that’s not all. The **third thing** we need to remind ourselves is that **It’s not by chance who you married.**

**Psalm 139:16** “But with your own eyes you saw my body being formed. Even before I was born, you had written in your book everything I would do.” (CEV)

Now according to our text here, God is so Wise that He knows everything we’ve ever done before we even did it! And so the point is this. If God knows everything we would ever do then don’t you think He knows to **whom we’d say, “I do” to**? Therefore, there must be a **wise reason** for marrying the person we married, right? Absolutely!

But here’s our problem. Because we think it’s by chance we married who we did, our priorities get all messed up and we think our main reason for getting married was just to have a **person to enjoy**. And so when something happens with our spouse or spouses family that we don’t like and since it’s all just about **my enjoyment**, we get upset and start creating even more problems, don’t we?
But people, it’s not by chance you married whom you did, and it’s not just about your own personal enjoyment. The first wise reason why God has you married to your spouse is for a mission field. Now before I go any further, let me set the record straight. I am not saying that it’s okay for a Christian to marry a non-Christian. The Bible clearly warns about Christians marrying a non-Christians. Why? Because it’s like oil and water, the two don’t mix and therefore sooner or later you are headed for trouble like these guys were.

“There was a Christian man named Vic who recently shared a conversation he had with his wife.

Now Vic is fairly easygoing and so is his wife. But his wife is an atheist. And to make matters worse, she’s always trying to do something to mock his beliefs.

So one day she said she was going to go to Church services with Vic. And of course Vic got excited.

However, his wife mockingly added that first she was going to go out and buy a t-shirt to wear to Church services that said in big bold letters, ‘I’m Unsaved.’

So Vic didn’t even bat an eye and said, ‘Okay, I’ll get one that says, ‘I’m With Stupid -->.’”

Now that guy had a few problems with his non-Christian wife, didn’t he?

And people, this is precisely why God says not to marry a non-Christian if you’re already a Christian. But sometimes, two unsaved people can get married and later one of them does get saved. So guess what God wants the saved spouse to do? Hey that’s right! To share the love of Jesus with your spouse so they can be saved too. Or if both spouses are saved, then guess what God wants both of them to do? Hey, that’s right. To share the love of Jesus with their unsaved families.
For instance, both my wife and I have a lot of non-Christians in our families and so whenever we get together for Thanksgiving or Christmas, guess who always gets asked to pray for the food? Yeah, preacher boy! And I didn’t mind praying but what bugged me was that some of the times when I would finish praying, they would clap! They had no concept of prayer because to them it was just a religious thing. So I decided, fine, you want me to pray. I’ll pray. And so I would purposely weave in the gospel. “Oh God thank you for this turkey and thank you for Jesus dying on the cross to shed His blood for our sins, etc.’ And for some strange reason, they don’t clap like they used too. But I’m not giving up. And do you know why? Because they’re our mission field! I see the wisdom behind it.

Oh but that’s not all. The second wise reason why God has you married to your spouse is as a training ground. Hey, if you want to move from being a carnal Christian to a spiritual Christian then guess what needs to happen? You need some sort of training ground, some place to put it into practice, right? And so what better place to learn how to deal with the sin nature, then with a spouse who also has a sin nature, right? Do you see the wisdom of God? He puts two sinners together so they can act as a mirror for each other and expose the problems that need to be worked on.

You see, marriage has a tendency to bring out not only the best in you but also the worst! How many have learned that one? But unless we can admit the worst were never going to get around to experiencing the best. And you’ll forever be stuck in constant tension, like these guys were.

“One day a husband and wife got into a petty argument. And as was their nature, neither one of them would admit they were wrong.

But to her credit, the wife finally spoke up and said, ‘Look. I’ll tell you what. I’ll admit I’m wrong if you admit I was right.’
So the husband replied, ‘That’s fine with me.’ And being a gentleman and all, he insisted that she go first.

So the wife took a deep breath and looked her husband in the eye and said, ‘Okay, I’m wrong.’

And the husband grinned and replied, ‘You’re right!’

Now how many of you think that couple was never going to get around to dealing with the sin in their lives? Hey, you’re right! But seriously, it’s the same thing with you and I. By nature of being married, sooner or later you’re going to **expose some problems** you never knew you had **unless** you married the person you did. It was that particular person that exposed particular areas that need to be worked on. And once you can see this, then you’re on your way to experiencing not the worst marriage has to offer, but the best.

People, it’s not by chance you married who you did or even into the family you did. It’s by the Creator of the universe. And once you start seeing the wise reasons why He’s got you married to your spouse, then your marriage is no longer just about personal enjoyment, it’s become a **powerful ministry**!

Oh, but that’s not all. The **fourth thing** we need to remind ourselves is that **It’s not by chance when you die.**

**Job 14:5** “You have decided the length of our lives. You know how many months we will live, and we are not given a minute longer.” (NLT)

Now according to our text here, God is so Wise that He knows everything about us even to the point of the exact day when we die. So the point is this. If God knows when we’re going to die then there must be a **wise reason why He keeps us alive**, right?
And the Bible’s very clear. The **first wise reason** God keeps **Christians** alive is to **glorify Him**. People, God didn’t save you and I so we could stand on His promises and then sit around on the premises! Hello! He wants us to get up off our blessed assurance and get busy doing something for His glory! That’s why He saved us. But since many Christians think it’s **by chance when they die**, they have a tendency to put off serving God until tomorrow. But people, hello, one day tomorrow’s not coming. And you’re going to wake up dead and realized you just wasted your life!

Oh, but that’s not all. The **second wise reason** why God keeps **non-Christians** alive is to **get them saved**. As we saw in the last chapter, God extends His love to unsaved people, even down to their last breath, like what happened to Bob. But if a person assumes it’s by chance when they die, they’ll naturally have a tendency to put off getting saved until tomorrow. And unfortunately, this dangerous attitude has become an epidemic in our country, like Erwin Lutzer states.

“Recently, I read a tragic story about people enjoying themselves on the top stories of a tall apartment building not knowing that there was a fire burning on the lower floors.

Just so, many are enjoying life, comfortably ignoring the fact that their death is not only inevitable, but much nearer then they think.

Though there are many uncertainties in our lives, we can count on this: Whatever we strive for in this world must of necessity be temporary. Indeed, this world and all we have accumulated will eventually be burned up.

The other day I was browsing in a travel section of a bookstore. Potential travelers were buying maps and guidebooks on Hawaii and Europe. Some were purchasing booklets to help them learn some phrases of a foreign language.

No doubt they had saved their money, blocked out their vacation schedules, and purchased airline tickets. All that just for a two-week journey.
I wondered how many of them were giving at least that much attention to their final destination. I wondered how many were reading the guidebook, studying the map, and trying to learn the language of heaven.

Europe and Hawaii seemed so much more real than the unseen realm of the dead. And yet, even as they planned their vacations, they were en route to a more distant destination.

If we are wise, we will spend our time preparing for that which lasts forever. What is life but preparation for eternity?4

People, the point is this. If you’re a Christian and you’re still alive, then it’s time to get busy. There’s a war going on and we all need to find something to do. If you won’t go to the front lines then at least support those who will. And if you won’t shoot then at least carry some bullets. Don’t waste your life, find something to do for the Lord. That’s why He saved you! And if you’re still alive and you’re not a Christian then the point is this. Hey, give your life to Jesus today. Why? Because you can blow it at work, you can blow it where you live, and you can even blow it in your marriage. But please, whatever you do, don’t blow it for all eternity. The stakes are too high! There really is a heaven and there really is a hell. Therefore, please make sure today, that you’ve made your own adequate preparations for your own journey beyond the grave. Why? Because tomorrow may never come!

And people this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people really can have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe before it’s too late! They don’t have to miss out on heaven and they can know for sure where they’ll spend eternity! But people, I’m telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our
message, then we’ve got to stop acting like practical atheists. We’ve got to start demonstrating by our lips as well as our lives that God is Wise.
Chapter Twelve

God’s Wisdom Prevents Bad Advice

“There was a 23-year old lady named Lisa who was visiting her in-laws one day and while she was there, she went to a nearby supermarket to pick up some groceries. And so after shopping she returned to her car.

Well, after a while, several people noticed Lisa sitting in her car with the windows rolled up and with her eyes closed, with both hands behind the back of her head.

So one customer who had been at the store for a while became concerned and walked over to the car. And he noticed that Lisa’s eyes were now open, but she looked very strange. So he asked her if she was okay and Lisa replied that she’d been shot in the back of the head, and she’d been holding her brains in for over an hour.

So the man called the paramedics, who had to break into the car because the doors were locked and Lisa refused to remove her hands from her head. And when they finally got in, they found that Lisa had a wad of bread dough on the back of her head.

Apparently, a Pillsbury biscuit canister had exploded from the heat, making a loud noise that sounded like a gunshot, and the wad of dough hit her in the back of her head. And when she reached back to find out what it was, she felt the dough and thought it was her brains so she passed out.
And when she recovered she immediately went to try to hold her brains in for over an hour until someone noticed and came to her aid. And yes, for those of you wondering, Lisa is a blonde.”

Now it’s too bad that ol’ Lisa there couldn’t tell the difference between a ball of biscuits and a bunch of brains, don’t you think? She could’ve saved herself a whole mess of trouble, right? But people, did you know that blonde lady isn’t the only one having a problem with discernment? Believe it or not, so are believers in the Lord. Why? Well, it’s simple. They refuse to study the Bible! And people, if this wasn’t bad enough, because people are refusing to study the Bible, it’s also producing a generation of Churches that are full of Christians acting like practical atheists.

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our lips and by our lives, we act like He’s not there. And this not only keeps us from growing in our own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christians living like practical atheists by not knowing Who God Is, we’re going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, “Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?”

We’ve already seen that the very first thing we need to know about God is that God Is Real. The second thing we need to know about God is that God Is Personal. And in the last eight chapters we saw the third thing we need to know about God is that God Is Wise. And there we saw that when we realize that God Is Wise that this means There’s No Such Thing As An Accident and in the last chapter we saw that There’s No Such Thing As Chance.

But people, that’s not the only thing knowing that God Is Wise is going to reveal to us. The third thing knowing that God Is Wise is going to reveal to
us is that **There’s No Such Thing As Bad Advice**, from God that is. But hey, don’t take my advice. Let’s listen to God’s.

**James 1:5-8** “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.” (NIV)

Now according to our text, it’s pretty simple. If we need wisdom for the problems we face in life, then who do we go to? To God, right? In fact, God says when we do ask, He won’t give us just a little wisdom or just enough to tie us over for awhile. What did He say? He’d give us a generous amount of it. It’s almost like God is pleading with us to come to Him to receive His wisdom. Why? Because **God knows all things** and therefore He’s never going to give us bad advice.

But herein lies our problem. Even though we just spent eight weeks on this one attribute of God’s Wisdom showing us how incredibly wise He is, if we’re honest with ourselves, we still don’t seek His wisdom, do we? No! And then we have the audacity to wonder why our lives are totally unstable, full of doubt, and being tossed to and fro by the winds of life.

Therefore, if we’re going to avoid being tossed around in life and experience more stability, I think we had better take a look at some of the bad places for advice so we can avoid them, how about you? Hey, great answer! We’re going to do it anyway. Folks, it’s pretty simple. The first place we get bad advice from is Our Feelings.

**Jeremiah 17:9** “The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?” (NLT)
Now according to our text here, and contrary to what society would say, the human heart is not a very good source of wisdom, is it? Not at all! It’s not only wicked, it’s downright deceitful. Therefore, why would anyone ever want to listen to the so-called wisdom that comes from the heart, or in other words from our feelings?

And herein lies our problem. You see, we’re tempted to not go to the Father for wisdom, but to our feelings for wisdom. We are told by our society to do whatever feels right. But folks, I don’t care how good something feels, that still doesn’t make it right nor does it make it a wise thing to do. And as long as we’d rather listen to our happy feelings instead of our Heavenly Father, we’re headed for trouble.

For instance, I recall a time when I was in High School and I was working after school with a friend of mine, Loren, at a pottery plant that my Dad oversaw. Our job was to hand pack boxes full of clay pots for plants. They would then be shipped out to various customers throughout the Midwest.

Well, one day, in the midst of the tedious, boring, monotonous work, we felt like we had a wise idea to help alleviate our boredom. We thought, “Hey, let’s mark on the bottom of one of these pots that they, the customer, are the lucky owners of the one millionth piece of pottery produced by this company. And if they return it they’ll be refunded $10,000.” So we chuckled at our creative wisdom that temporarily seemed to alleviate our boredom, wrote the secret message, and promptly forgot about it a couple of days later.

That is, until about three months later, when my friend and I were called into my Dad’s office who was standing silently with his arms folded with that look that fathers get when you know your life is in jeopardy. And we were completely bewildered at his behavior because for the life of us, we couldn’t
figure out what we had done wrong. That is, until our eyes met in horror upon the “wise idea” on his desk.

It seems that some “lucky” customer had taken our method of alleviating boredom serious and returned the pot requesting a $10,000 credit to their account. Needless to say, we left the office deflated and kicking ourselves thinking, “That wasn’t a wise idea, that was a stupid idea!” And of course, we didn’t feel very good after that!

And so here’s the point. People, how much proof do we need before we admit that our wisdom, no matter how good it feels at the moment, isn’t always what’s best? In fact, if we’re honest with ourselves, our feelings are one of the biggest sources for bad advice, aren’t they? Why? Because people, they’re not only deceitful, they’re downright fickle! They’re influenced by anything from bad weather to a bad piece of chicken. They’re up one minute and down the next. And because they’re completely unstable, then any so-called wisdom that comes from them is also going to be unstable! How many of you can figure that one out without any help?

And folks, even though I shared a humorous example of what happens when you follow your feelings, hey, if we are honest with ourselves, sometimes the results of following our feelings isn’t very funny at all, is it? Sometimes, it’s downright painful isn’t it? Therefore, wouldn’t it be wise to seek advice from the One Who knows all things, never makes a mistake, and never changes, like God perhaps? Hmmmm. Sounds like good advice to me!

Oh, but that’s not all. The second place we get bad advice from is Our Friends.

Job 42:7 “After the LORD had finished speaking to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite: I am angry with you and with your two friends, for you have not been right in what you said about me, as my servant Job was.” (NLT)
Now according to our text here, Job’s three friends weren’t a very good source of wisdom, were they? No way! They not only were saying some wrong things, but their bad advice was making God mad at them. Therefore, why would anyone ever want to listen to the so-called wisdom that comes from our friends, right?

And herein lies our problem. You see, we’re tempted to not go to the Father for wisdom. No! That’s too much trouble. We want to go to our friends. But folks, I don’t care how good of a friend you have, that still doesn’t make them right nor does it make them have infallible wisdom. And as long as we’d rather listen to our handful of friends instead of our Heavenly Father, we’re headed for trouble.

For instance, one day, a few years older, and I thought for sure a little wiser, I was at work. And we had just received our new walkie talkie’s so that we wouldn’t have to yell through the loudspeaker in the warehouse. One day we needed the assistance of one of the other employees and called him on the walkie talkie but he wouldn’t respond. And finally, after about three or four times he did respond but he sounded a bit perturbed. And as it turned out, he was in the restroom and didn’t want anyone to know about it.

So me and my friend got this wise idea. We thought, “Oh, you don’t want anyone to know that you are in the restroom? We’ll help you out.” So I proceeded to make various gastric noises and explosions on the radio while the other guy piped in with loud grunts and groans. And my friend and I started to chuckle at our creative wisdom. But the guy in the restroom was not to be outdone. He proceeded to place his walkie talkie over the toilet and flushed it a couple of times, to get back at us. And after laughing at each other, being friends
and all, and having a newfound appreciation for our walkie talkies, we promptly forgot about it. **That is,** until my boss came out of his office about an hour later.

You see, it **just so happened** that my boss was in a very serious sales meeting in his office at the exact time my friend and I got our wise idea. And it **just so happened** that my bosses walkie talkie was on too. Only his was right on top of his desk, between him and the salespeople. So suddenly it dawned on us that their meeting was entertained by gastric noises, explosions, grunts and groans, and even a couple of toilet flushes as my boss tried his best to look very serious and sound professional. Needless to say, we went back to work deflated and kicking ourselves thinking, “That wasn’t a wise idea, that was a stupid idea!” And of course, my boss wasn’t very **friendly** after that either!

And so here’s the point. People, how much proof do we need before we admit that our **friend’s wisdom,** no matter how good it sounds at the moment, isn’t always what’s best? In fact, if we’re honest with ourselves, our friends can be one of the biggest sources for bad advice, can’t they? Why? Because our friends, **just like us,** are fallen sinful creatures who have a limited amount of wisdom. Therefore, we might come up with some good ideas once in awhile but we’re never going to be right all of the time. And because our friend’s knowledge is **completely unreliable,** then any so-called wisdom that comes from them is **also going to be unreliable!** How many of you can figure that one out without any help?

And folks, even though I shared a humorous example of what happens when you follow **your friends** advice, hey, if we are honest with ourselves, sometimes the results of doing so isn’t very funny at all, is it? Sometimes, it’s very painful, isn’t it? Therefore, wouldn’t be **wise** to seek advice from the One
Who knows all things, never makes a mistake, and never changes, like God perhaps? Hmmmm. Sounds like good advice to me!

Oh, but that’s not all. The **third place** we get bad advice from is **Freudian Psychology**.

1 Corinthians 1:20 “So where does this leave the philosophers, the scholars, and the world’s brilliant debaters? God has made them all look foolish and has shown their wisdom to be useless nonsense.” (NLT)

Now according to our text, and contrary to what society would say, not even the world’s most brilliant minds are a very good source of wisdom, are they? No way! Man’s wisdom in comparison to God’s wisdom is not only foolishness, but it’s downright nonsense. Therefore, why would anyone ever want to listen to the so-called wisdom that comes from **secular psychology**? I mean, isn’t it based on **man’s so-called wisdom**?

And herein lies our problem. You see, we’re tempted to not go to the Father for wisdom, but to a **Freudian psychologist** for wisdom. Aren’t we told by our society to seek “professional help” not the power of God? But folks, I don’t care how professional something sounds, that still doesn’t make it right nor does it make it a wise. And as long as we’d rather listen to a psychologist instead of our Savior, we’re headed for trouble. Why do I say that? Well, let’s take a look at the lives of the pillars of secular psychology and you tell me if their wisdom had wise affects on their **personal lives**.

1. **FREUD** was an evolutionist who believed that man had evolved from lower animals.

2. **FREUD** believed that the idea of a Almighty God was just a myth made up by our forefathers to cope with life.

3. **FREUD** was a believer in the positive health benefits of cocaine and was a user himself for many years.
4. **FREUD** had a severe addiction to nicotine to the tune of smoking an average 20 cigars a day, which eventually led to his death.

5. **FREUD** refused to be psychoanalyzed himself even by his own teachings.

6. **ABRAHAM MASLOW** said that the motivation for his life’s work was his absolute hatred of his mother.

7. **KAREN HORNEY** decided she wasn’t happy with her marriage after 2 years so she began a life of constant sexual affairs to which her husband did not object.

8. **KAREN HORNEY** was said to have a serious sexual addiction for young men, which included her students and fellow colleagues, and even had sexual relations with other women.

9. **CARL JUNG** made a wooden man out of a ruler that he called Manikin and kept it in a wooden case and frequently talked to it in times of trouble.

10. **CARL JUNG** had a mystical experience while sitting on a rock where he couldn’t tell if he was the rock or the rock was him.

11. **CARL JUNG** had what he considered a major breakthrough in life when he had a vision of God supposedly going to the bathroom on a Church sanctuary from the sky.

12. **CARL JUNG** was completely absorbed in the occult by studying their teachings and attending séances and listening to mediums.²

Now I don’t know about you, But I’d say those psychologists have a few **psychological problems**, how about you?

**Proverbs 12:8** “Everyone admires a person with good sense, but a warped mind is despised.” (NLT)
And people, this is our problem. We don’t seem to have enough good sense to recognize when someone has a warped mind like those Freudian psychologists. I mean, think about it. Who in their right mind would ever want to listen to their so-called wisdom when it doesn’t work for them? And not only that, but because they’re completely unbiblical, then any so-called wisdom that comes from them is also going to be unbiblical! How many of you can figure that one out without any help?

And if we are honest with ourselves, sometimes the results of following the advice of secular psychology isn’t very satisfying, is it? Sometimes, it’s very painful isn’t it? Why? Well people, what do you expect when we’re told to blame our parents for all our problems, to divorce our spouse as soon as they don’t meet our needs, and to make sure we love ourselves more than anyone? It sounds to me like their causing more pain instead of solving the pain, how about you? Therefore, wouldn’t it be wise to seek advice from the One Who knows all things, never makes a mistake, and never changes, like God perhaps? Hmmm. Sounds like good advice to me!

People, of God, it’s pretty simple. If you’re life has been totally unstable, full of doubt, and tossed to and fro lately, then you need to ask yourself, where are you getting your advice from? Is it from God or is it from man? And the longer you refuse to heed God’s Word, the longer you’re going to miss out on the blessings it contains within, like this man discovered.

“A young man was getting ready to graduate from college and for many months he had admired a beautiful sports car in a dealer’s showroom, and knowing his father could well afford it, he told him that was all he wanted.

So finally, on the morning of his graduation, the young man’s father called him into his private study. And there his father told him how proud he was to have such a fine son, and told him how much he loved him. And then he handed his son a beautifully wrapped gift box.
Curious, and somewhat disappointed, the young man opened the box and found a lovely, leather-bound Bible, with the young man’s name embossed in gold. So now angry, he rose his voice to his father and said, ‘With all your money, you give me a Bible?’ and he stormed out of the house.

Well, many years passed and the young man became very successful in business, and had lots of money and a beautiful home. But he realized his father was very old, and thought perhaps he should go to him. You see, he had not seen his father since that graduation day.

But before he could make arrangements, he received a telegram telling him that his father had passed away, and willed all of his possessions to his son. So when he arrived at his father’s house, sudden sadness and regret filled his heart.

And as he began to search through his father’s important papers and saw the still gift-wrapped Bible, just as he had left it years ago.

And now with tears in his eyes, he opened the Bible and began to turn the pages. He noticed that his father had carefully underlined a verse, Matthew 7:11, ‘And if ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father which is in heaven, give to those who ask Him?’

And as he read those words, a car key dropped from the back of the Bible. It had a tag with the dealer’s name, the same dealer who had the sports car he had desired so long ago. And on the tag was the date of his graduation, and the words PAID IN FULL.”

Now how many of you would say that man was just a little bit sorry for not opening that Bible earlier? It not only cost him a blessing, but it also became a stumbling block in his relationship with his father, didn’t it? Well people, it’s the same thing with you and I. You see, as long as we forsake the Bible for the things of this world like that man did, then we too will be filled with years of regret. And we too will miss out on the blessings it contains within. And I’m not talking about the keys to unlock a hot sports car. But the keys to unlock the greatest source of wisdom of all time, the Words of God, who alone is Wise!
And people this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people really can have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe.” But people, I’m telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we’ve got to stop acting like practical atheists. We’ve got to start demonstrating by our \textit{lips} as well as our \textit{lives} that \textbf{God is Wise}!
Part III

God is Powerful
“A minister dies and is waiting in line at the Pearly Gates. And ahead of him is a guy who’s dressed in sunglasses, a loud shirt, leather jacket, and jeans.

So Saint Peter addresses this guy and says, ‘Who are you, so that I may know whether or not to admit you into the Kingdom of Heaven?’

And the guy replies, ‘I’m Joe Cohen, taxi-driver, of New Yawk City.’

So Saint Peter consults his list and he smiles and joyfully says to the taxi-driver, ‘Take this silken robe and golden staff and enter the Kingdom of Heaven.’

So the taxi-driver goes into Heaven with his robe and staff.

Well now it’s the minister’s turn. So he stands tall and booms out, ‘I am Peter Finnster, Pastor of Saint Michael’s for the last forty-three years.’

So Saint Peter consults his list and casually says to the minister, ‘Oh, alright, take this cotton robe and wooden staff and enter the Kingdom of Heaven.’

But the minister objects and says, ‘Now, just wait a minute here. That man was a taxi-driver and he gets a silken robe and golden staff. How can this be?’
And Saint Peter replied, ‘Well you see, up here we work by results. While you preached, people slept; while he drove, people prayed.’”

Yes, sometimes it’s hard to stay awake in Church services, isn’t it? But people, did you know you can’t totally blame this sleeping problem on the Pastor? I know it’s tempting but there’s another reason for it. You see, the reason why so much of the American Church is snoozing big time is because they refuse to give time to studying the Bible! And people, if this wasn’t bad enough, because people are refusing to study the Bible, it’s now produced a generation of Churches that are full of Christians acting like practical atheists.

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our lips and by our lives, we act like He’s not there. And this not only keeps us from growing in our own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christians living like practical atheists by not knowing Who God Is, we’re going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, “Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?”

We’ve already seen that the very first thing we need to know about God is that God Is Real. The second thing we need to know about God is that God Is Personal. And in the last nine chapters we saw that the third thing we need to know about God is that God Is Wise.

But people that’s not the only thing we need to know about God if we’re going to refrain from being practical atheists. The fourth thing we need to know about God is that God Is Powerful. But hey, don’t take my word for it, let’s listen to God’s.

1 Chronicles 29:1-13 “David praised the LORD in the presence of the whole assembly, saying, Praise be to you, O LORD, God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours.
Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name.” (NIV)

Now according to our text, David was obviously jazzed and excited about God, right? I mean, he was so thrilled about God that he even praised God publicly. Why? Because God was not only full of splendor, but David recognized that what made Him so majestic was the fact that God was also the supreme power of the universe! And David couldn’t keep his mouth shut about it. And people, believe it or not, this is one of our biggest problems in living like practical atheists as Christians. We don’t recognize like David that God is All-Powerful.

Therefore, to help us have the vision and insight David had about God, we’re going to take a look at some of the ways we know that God Is Powerful. And the first way we know God Is Powerful is by His Display of Creation. Romans 1:20 “People cannot see that God has power which lasts for ever. They cannot see that he is really God. But ever since he made the world, he has clearly shown this by the things he made. So they cannot say, ’I did not know about God.’” (WE)

Now according to our text here, one of the most obvious ways to show us that God not only exists but that He’s All-Powerful is by looking at His creation. You see, God not only created the world so we’d have a place to live but hello, He created the world so we’d come to a knowledge of Him. And once you start looking at this world we live in, you’re not only going to see that God must exist, but you’re going to see that He’s incredibly powerful! Let me show you what I mean by taking a look at just some of the characteristics of creation.
1. **THE ATOM:** The atom is so small that it would take the whole population of the world 180 million years to count just the amount of atoms in a cup of water, counting at one per second.²

2. **THE CELL:** Even the simplest cells are bristling with high-tech machinery. On the outside, their surfaces are studded with sensors, gates, pumps and identification markers and on the inside cells are jam-packed with power plants, automated workshops and recycling units. Miniature monorails whisk materials from one location to another. No such system could arise in a blind, step-by-step Darwinian process. The most advanced, automated modern factory, with its computers and robots all coordinated on a precisely timed schedule, is less complex than the inner workings of a single cell. A single cell of the human body contains 3 or 4 times more information than all 30 volumes of the Encyclopedia Britannica.³

3. **THE BRAIN:** The brain is the most complex mechanism in the world. The average brain weighs about three pounds and contains 12 billion cells, each of which is connected to 10,000 other brain cells making 120 trillion brain connections! Scientists tell us that the average person uses less than 10% of his brain’s capability. If that is true, then most people die with 10 to 11 billion brain cells still unused.⁴

4. **THE MATERIAL WORLD:** Not only are no two snowflakes alike, but neither are no two blades of grass nor no two grains of sand.⁵

5. **THE ANIMAL WORLD:** The common flea is capable of jumping 100 times as high as its own head. Were champion Olympic jumpers to do as well proportionately they would have to jump clear over the Washington monument at one bound with some 80 feet to spare.⁶

Hmmm. Now I’d say somebody had to be pretty powerful to do that, how about you? Oh but people, that’s not all. That’s just life on our planet. The same God Who created this earth also created our universe. And what a universe it is! It’s not only complex. **It’s huge**! Do you remember the statistic shared earlier? That if you could travel at the speed of light it would take you 8 ½ minutes just to reach the sun which is 93 millions miles away. And if you wanted
to reach the nearest star it would take you 4 ½ years traveling at the speed of light. But that’s nothing. If you wanted to make it across our galaxy, the Milky Way, it would take you 100,000 light years. And people, that’s just one galaxy! And our universe is full of them! And what you have to keep in mind is that God not only created all this, but He did it all in six literal days. Hmmm. Now I’d say somebody had to be pretty powerful to do that, how about you?

Oh but that’s still not all. God not only created all of life in six literal days, but when He was doing it, He flung it down like it was no big deal. 

**Ephesians 1:4** “Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes.” (NLT)

Now the word “made” there in the Greek literally gives the picture of “flicking the hand” like you’re just casually tossing something down. Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say that anyone who could casually throw the world and the whole universe into existence, might be just a little bit powerful, how about you?

Oh, but that’s not all. The second way we know God Is Powerful is by His **Demonstration of Miracles**.

**Matthew 8:27** “The men were amazed and asked, What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!” (NIV)

Now according to our text, the disciples were absolutely blown away by Jesus behavior. Why? Because they saw first hand that Jesus not only had the miraculous power to create the universe but to also control it! And it wasn’t just the wind and the waves that Jesus had the power to control. Let me share with you just a few of the other miracles He had the power to do.

1. Water converted into wine
2. Heals the nobleman’s son
3. The catch of fish
4. Heals the demoniac  
5. Heals Peter’s mother-in-law  
6. Cleanses the leper  
7. Heals the paralyzed man  
8. Healing of the immobile man  
9. Restoring the withered hand  
10. Restores the centurion’s servant  
11. Raises the widow’s son to life  
12. Stills the storm  
13. Throws demons out of two men  
14. Raises the daughter of Jairus from the dead  
15. Cures the woman with the issue of blood  
16. Restores two blind men to sight  
17. Walks upon Lake Galilee  
18. Heals the daughter of the Syro-Phoenician woman  
19. Feeds more than 4,000 people  
20. Restores the deaf-mute man  
21. Restores a blind man  
22. Heals the epileptic boy  
23. Pays the temple tax by getting money from a fish’s mouth  
24. Restores ten lepers to wholeness  
25. Opens the eyes of a man born blind  
26. Raises Lazarus from the dead  
27. Heals the woman with the spirit of infirmity  
28. Cures a man with dropsy  
29. Restores sight to two blind men near Jericho  
30. Condemns a fig tree  
31. Heals the ear of Malchus  
32. The second catch of fish  

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say that anyone who could command the winds and waves, walk on water and raise the dead, might be just a little bit powerful, how about you?

Oh, but that’s not all. The third way we know God Is Powerful is by His Destroying of satan.
1 John 3:8 “Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.” (ESV)

Now according to our text, one of the biggest reasons why Jesus came to this earth was not only to save us from our sins, but to also come and destroy the one who instituted sin, satan. And when it comes to the devil we usually fall into two traps. One is to overemphasize him by blaming him for all our troubles. Or the other trap is to de-emphasize him by thinking he doesn’t exist at all. But people, the Bible is very clear. There really is a devil and he not only wants to kill you, but he wants to deceive you all the way into hell. And folks, this is the great news of the cross of Jesus Christ. When Jesus died on the cross, He not only secured forgiveness of our sins, but He stripped the devil of his power.

Colossians 2: 9-10,15 “Yet it is in Him that God gives a full and complete expression of Himself in bodily form. Moreover, your own completeness is realized in Him, who is the ruler over all authorities, and the supreme head over all powers. And then, having drawn the sting of all the powers and authorities ranged against us, He exposed them, shattered, empty and defeated, in His own triumphant victory!” (J.B.P.)

People, the Bible is clear. Jesus stripped the devil of his power. The Lord exposed him, shattered him, and defeated him on the cross. But you might be asking, “But hey, if the devil is defeated then why do we still get attacked?” Well, folks, if you’d read the Bible you’d see that the devil’s currently on death row awaiting his final sentence in the Lake of Fire. And only gets to do what God allows him to do. His gig is up! This is why he’s so furious in these last days! In fact, the proper Biblical way to think of satan is as a fallen creature with the head of a lion but a tiny rat body. I didn’t say that, the Bible did.

1 Peter 5:8 “Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” (NIV)
People this is all part of satan’s lies. He tries to get you and I scared of him and his big roar thinking he’s got big power like God, but he doesn’t. In comparison to God’s power the devil is just a teensy weensy rat! In fact, the great preacher Charles Spurgeon says the same thing.

“What a remarkable picture to behold all the enemies of Christ totally disarmed. And satan has nothing left now with which he may attack us. He may attempt to injure us, but wound us he never can, for his sword and spear are utterly taken away.

Be very courageous, remembering that you have to fight with a stingless dragon. He may hiss, but his teeth are broken and his poison fang extracted. You have to do battle with an enemy already scarred by your Master’s weapons.

Every blow you give him takes its toll upon him, for he has nothing to protect him. Christ stripped him naked, divided his armor, and left him defenseless.

The enemy may rush in upon you with hideous noise and terrible alarms, but there is no real cause for fear. Stand fast in the Lord. Rejoice in the day of battle, for it is for you but the beginning of an eternity of triumph.”

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say that anyone who could reduce the devil to a pipsqueak of a rat, might be just a little bit powerful, how about you?

Oh, but that’s not all. The fourth way we know God Is Powerful is by His Defeating of Death.

1 Corinthians 15:55,57 “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (NIV)

Now according to our text, the great news about Jesus going to the cross was not only that He defeated the devil, but He also defeated death itself! In fact, so much so has Jesus defeated death that He reassures us to never, ever, ever even be afraid of death, that is, if you’re a Christian.
**Hebrews 2:14-15** “Because God’s children are human beings – made of flesh and blood – the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying.” (NLT)

Now folks, I don’t know if you’ve noticed this, but everyone’s afraid of something in life. For some it’s spiders, for others it’s high places and for some it’s speaking in public. But there’s one fear that is not only the greatest of all, but it’s **universal for all mankind**. And that’s the **fear of death**. Oh, you hardly ever hear anyone talk about it because after all, that’s kind of a bummer of a thing to think about, right? I mean, who cares if it’s reality and that we’re all marching towards the grave at different speeds, the average person still doesn’t want to think about it, do they? No way! And you know why? Because deep down inside, like everybody else, they’re **scared to death of death**!

But people, once again this is the great news of the gospel. Jesus not only destroyed the devil but He defeated death! Through the cross of Christ, mankind’s darkest hour has now become his entrance into eternal light! And it’s only the Christian who is genuinely freed from this fear of death that we all have like this little boy learned.

“In a home of which I know, a little boy, the only son, was ill with an incurable disease. Month after month the mother had tenderly nursed him, read to him, and played with him, hoping to keep him from the dreadful finality of the doctor’s diagnosis – the little boy was sure to die.

But as the weeks went on he gradually began to understand that he would never be like the other boys he saw playing outside the window. Small as he was, he began to understand the meaning of the term death, and he too knew he was to die.

One day his mother was reading him a story and after she closed the book her little son sat silent for an instant, deeply stirred. Then he asked the question
weighing on his childish heart, ‘Mama, what is it like to die? Mama, does it hurt?’

Quick tears sprang to her eyes and she fled to the kitchen, supposedly to tend to something on the stove. She knew it was a question with deep significance. She knew it must be answered satisfactorily.

So she breathed a hurried prayer that the Lord would keep her from breaking down before the boy and that she would be able to tell him the answer; the Lord did tell her. Immediately she knew how to explain it to him.

‘Kenneth,’ she said to her son, ‘do you remember when you were a tiny boy how you used to play so hard all day that when night came you were too tired to even undress and you’d tumble into your mother’s bed and fall asleep.

That was not your bed, it was not where you belonged. You would only stay there a little while. Much to your surprise you would wake up and find yourself in your own bed in your own room. You were there because someone had loved you and taken care of you. Your father had come with big strong arms and carried you away.’

‘Kenneth darling, death is just like that. We just wake up some morning to find ourselves in the other room. Our room where we belong, because the Lord Jesus loved us and died for us.’

The lad’s shining face looking up into hers told her that the point had gone home and there would be no more fear, only love and trust in his little heart as he went to meet his Father in heaven.

He never questioned again. Several weeks later he fell asleep just as she said and he was carried into his own room by his Heavenly Father.’

Now, how many of you think that mother was just a little bit glad that Jesus defeated death? And not only to comfort her own soul, but the soul of her dying son as well. People, it really is true. Through Jesus Christ, you don’t have to be scared to death of death anymore! Give your life to Him truly and you’ll see what I mean. And folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say that anyone who
could reduce death to a beautiful transition into eternal bliss, might be just a little bit powerful, how about you?

And people this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people really can have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe before it’s too late!” But people, I’m telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we’ve got to stop acting like practical atheists. We’ve got to start demonstrating by our lips as well as our lives that God is Powerful!
In this chapter, I’m going to share a story about a guy and his encounter with the law and I want you to tell me how it went.

“I went to the store the other day and I was only there for about five minutes and when I came out there was a pesky motorcycle cop writing a parking ticket.

So I went up to him and said, ‘Come on Buddy, how about giving a guy a break?’ But the cop ignored me and continued writing the ticket.

So I called him a pencil necked geek. So the policeman glared at me and starting writing another ticket for having bald tires!

So I called him a wormy little weasel. And the cop finished the second ticket and put it on the car with the first, he started writing a third ticket!

And this went on for about twenty minutes and the more I abused him, the more tickets he wrote. But I didn’t care! My car was parked around the corner.”

Okay, so how did it go for that guy? Piece of cake for him, right? But somebody else was going to pay a big price for his behavior, weren’t they? And did you know the same thing happens with you and I as Christians? Uh, huh, it really does. You see, our attitude towards the law of God not only affects our
lives, but if affects the lives of those around us. **How?** Well, it works like this. You see, when people refuse to **study the Bible**, it produces a generation of Churches that are full of Christians acting like **practical atheists**.

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our **lips** and by our **lives**, we act like He’s not there. And this not only keeps us from growing in our own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christians living like practical atheists by not knowing **Who God Is**, we’re going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, “**Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?**”

We’ve already seen that the very **first thing** we need to know about God is that **God Is Real**. The **second thing** we need to know about God is that **God Is Personal**. The **third thing** we need to know about God is that **God Is Wise**. And in the last chapter we saw that the **fourth thing** we need to know about God is that **God Is Powerful**. And there we looked at **four practical ways** we can know that **God Is Powerful**: by His **Display of Creation**, **Demonstration of Miracles**, **Destroying the Works of satan**, and by His **Defeating of Death**.

Now that’s pretty powerful, don’t you think? Oh, but it gets even better. We can not only **know** that **God Is Powerful** but we can **be shown** what God’s **Power is like**. How? Well, thanks for asking! You see, the **first way** the Bible shows us what God’s Power is like is that **There’s Nothing He Cannot Do**. But hey, don’t take my word for it, let’s listen to God’s.

**Numbers 11:18-23** “Tell the people: Consecrate yourselves in preparation for tomorrow, when you will eat meat. The LORD heard you when you wailed, If only we had meat to eat! We were better off in Egypt! Now the LORD will give you meat, and you will eat it.

You will not eat it for just one day, or two days, or five, ten or twenty days, but for a whole month-until it comes out of your nostrils and you loathe it-because
you have rejected the LORD, who is among you, and have wailed before him, saying, Why did we ever leave Egypt?

But Moses said, Here I am among six hundred thousand men on foot, and you say, I will give them meat to eat for a whole month! Would they have enough if flocks and herds were slaughtered for them? Would they have enough if all the fish in the sea were caught for them?

The LORD answered Moses, Is the LORD’s arm too short? You will now see whether or not what I say will come true for you.” (NIV)

Now according to our text, Ol’ Moses there was having a little attitude problem wasn’t he? He started to complain about his circumstances like everybody else, didn’t he? And why’d he do that? Because he began to doubt that God can do whatever He wants to do! And people, believe it or not, this is another one of our problems in living like practical atheists as Christians. We start to complain about our circumstances because we too begin to doubt that God is All-Powerful.

Therefore, to help us get an attitude adjustment like Moses got, we’re going to take a look at some of the ways the Bible shows us that God Can Do Whatever He Wants. And the first way we know God Can Do Whatever He Wants is because He Can Save Anyone He Wants. 

Matthew 19:24-26 “Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, Who then can be saved? Jesus looked at them and said, With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” (NIV)

Now according to our text here, it’s pretty simple. God can do whatever He wants! Why? Because all things are possible with Him. How much is all? He didn’t say some. He didn’t say most things. He said all! But, I will make a disclaimer here for the skeptic. God can do all things consistent with His
character. You see, there are some things God cannot do. For instance, God can’t lie, He can’t learn, He can’t like sin, and He can’t be tempted with sin.

So when the Scripture says that God can do all things, it’s talking about all things that are consistent with His character. So don’t fall for the skeptics trick when they ask you if God can do anything. Because you’ll likely say yes, and then they’ll ask you, “Well, can God make a rock so big that he can’t lift it.” And folks, this is one of those trick questions like, “Have you stopped beating you’re wife yet?” If you say yes, then you’re admitting that you do. But if you say no, then you’re saying you’re saying you’re still doing it.”

Besides, the question “Can God make a rock so big that He can’t lift it” is illogical because by definition God is the biggest and Supreme Being of all, and thus nothing is nor ever can be bigger than Him. And secondly, making a rock so big that you can’t lift it is stupid. And God’s not stupid so it’s not consistent with His character so naaaaaaa!

But the point of our passage here is that when it comes to salvation that God can save anyone He wants. And I don’t know about you but this is a huge comfort to me, especially when I think about my unsaved loved ones. I mean, maybe I’m the only one but sometimes, over time we start to doubt that God can or ever will save our loved ones. Sometimes we think we’ve said all we can say, prayed all we can pray, and nothing seems to work. So we start to think that maybe it’s not possible. Well folks, with man it is impossible. But with God, all things are possible.

In fact, I want to give you some encouraging proof. Let’s do a little experiment. The next time you’re in a Church service, turn to your neighbor and say this, “If God can save you…He can save anyone!!!!” Hopefully they will appreciate that truth as much as you! Oh but it gets even better. God can not only
save you, he can save me, the ex-drug addict, sexually immoral, male chauvinistic pig guy.

But you might be thinking, “Okay, God can save my neighbor and my Pastor, but I don’t think that even God could save somebody like a mass murderer, could He?” Well, if the story is right, according to his own verbal testimony during an interview with Dr. James Dobson, the former mass murderer Ted Bundy gave his heart to the Lord Jesus Christ.² And if you have a problem with that then it only shows you’re still not getting it. People, it really is true. God can save anyone He wants. Why? Because salvation is based not on what we do for God, but what Christ has done for us on the cross. And I don’t know about you, but I’d say someone who could save you and me and a mass murderer, might be just a little bit powerful, how about you? In fact, I’d venture to say He could probably do whatever He wants!

Oh, but that’s not all. And the second way we know God Can Do Whatever He Wants is because He Can Supply Any Need He Wants.

² Kings 3:17-18 “For this is what the LORD says: You will see neither wind nor rain, yet this valley will be filled with water, and you, your cattle and your other animals will drink. This is an easy thing in the eyes of the LORD; he will also hand Moab over to you.” (NIV)

Now according to our text here, the Israelites were getting a little low on provisions and so they began to freak out thinking that they were not only going to die of thirst but get slaughtered by the Moabites. And so Elisha steps in and tells them what? He said God’s not only going to fill a whole valley full of water so they can drink, but He was also going to take care of their enemies as well. Or in the southern Hebrew…”Hey! Take a chill pill!” And why’d Elisha tell them that? Because God can supply any need! And notice it wasn’t a small one either. Out of the blue, God not only provided water for 1000’s of people and their
animals but He provided victory over 1,000’s of their enemies. And the point is that He could not only do it, but it was easy for Him!

So why is it so easy for the Lord to supply any need? Well, first of all it’s because He owns everything.

Psalm 24:1 “The earth and everything on it belong to the LORD. The world and its people belong to him.” (CEV)

Psalm 50:10 “For all the animals of the forest are mine, and I own the cattle on a thousand hills.” (NLT)

And by the way, notice it’s not the chickens on a 1,000 hills. Chalk one up for the cow debate. And speaking of cows and God’s provision, listen to this true story of God’s faithfulness.

“Shortly after Dallas Seminary was founded in 1924, it almost folded. It came to the point of bankruptcy. All the creditors were ready to foreclose at twelve noon on a particular day. That morning, the founders of the school met in the president’s office to pray that God would provide.

In that prayer meeting was Harry Ironside. When it was his turn to pray, he said in his refreshingly candid way, ‘Lord we know that the cattle on a thousand hills are Thine. Please sell some of them and send us the money.’

Just about that time, a tall Texan in boots and an open-collar shirt strolled into the business office. ‘Howdy!’ he said to the secretary. ‘I just sold two carloads of cattle over in Fort Worth. I’ve been trying to make a business deal go through, but it just won’t work. I feel God wants me to give this money to the seminary. I don’t know if you need it or not, but here’s the check,’ and he handed it over.

The secretary took the check and, knowing something of the critical nature of the hour, went to the door of the prayer meeting and timidly tapped. Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, the founder and president of the school, answered the door and took the check from her hand.

When he looked at the amount, it was for the exact sum of the debt. Then he recognized the name on the check as that of the cattleman. Turning to Dr. Ironside, he said, ‘Harry, God sold the cattle.’”
Now was that the coolest cow story you ever heard or what? And speaking of cows, a Village Missionary shared a story about God’s amazing provision of leather shoes during Bible College. It turns out the missionary was flat broke with hardly anything to eat and had just barely enough money to pay tuition. So there he was one day walking across campus, which had a strict dress code and one of the soles of his dress shoes fell off. So without missing a stride, he just slipped his shoe off, held it up into the air and prayed, “God, you now my need. Please provide me with some dress shoes,” and slipped his shoe back on and kept walking.

So he gets back to his dorm and lo and behold a package was there. And can you guess what was in that package? Two pairs of brand new expensive leather dress shoes. It turns out that his Mom felt impressed the week prior to buy him a pair of dress shoes and there was such a good sale going on, she bought two pair. So she mailed them and they got there the exact day when his other shoes gave out.

Oh but that’s still not all. So much so can God supply any need that He commands us to not worry about our needs. Matthew 6:31-32 “So do not worry, saying, What shall we eat? or What shall we drink? or What shall we wear? For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.” (NIV)

People, it really is true. God knows our needs and He will supply them. He’ll make sure we got something eat, drink, and wear. Now it may not be a pair of Gucci shoes, but it will be what’s good for you. And folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say someone who owns everything and then commands us to not worry about anything, might be just a little bit powerful, how about you? In fact, I’d venture to say He could probably do whatever He wants!
Oh, but that’s not all. And the third way we know God Can Do Whatever He Wants is because He Can Solve Any Problem.

Jeremiah 32:17 “Ah Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You.” (NAS)

Now according to our text here, it’s pretty simple. God can do whatever He wants. Why? Because nothing is too difficult for Him to do. And people, did you know that includes all our problems! And I don’t know about you but this is a huge comfort to me. I mean, maybe I’m the only one who encounters problems in life, but sometimes they can seem so huge that you start to wonder if you’re going to make it through this one. And sometimes we think we’ve done all we can do and prayed all we can pray, and the problems still never seem to go away. Have you ever been there? And so we start to think that maybe this is one problem that not even God can fix.

But folks, what did we read in our text? Nothing is too difficult for God. And the last time I checked, nothing means nothing! God can solve any problem. And because we have such a hard time believing this, I’m going to give you some proof. Wait to you hear how God solved this problem!

“Marcel Sternberger always took the 9:09 Long Island Railroad train where he caught a subway into the city. And on the morning of January 10, 1948, Sternberger boarded it as usual but en route, he suddenly decided to visit a Hungarian friend who lived in Brooklyn and was ill.

So Sternberger changed to the subway for Brooklyn, went to his friend’s house, and stayed until midafternoon. He then boarded a Manhattan-bound subway for his office and here’s Marcel’s incredible story.

The car was crowded, and there seemed to be no chance of a seat. But just as I entered, a man sitting by the door suddenly jumped up to leave, and I slipped into the empty place. The passenger on my left just happened to be reading a
Hungarian newspaper, and something prompted me to say in Hungarian, ‘I hope you don’t mind if I glance at your paper.’

So the man answered politely, ‘You may read it now. I’ll have time later on.’ So during the half-hour ride to town, we had quite a conversation. He said his name was Bela Paskin, a law student when World War II started, who had been put into a German labor camp and sent to the Ukraine. Later he was captured by the Russians and put to work burying the German dead. And after the war, he covered hundreds of miles on foot until he reached his home in Debrecen.

Well, I myself knew Debrecen quite well so we talked about it for a while and that’s when he told me the rest of his story. When he went to the apartment once occupied by his family and wife, he found strangers living there. And none of them had ever heard of his family.

As he was leaving, full of sadness, he just happened to run into some of his old neighbors who told him, ‘Your whole family is dead. The Nazis took them and your wife to Auschwitz.’

Well, Paskin gave up all hope and managed to immigrate to the United States just three months before I met him. And all the time he’d been talking, I kept thinking that somehow his story seemed familiar.

You see, a young woman I’d recently met at the home of friends had also been from Debrecen and had been sent to Auschwitz. Her relatives had been killed in the gas chambers and later she was liberated by the Americans and was brought here. In fact, her story had moved me so much that I wrote down her address and phone number so I could invite her to meet my family to relieve the terrible emptiness in her life.

It seemed impossible that there could be any connection between these two people, but as I neared my station, I asked in what I hoped was a casual voice, ‘Was your wife’s name Marya?’

Bela turned pale and answered, ‘Yes! How did you know?’ He looked as if he were about to faint.
I said, ‘Let’s get off the train.’ So I took him by the arm at the next station and led him to a phone booth. He stood there like a man in a trance while I dialed her phone number. It seemed hours before Marya Paskin answered.

Later I learned her room was alongside the telephone, but she was in the habit of never answering it because she had so few friends and the calls were always for someone else. This time, however, there was no one else at home and, after letting it ring for a while, Marya Paskin responded.

When I heard her voice at last, I told her who I was and asked her to describe her husband. And then asking her to hold the line, I turned to Paskin and said, ‘Try to be calm, but something miraculous is about to happen to you. Here, take this telephone and talk to your wife!’

Bela was as white as a sheet and his eyes were bright with tears. He took the receiver, listened a moment to his wife’s voice, then suddenly cried, ‘This is Bela! This is Bela!’ and he began to mumble hysterically.

Seeing that the poor fellow was so excited he couldn’t talk coherently, I took the receiver from his shaking hands and I told Marya, ‘Stay where you are. I’m sending your husband to you.’

By now, Bela was crying like a baby and saying over and over again. ‘It is my wife. I go to my wife!’ At first I thought I had better accompany Paskin, lest the man should faint from excitement. But I decided that this was a moment in which no strangers should intrude. So I put Paskin into a cab, directed the driver to take him to Marya’s address, paid the fare, and said goodbye.

Now, skeptical persons will no doubt attribute the events of that memorable afternoon to mere chance. But was it chance that made Marcel Sternberger suddenly decide to visit his sick friend and take a subway he’s never ridden before? Was it chance that caused the man sitting by the door of the car to rush out just as Sternberger came in? Was it chance that caused Bela Paskin to be sitting beside Sternberger, reading a Hungarian newspaper?

Was it chance—or did God ride the Brooklyn subway that afternoon?!

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say Mr. and Mrs. Paskin there have no problem believing that God can solve any problem today, how
about you? And people get this. That includes our problems too! All of them! And I don’t know about you, but I’d say that someone who could reunite that couple in that manner, might be just a little bit powerful, how about you? In fact, I’d venture to say He could probably do whatever He wants!

And people this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people really can have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe before it’s too late!” But people, I’m telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we’ve got to stop acting like practical atheists. We’ve got to start demonstrating by our lips as well as our lives that God is Powerful!
Chapter Fifteen

God’s Power Cannot Be Intimidated

“One day, two ladies stumbled across a real live ‘Husband Shopping Center’ where a woman could go and personally choose a husband from among many men.

It had five floors with the men increasing in positive attributes as you ascended up the floors. The only rule was, once you opened the door to any floor, you must choose a man from that floor, and if you went up a floor, you couldn’t go back down except to leave the place.

So the two ladies decided to go in and find a good husband. And when they got to the first floor, the door had a sign saying ‘These men have jobs and love kids.’ And the women read the sign and say, ‘Well that’s better than not having jobs, or not loving kids, but I wonder what’s further up?’

So up they go to the second floor which had a sign that said, ‘These men have high paying jobs, love kids, and are extremely good looking.’ And the ladies said, ‘Hmmmm…but I wonder what’s further up?’

So they get to the third floor which says, ‘These men have high paying jobs, are extremely good looking, love kids and help with the housework.’ ‘WOW,’ said the ladies, ‘Very tempting, BUT, there’s more further up!’
And up they go to the fourth floor which said, ‘These men have high paying jobs, love kids, are extremely good looking, help with the housework, and have a strong romantic streak.’

‘Oh mercy me,’ cried the ladies, ‘But just think! What must be awaiting us further up!’

So, up to the fifth floor they go and there they see a sign on the door that said, ‘This floor is just to prove that women are impossible to please. Please exit the building and have a nice day.’

Now those ladies should’ve stopped while they were ahead, shouldn’t they? They had all kinds of great guys to choose from, right in front of them, but they kept passing them up looking for something better. But folks, did you know the same thing happens with you and I as Christians? You see, we too pass up on something great right in front of us. It’s called the Bible. And as long as we allow ourselves to be tricked into searching for something better, we’ll never be satisfied, just like those ladies Why? Well, it works like this. You see, when people refuse to study the Bible, it produces a generation of Churches that are full of Christians acting like practical atheists.

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our lips and by our lives, we act like He’s not there. And this not only keeps us from growing in our own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christians living like practical atheists by not knowing Who God Is, we’re going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, “Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?”

We’ve already seen that the very first thing we need to know about God is that God Is Real. The second thing we need to know about God is that God Is Personal. The third thing we need to know about God is that God Is Wise. And in the last two chapters we saw that the fourth thing we need to know about God
is that **God Is Powerful**. And in the last chapter we saw **three ways** that show us that **God Is so Powerful** that **There’s Nothing He Cannot Do**. He can do whatever He wants. And there we saw that **God Can Save Anyone He Wants**, **He Can Supply Any Need He Wants**, and **He Can Solve Any Problem He Wants**.

Now that’s pretty powerful, don’t you think? Oh, but it gets even better. You see, the **second way** the Bible shows us what God’s Power is like is **That Nothing Can Intimidate Him**. But hey, don’t take my word for it, let’s listen to God’s.

**Daniel 4:34-35** “At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: What have you done?” (NIV)

Now folks, I think it’s pretty obvious according to our text that **nothing and no one** can ever intimidate God, **ever**! Why? Because He’s going to do whatever He wants to do, any time He pleases. And this is what Nebuchadnezzar finally got through his head. He learned that **God Is So Powerful** that He doesn’t have to answer to anyone. Nobody’s going to bully Him around and nothing is going to make Him afraid. And people, believe it or not, this is another one of our problems in living like practical atheists. You see, we forget that **God is the One Who is in control**! We forget that **because we’re His children** that we **don’t have to be afraid** and we don’t have to be **bullied around** by people or circumstances. Why? Because God certainly isn’t afraid, is He?

Therefore, to help us get a helpful reminder like Nebuchadnezzar got, we’re going to take a look at some of the ways the Bible **shows us** that **Nothing**
Can Intimidate God. And the first way we know that Nothing Can Intimidate God is because God Has Control Over the Wild Animals.

2 Kings 2:23-24 “Elisha left Jericho and went up to Bethel. As he was walking along the road, a group of boys from the town began mocking and making fun of him. Go away, you baldhead! they chanted. Go away, you baldhead! Elisha turned around and looked at them, and he cursed them in the name of the LORD. Then two bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of them.” (NLT)

Now folks, according to our text here, I think the lesson’s pretty clear. Whatever you do, don’t joke around with a bald guy, right? In fact, one guy who is very bald says he’s so afraid of bald jokes that he no longer wears turtle neck sweaters because he doesn’t want to go around looking like one of those roll on deodorants! But seriously, I think the bigger lesson in our text is that God obviously has control over the wild animals, right? People He’s so powerful that with a snap of His fingers, even animals have to do His bidding. Wild ferocious beasts become playthings in His hands. But people, bears aren’t the only wild animals God’s got control over. Let’s look at a few of the others He controlled in the past.

1. Caused FROGS to invade Egypt: (Exodus 8)
2. Caused GNATS to invade Egypt: (Exodus 8)
3. Caused FLIES to invade Egypt: (Exodus 8)
4. Caused the LIVESTOCK of Egypt only to die: (Exodus 9)
5. Caused LOCUSTS to invade Egypt: (Exodus 10)
6. Caused QUAIL to come for food: (Numbers 11)
7. Caused poisonous SNAKES to bite people: (Numbers 21)
8. Caused HORNETS to invade: (Joshua 24)
9. Caused BEARS to maul youths: (2 Kings 2)
10. Caused a DONKEY talk and rebuke Balaam: (Numbers 22)

Now folks, I don’t know about you, But I’d say whoever could do that is just a little bit powerful, don’t you think? Dr. Doolittle, eat your heart out. But
that’s not the half of it. God not only controlled the animals in the past, but He’s also going to do it again in the future.

**Revelation 6:8** “And I looked up and saw a horse whose color was pale green like a corpse. And Death was the name of its rider, who was followed around by the Grave. They were given authority over one-fourth of the earth, to kill with the sword and famine and disease and wild animals.” (NLT)

Now according to our text, one of the instruments that God’s going to use during the 7-year Tribulation to judge the wicked is **wild animals**, right? In fact, they’re going to be used to help get rid of one fourth of the earth’s population. But you might be asking, “Okay, **maybe in the past** there were lots of dangerous wild animals, but that’s not a big concern today. That can’t really happen today could it?” Well, that might change if the environmentalist’s have their way. You see, there’s an actual map out there that reveals in great detail the environmentalists plan to turn America into one gigantic wild animal park. It’s called the **Biodiversity Treaty**. And it basically maps out where you and I get to live and where the animals get to live. And with one look at this map you will see that America will basically be turned into one giant wildlife park with most of the human population corralled into isolated areas on the East Coast. I know this may sound crazy but you can go online and check it out for yourself.³

But the point is this. It’s not only kind of creepy and crazy all at the same time, but **based on that map**, maybe there really could come a day when the earth will once again have a super abundant supply of wild animals. And gee, if a famine hits, they might get a little bit hungry, don’t you think? But folks, the **bigger point** is this. I don’t know about you, but I’d say anyone who could **control all the wild animals on the whole earth**, might be just a little bit powerful, how about you? In fact, I’d venture to say that nobody could ever intimidate them?
Oh, but that’s not all. The **second way** we know that **Nothing Can Intimidate God** is because **God Has Control Over The Weather**.

**Job 37:5-6** “God’s voice is glorious in the thunder. We cannot comprehend the greatness of his power. He directs the snow to fall on the earth and tells the rain to pour down.” (NLT)

Now according to our text, I think it’s pretty clear just whose the ultimate weatherman? It’s God, right? He **obviously** has control over the **weather**, right?

People, **God is so powerful** that with a clap of His hands, even the **atmosphere** has to do His bidding. Lightning and thunder become playthings in His hands.

But people, **rain and snow** isn’t the only weather God’s got control over. Let’s look at some other weather He has controlled in the past.

1. Caused the world to **FLOOD**: (Genesis 7)
2. Caused **FIRE** from heaven upon the cities: (Genesis 19)
3. Caused plagues of **HAIL**, **THUNDER**, and **LIGHTNING** in Egypt: (Exodus 9)
4. Caused the **WIND** to divide the Red Sea: (Exodus 14)
5. Caused the **SUN** to stand still: (Joshua 10)
6. Caused **DEW** to form on Gideon’s fleece: (Judges 6)
7. Caused a **WHIRLWIND** to carry Elijah to heaven: (2 Kings 2)
8. Caused **RAIN** in answer to Samuel’s prayer: (1 Samuel 12)
9. Caused a **STORM** to confuses the Philistine army: (1 Samuel 7)
10. Caused **DARKNESS** at the crucifixion: (Matthew 27)

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say whoever could do that is just a little bit powerful, don’t you think? Dopler Radar, eat your heart out. But that’s not the half of it. God not only controlled the weather in the past, but He’s also going to do it again in the future.

**Revelation 8:5,7** “Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake. The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down upon the
earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.” (NIV)

Now according to our text, another instrument God’s going to use during the 7-year Tribulation is the weather, right? In fact, prior to the Tribulation, Jesus said that if you want to know when He’s coming back that you also need to pay attention to the weather. This is one weather forecast you don’t want to miss!

**Matthew 24:3-4,7-8** “Later, Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives. His disciples came to him privately and said, Tell us, when will all this happen? What sign will signal your return and the end of the world? Jesus told them, Don’t let anyone mislead you. Nation will go to war against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in many parts of the world. But all this is only the first of the birth pains, with more to come.” (NLT)

Hmmm. Now Jesus said that prior to His second Coming that there’s going to be an increase in destructive wars and destructive weather all over the world. Gee, do we see any signs of this today? Wow! That’s kind of creepy and crazy all at the same time, isn’t it? But folks, the bigger point is this. I don’t know about you, but I’d say anyone who could control all the weather on the whole earth, might be just a little bit powerful, how about you? In fact, I’d venture to say that nobody could ever intimidate them.

Oh, but that’s not all. The third way we know that Nothing Can Intimidate God is because God Has Control Over The Wicked Governments. **Daniel 4:17** “For this has been decreed by the messengers; it is commanded by the holy ones. The purpose of this decree is that the whole world may understand that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world and gives them to anyone he chooses – even to the lowliest of humans.” (NLT)

Now according to our text, I think it’s pretty clear just who is the Ultimate Authority? It’s God, right? He obviously has control over the governments, right? People listen up. God is so powerful that with a blink of an
eye, even kings have to do His bidding. In fact, Daniel goes on to say that God has already mapped out all the major governments for mankind’s history in the past. First, there was the Babylonian Empire, then the Medo-Persian Empire, then the Grecian Empire and finally the Roman Empire. In fact, God not only mapped out the governments in the past, He did it for the future as well. You see, the Bible says that there’s going to come a revived Roman Empire made up of ten rulers. When? In the last days.

Revelation 17:12-13 “The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour. These have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast.” (NAS)

But you might be asking, “Well, that’s kind of neat, but we don’t see any signs of this today, do we?” Well, that might all change if the Club of Rome gets their way. You see, believe it or not, there’s another map out there besides the Biodiversity Treaty. This map was produced by the Club of Rome. They have basically divided the world up into various economic regions and the plan is to have these regions each under the control of an individual leader who will answer to a central leader. And can anyone guess just how many regions the world is divided up into economically? That’s right! Can you say ten? Once, again, if you don’t believe me, you can go check it out for yourself.5

But the point remains. Hmmm. Club of Rome and Revived Roman Empire. And the world divided up into Ten Economic Regions? Wow! That’s kind of creepy and crazy all at the same time, isn’t it? I mean, based on that map, maybe there really could come a day when the earth will have a world government split up into ten kingdoms. But folks, before you get all anxious about world events, you really need to hear what God says about all these wicked people and their wicked plans for a world government.
Psalm 2:1-4 “Why do the nations plot, and why do their people make useless plans? The kings of this earth have all joined together to turn against the LORD and his chosen one. They say, Let’s cut the ropes and set ourselves free! In heaven the LORD laughs as he sits on his throne, making fun of the nations.” (CEV)

Now folks, I don’t know about you but it sure it doesn’t sound like God’s worried one teensy weensy bit, how about you? Therefore, what should our attitude be? Don’t worry, be happy, right? Why? Because I’d say anyone who could not only laugh at but control all the wicked governments on the whole earth, might be just a little bit powerful, how about you? In fact, I’d venture to say that nobody could ever intimidate them.

And people the whole point of this chapter is this. It’s not to freak you out and scare you with world events. Hello! It’s to encourage your heart and strengthen your faith! If God is laughing about all the wicked attempts of people to try to overthrow His authority, then what should our attitude be? Maybe we should lighten up a little bit? And if God can control the Wild Animals, the Weather, and even the Wicked Governments, past, present and future, then can’t He control the people and circumstances in our lives today? Of course He can! And people, once you realize the awesomeness of God’s power, it’s going to revolutionize your life. In fact, it’s going to be kind of hard to keep your mouth shut about it, like it was for this person.

“He is the First and Last, the Beginning and the End! He is the keeper of Creation and the Creator of all! He is the Architect of the universe and The Manager of all times.

He always was, always is, and always will be…Unmoved, Unchanged, Undefeated, and never Undone!

The world can’t understand him, The armies can’t defeat Him, the schools can’t explain Him, and the leaders can’t ignore Him.
Herod couldn’t kill Him, The Pharisees couldn’t confuse Him, and the people couldn’t hold Him! Nero couldn’t crush Him, Hitler couldn’t silence Him, The New Age can’t replace Him, and Donahue can’t explain Him away!

He is Holy, Righteous, Mighty, Powerful, and Pure. His Ways are right, His Word is eternal, His Will is unchanging, and His Mind is on me.

He’s my Redeemer, my Savior, my Guide, and my Peace! He’s my Joy, my Comfort, my Lord, and He rules this life!

He will never leave me, forsake me, mislead me, forget me, and never cancel my appointment in His appointment book!

When I fall, He lifts me up! When I fail, He forgives! When I am weak, He is strong! When I am lost, He is the way!

When I am afraid, He is my courage! When I face persecution, He shields me! And when I face Death, He carries me Home! He is Everything for everybody, everywhere, every time, and every way.

He is God, He is Faithful. I am His, and He is mine! My Father in heaven can whip the father of this world.

So, if you’re wondering why I feel so secure, you better understand this... God is in control, I am on His side, and that means all is well with my soul.”

Now folks, I’d say that Christian wasn’t going to be intimidated by anything, how about you? I’d say he probably had a good grasp on the fact that **God is just a little bit powerful**, how about you? People, there really is no need to be intimidated by life. There’s no need to fear. **Why?** Because nothing intimidates God and we belong to Him. And since He’s a good and loving God then that means whatever He allows into our lives **must** serve a good and loving purpose. **Why?** Because He’s the One in Control!
And people this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people really can have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe before it’s too late!” But people, I’m telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we’ve got to stop acting like practical atheists. We’ve got to start demonstrating by our lips as well as our lives that God is Powerful!
Hey, how many of you guys have ever considered going back to school as adults? It’s pretty commonplace nowadays, isn’t it? And we usually do this to hopefully improve the quality of life, right? Well, folks, I’ve got good news for you. You see, I came across a list of some classes guaranteed to really improve your life. And we’re not talking about just any ol’ classes. We’re talking about classes specifically for men!

1. **Toilet Paper Rolls:** They don’t grow on the holders! (Followed by a Round-table discussion)

2. **Health Watch:** Bringing her flowers is not harmful to your health. (Includes graphics and audio tape)

3. **Learning How To Find Things:** Starting with looking in the right place instead of turning the house upside down while screaming your head off. (Open forum discussion)

4. **Is It Genetically Possible To Sit Quietly As She Parallel Parks?** (A driving simulation will be offered)
5. **The After-Dinner Dishes And Silverware**: Can they really levitate and fly into the kitchen sink? (Examples on video)

6. **Communication Skills III**: Getting What you Want Without Nagging

7. **Advanced Motor Shop**: Driving a car safely. A skill you CAN acquire

8. **Telephone Skills 101**: How to Hang Up

9. **Cooking II**: Bran and Tofu are NOT for Human Consumption

10. **Cooking III**: How NOT to Inflict Your Diets on Other People

11. **Classical Dancing**: Why Men Don’t Like To And Never Will!

Yes, as you can see, there’s lots of classes out there to improve our lives, aren’t there? But folks, did you know there’s one course out there for **men AND women** that’s guaranteed to improve your life? Hey that’s right, there really is. It’s called **Bible Study 101**. But unfortunately, many Christians avoid this course and so their lives never seem to improve. **Why**? Well, it works like this. You see, when people refuse to **study the Bible**, it produces a generation of Churches that are full of Christians acting like **practical atheists**.

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our **lips** and by our **lives**, we act like He’s not there. And this not only keeps us from growing in our own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christians living like practical atheists by not knowing **Who God Is**, we’re going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, “**Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?**”

We’ve already seen that the very **first thing** we need to know about God is that **God Is Real**. The **second thing** we need to know about God is that **God Is Personal**. The **third thing** we need to know about God is that **God Is Wise**. And
in the last three chapters we saw that the **fourth thing** we need to know about God is that **God Is Powerful**. And in the last chapter we saw another detail about God’s Power and that was **There’s Nothing That Can Intimidate God** Why? Because He’s in control. And there we saw that **God Has Control over the Wild Animals**, the **Weather**, and **Wicked Governments**.

Now that’s pretty powerful, don’t you think? Oh, but it gets even better. You see, the Bible not only shows us what God’s Power is like, it also shows us **what it can do for you**. And the **first thing** God’s Power does for us is that **It Gives Us Strength**. But hey, don’t take my word for it. Let’s listen to God’s.

**Philippians 4:10-13** “I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.” (NIV)

Now folks, I don’t think Paul could’ve made it any more plain than that as to where we get our strength from. It only comes from who? From God right? But what you have to keep in mind is that when Paul said this, he wasn’t on vacation and he didn’t just inherit a million dollars. No! He was in a deep, dark, stinky, rat-filled dungeon, and what did he say? He was **content** in that situation. Why? Because **God gave Him the strength for it**! That was the secret he learned! And people, lest you think this was just some isolated case with Paul, let’s take a look at some of the other things he had to endure.

1. He **worked harder** than anyone.
2. He’d been in **prison** more than anyone.
3. He’d been **flogged** more severely than anyone.
4. He was **exposed to death** again and again.
5. Five times he was **beaten with 39 lashes**.
6. Three times he was **beaten with rods**.
7. Once he was **stoned**.
8. Three times he was **shipwrecked**.
9. He spent a **night and a day in the open sea**.
10. He was in **constant danger** from rivers, bandits, his own countrymen and Gentiles, and false brothers.
11. He **labored** and **toiled** often **without sleep**.
12. He **often** went **without food or water** and **clothing**.
13. He **daily** felt the **pressure** and **concern** for all the Churches.²

Now I don’t know about you guys, but I’d say Paul wasn’t just having a bad day, he was having a **bad life**! Could you imagine going through all that and **still** being content? How in the world could he survive all that?

Oh, but Paul wasn’t the only one. There’s examples all over Scripture. How about Gideon? He and three hundred other men took on and defeated thousands of their enemies. And later, Gideon single-handedly defeated a whole town! Or how about Samson? He rips the massive gates off of a city and proceeds to take them up to the hills. And then all by himself he killed thousands of guys coming at him with the jaw-bone of a donkey!

Now how many of you have ever had a day like that? That’s kind of rough, don’t you think? I mean, I’ve had some bad days, but nothing like that! Yet, the point is that somehow those guys not only survived, but they came out on top! Why? Well, could it be they realized that it’s God and God alone Who **gives us strength**? Gee, I kind of think so.

Oh, but that’s not all. The **second thing** God’s Power does for us is that **It Gives Us Courage**.

**Daniel 3:16-18** “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. But even if He doesn’t, we want to make it clear to you,
Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up.” (NLT)

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were having a bad day, how about you? I mean, here they are going up against the world ruler of that day who just happened to be threatening them with death on the spot by throwing them into a fiery furnace, and what’d they say? In the Crone translation they said, “Take a hike little king! We serve the Almighty King!” Now people, that’s just a little bit courageous, don’t you think?

Oh, but Daniel’s three friends aren’t the only ones who had courage when they needed it most. There’s examples all over Scripture. How about Moses going up against Pharaoh? Here’s an 80-year old guy taking on a world power and giving them orders to let tens of thousands of their slaves go free? Can you imagine doing that today? Or how about David going up against Goliath? Here’s a 12-14 year old going up against a seasoned warrior who’s over 9 feet tall!

Or how about Foster Walker, who accidentally walked into a bank holdup in Memphis Tennessee? As soon as he walked in the robber pointed the gun at him and ordered Walker to give him his money. So what did Walker do? He said, “You just go ahead and shoot. I just got through reading my Bible and I’ve already said my prayers.” And Walker, a man in his 60’s, just turned and walked away.”

Or how about this Christian grandmother from South Dakota? They were in their motor home when a 120 pound mountain lion leaped through the window and began to maul her 18-month old grandson. So what’d she do? She said, “All I kept saying was, “Give me a knife! Give me a knife!” And her husband gave her a butcher knife and she jammed it in and twisted it in the lion’s
heart and killed it. Later she said she prayed to the Lord for the strength and
courage to hit the right spot, and He did.”

Or how about what **C. T. Studd**, a Christian missionary said, “Some
people want to live within the sound of a Church or chapel bell. But I want to run
a rescue shop within a yard of hell!”

Now I don’t know about you guys, but I’d say those people were just a
little bit courageous, how about you? **Why?** Could it be they realized that it’s
God and God alone Who **gives us courage**? Gee, I kind of think so!

Oh, but that’s not all. The **third thing** God’s Power does for us is that It
**Gives Us Protection.**

**Titus 2:14** “For he gave himself for us, that he might set us free from all our evil
ways and make for himself a people of his own, clean and pure, with our hearts
set upon living a life that is good.” (J.B.P.)

Now, on the surface, this passage does not seem to speak much about
God’s **powerful protection** towards His children. That is, until you focus on the
phrase, “a people of his own.” In the Greek, it literally means “a people of His
own private possession.” And it’s made up of two words, one which means
“**around,**” as a circle, and the other which means “**to be.**” And the picture in the
Greek is like having a person totally surrounded by a circle. It’s like we walk
around with a **God bubble.** Therefore, nothing enters the sphere of our lives
without His divine permission. And if God allows it, it must serve a good
purpose because He’s a good and loving God. That’s how powerful God’s
protection is!

In fact, the Bible shows us that God’s protection is not only two-
dimensional, it’s **multi-dimensional.** For instance, we have God **before us**
(Isaiah 48:17), God **behind us** (Isaiah 30:21), God on our **right** (Psalm 16:8),
God on our **left** (Job 23:9), God is **above us** (Psalm 36:7), God’s arms are
underneath us (Deuteronomy 33:27), and His Spirit is within us (1 Corinthians 3:16).

Now I’d say that’s pretty well protected, how about you? And this brings us to The **fourth thing** God’s Power does for us is that **It Gives Us Hope**.

**Romans 15:13** “So I pray that God, who gives you hope, will keep you happy and full of peace as you believe in him. May you overflow with hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.” (NIV)

Now folks, I think it’s pretty obvious where our hope come from. It comes from God, right? And when does it fill our hearts? As we **trust** in Him. And people this is the whole key to **experiencing** God’s power. You see, we don’t get the hope we need to make it through life when we have all the answers and all details figured out. We don’t get it after all the problems go away! No! That’s not when we need it. We get it as we trust in Him for strength, courage, and protection **during our difficulties**.

And people, this is why the Bible says over and over again, that Christians **should not** be filled with worry, anxiety, or even fear. Why? Because even though we might not “see” God’s power moving, it’s still nonetheless real. **And this should give us hope**! In fact, most of the time, we don’t even recognize God’s power moving in our lives until after the fact, like this missionary learned.

“A missionary on furlough told this true story while visiting his home Church in Michigan. While serving at a small field hospital in Africa, every two weeks I traveled by bicycle through the jungle to a nearby city for supplies.

This was a two-day journey and required camping overnight at the halfway point. On one of these journeys, I arrived in the city where I planned to collect money from a bank, purchase medicine and supplies, and then begin my two-day journey back to the field hospital.

Upon arrival in the city, I observed two men fighting, one of whom had been seriously injured. I treated him for his injuries and at the same time talked to him
about the Lord Jesus Christ. I then traveled two days, camping overnight, and arrived home without incident.

Two weeks later I repeated my journey and upon arriving in the city, I was approached by the young man I had treated. He told me that he had known I carried money and medicines.

And he said, ‘Some friends and I followed you into the jungle, knowing you would camp overnight. We planned to kill you and take your money and drugs. But just as we were about to move into your camp, we saw that you were surrounded by twenty-six armed guards.’

Well, at this I laughed and said that I was certainly all alone out in that jungle campsite. But the young man pressed the point and said, ‘No sir, I was not the only person to see the guards. My five friends also saw them, and we all counted them. It was because of those guards that we were afraid and left you alone.’

Well, at this point in missionaries address, one of the men in the congregation jumped to his feet and interrupted the missionary and asked if he could tell him the exact day that this happened. So the missionary shared the date and the man who interrupted him told him this story.

‘On the night of your incident in Africa, it was morning here and I was preparing to play golf. I was about to putt when I felt the urge to pray for you. In fact, the urging of the Lord was so strong, I called men in this Church to meet with me here in the sanctuary to pray for you.’

And then he asked if all of those men who met with him on that day would please stand up. And when they did, the missionary wasn’t concerned with who they were—he was too busy counting how many men he saw. There were twenty-six.’

People, it really is true. We may never see God’s presence or even fully understand His power, but it’s nonetheless real. He totally surrounds us at all times. And it’s trusting in this truth that gives us hope for today! You see, in reality there are no hopeless situations. There’s only people who’ve given up hope. How? By losing sight of God and His power to do what He says He’ll do.
And people this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people **really can** have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe **before it’s too late!**” But people, I’m telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we’ve got to stop acting like practical atheists. We’ve got to start demonstrating by our **lips** as well as our **lives** that **God is Powerful!**
“One day a woman boarded a bus, holding a baby and the bus driver said, ‘Wow!!! That’s the ugliest baby I have EVER seen in my life’

Well, in a huff, the woman slammed her fare into the fare box and took an aisle seat near the rear of the bus. And boy was she ever fuming about what was said. In fact, the longer she thought about it, the more she got worked up about it.

And the man seated next to her sensed that she was agitated and asked her what was wrong.

So she said through clenched teeth, ‘The bus driver insulted me!’

And the man began to sympathize with her and said, ‘Hey! He’s a public servant and he shouldn’t say things to insult the passengers.’

And the lady said, ‘You’re right! I think I’ll go back up there and give him a piece of my mind.’

And the man said, ‘That’s a good idea. Here, let me hold your monkey!’”

Now how many of you would say that man was just about to get slapped? Oh, he had great intentions of wanting to help, but his behavior got
him into trouble didn’t it? **Why?** Because he wasn’t paying attention, was he? And folks, did you know he’s not the only one whose behavior’s getting them into trouble. Believe it or not so is the behavior of a lot of Christians. **Why?** Because they’re **also not paying attention** to one thing. Can you guess what that is? That’s right, it’s called **Bible study.** And because of this, they are getting slapped around **spiritually**! And if that wasn’t bad enough, now because many Christians refuse to **study the Bible,** it’s producing a generation of Churches that are full of Christians acting like **practical atheists.**

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our **lips** and by our **lives,** we act like He’s not there. And this not only keeps us from growing in our own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christians living like practical atheists by not knowing **Who God Is,** we’re going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, **“Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?”** We’ve already seen that the very **first thing** we need to know about God is that **God Is Real.** The **second thing** we need to know about God is that **God Is Personal.** The **third thing** we need to know about God is that **God Is Wise.** And in the last four chapters we saw that the **fourth thing** we need to know about God is that **God Is Powerful.** And in the last chapter we saw **four things** that God’s Power does for us. And there we saw that it gives us **Strength,** it gives us **Courage,** it gives us **Protection,** and because of this it gives us **Hope,** especially when we need it most.

Now that’s pretty awesome, don’t you think? But you might be thinking, “Okay, I understand what God’s Power is like and I even understand what it can do for me. But the question I have is this, **“Why don’t I experience it?”** Hey great question. I’m glad you asked. And folks, it’s pretty simple. The **main**
**reason** why we don’t experience God’s Power in our lives is **Because We Don’t Love God Like We Used To.** But hey, don’t take my word for it. Let’s listen to God’s.

**Revelation 2:1-4** “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands. I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance.

I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you. You have forsaken your first love.” (NIV)

Now according to our text here, the Ephesian Church had it going, right? I mean, they were working hard, persevering, and staying away from false teachers, which is a good thing to do, right? But they had **one big glaring problem.** And can anybody guess what that was? They had forsaken or lost their first love. What? Could that really happen? Could Christians do all the right stuff but still have the wrong heart? Unfortunately, the answer is yes. In fact, it happens all the time. **And what makes it so tricky to spot** is that you usually don’t notice right away. All it takes is a little **compromise** here and a few **excuses** there and the next thing you know, **over time,** it feels like God’s a million miles away. But folks, if it ever feels like God’s a million miles away, guess who moved? Not God, you did! And if it continues, you not only run the risk of losing your first love, but of **losing out on the power of God** in your life.

Therefore, I think we better take a look at some of the signs to indicate when we’ve started to lose our first love, how about you? And folks it’s pretty simple. The **first sign** to indicate that we’ve lost our first love is that **We No Longer Place Our Faith in God.**
Hebrews 11:1-2 “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for.” (NLT)

Now folks, according to our text, if we want to be commended by God, what do we need to do? We need to have faith in God, right? And notice the definition of faith there. It’s not only being sure of what you hope for, but certain about it even though you don’t see it.

And people, this is precisely our problem. You see, over time we’re tempted to not understand things spiritually, but naturally. We no longer trust in God, we start thinking about the odds. We don’t apply mountains of faith, we try to mentally figure it out! And if we really want to be intelligent, we don’t turn to the Savior, we turn to the latest statistics to determine whether or not something is feasible. But folks, did you know that 73.4% of statistics are wrong? Did you know that 5 out of 4 people have trouble with fractions? And how about those 4 out of 5 dentists who like this brand of toothpaste or those 4 out of 5 doctors who recommend this particular brand of cold medicine. I mean, have you ever stopped to think about this? Why is it always 4 out of 5? Is there really one guy in the medical world always holding out just to be a troublemaker so they’ll never get a perfect 5 out of 5? I mean, come on! Get real!

And people the whole point is this. In our naturalistic world, we are totally inundated with and tempted to listen to statistical data as if it’s the gospel truth! But let me ask you, is God bound by statistics? Is a mathematical probability more powerful than Him? Is your cranium bigger than the Creator? Then why in the world would we place more faith in a statistic instead of the Savior? I mean, who’s the real source of power here? And just to make sure we realize just how powerful faith in God can be, let’s take a look at what faith in God has done for some of God’s children.
1. By faith Enoch was **raptured to God**.
2. By faith Noah **survived** a worldwide **flood**.
3. By faith Abraham **received** the **Promised Land**.
4. By faith Moses’ parents **saved** him from **death**.
5. By faith Moses **led** the **Israelites** out into the desert.
6. By faith David **conquered kingdoms**.
7. By faith Daniel **shut** the **mouths of the lions**.
8. By faith others **endured being flogged** and thrown into prison.
9. By faith others **endured torture** and even refused to be released.
10. By faith others **endured being sawed in two**.3

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say those people benefited just a little bit by having faith in God, didn’t they? They not only received the power to overcome their enemies but also the power to overcome some pretty horrible circumstances. And people, this is the great news. Faith in God doesn’t just work for those folks in the past. **It works for you and I today**! And folks, I’m telling you, as long as you and I refuse to place our faith in God, all we’re doing is causing ourselves a lot of unnecessary pain and fear, like this guy observed.

“One time I heard of a story about the early days of our country when a weary traveler came to the banks of the Mississippi River for the first time and there was no bridge. It was early winter, and the surface of the mighty stream was covered with ice. Could he dare cross over? Would the uncertain ice be able to bear his weight?

Well, night was falling, and it was urgent that he reach the other side. So finally, after much hesitation and with many fears, he began to creep cautiously across the surface of the ice on his hands and knees.

He thought that he might distribute his weight as much as possible and keep the ice from breaking beneath him. And about halfway over, he heard the sound of singing behind him. And out of the dusk, there came a man, driving a horse-drawn load of coal across the ice, singing merrily as he went on his way.
Now here he was—on his hands and knees, trembling lest the ice should break! And there went the man, his horses, his sleigh, and his load of coal, upheld by the same ice on which he was creeping!

And he says this, ‘And so it is like this traveler that some of us have learned only to creep upon the promises of God. Cautiously, timidly, tremblingly we venture forth upon His promises, as though the lightness of our step might make His promises more secure.

God has promised to be with us. Let us believe that promise! He has promised to uphold us. Let us take Him at His word.

We are not to creep upon these promises as though they were too fragile to uphold us. We are to stand on them—confident that God is as good as His Word and that He will do what He has pledged to do.’”

People, when are we going to realize that God will keep His promises? Hello, He’s God! He is **faithful** and therefore **worthy of our faith**. And how sad it is that many Christians are creeping around in life full of pain and fear when other Christians are skating around having a good ol’ time. Why? Because they’re not creeping around on God’s promises, they’re standing on them. **By placing their faith in a faithful God!**

People, it not that hard to figure out. If you refuse to place your faith in a supernatural God then don’t expect to experience His Supernatural Power. It’s that simple. But not only that. It might also be a sign you’re losing your first love!

Oh, but that’s not all. The **second sign** to indicate that we’ve lost our first love is that **We No Longer Pray to God.**

**Acts 4:24,29,31** “When they heard the report, all the believers lifted their voices together in prayer to God: O Sovereign Lord, Creator of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them. O Lord, hear their threats, and give us, your servants, great boldness in preaching your word. After this prayer, the meeting
place shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they preached the word of God with boldness.” (NLT)

Now folks, according to our text, the early Church was facing some serious problems and serious persecution. So what did they do? Did they stop and pout about it? No! They prayed to God about it. And what happened? They not only got the **boldness** to preach the Word but the **buildings** began to shake! Now that’s a powerful prayer, don’t you think? And people, **that’s what prayer can do!**

But here’s our problem. We all talk about prayer, we believe in prayer, and we encourage each other to pray, but do we ever get around to praying? No! And here’s what happens. **Over time**, instead of praying to God right off the bat when troubles hit, we turn to **entertainment**. Instead of praying, **we go playing**! And pretty soon we come up with the all time biggest excuse of all, “**I Don’t Have Time To Pray.**” How many of you guys heard that one before? But people, I’m telling you this is one of the biggest lies from the pit of hell. You see, I’ve learned over the years that it’s not that we don’t have time to pray. No! It’s that we don’t take the time to pray. How do I know? Because we don’t seem to have a problem **finding time** for all sorts of **other things.**

For instance, how about the **sacred cow of TV**? Oh, it might be visually entertaining but it’s not spiritually stimulating. In fact, it’s a mindless activity. For instance, “How much TV would you watch if you had to chop wood to keep it going?”⁵ Think about it. It not only puts waste in your mind but **it wastes your time.** For instance, the **average family** watches 6 hours 59 minutes of TV per day. And because of this, by the age of 10, most children can name more brands of beer than Presidents. Wow! What an accomplishment, huh? Oh but that’s not all. Did you know that the **average person** spends 4 ½ hours a day watching TV.
And that’s enough time to read the Bible 22 times in just one year, not to mention a whole lot of prayer in between. And people, that’s just the **one non-spiritual activity**. What about all the other habits and hobbies we seem to always find time for? I mean, come on man! Who are we kidding? It’s not that we don’t have time to pray, we just don’t take the time to pray. We waste our time on non-spiritual things. One person had this to say.

“The moment you wake up each morning, all your wishes and hopes for the day rush at you like wild animals. And the first job each morning consists in shoving it all back and listening to God. Why? Because he who runs from God in the morning will scarcely find Him the rest of the day.”

And might I add, and the next day and the next day and the next day until one day you wake up and it feels like God’s a million miles away. **Why?** All because you fell for the lie, “I just don’t have the time.” But let me ask you, “Is the media more important than the Maker of the Universe? Will a sit-com soothe your soul better than the Savior? Then why in the world would we spend all our time with Hollywood instead of our Heavenly Father? Who’s the real source of power here? And just to make sure we realize just how powerful praying to God can be, let’s take a look at what prayer can do for God’s children.

1. By prayer Moses **parted** the **Red Sea**.
2. By prayer Hannah was **able to conceive**.
3. By prayer David **defeated Goliath**.
4. By prayer Jonah was **released from** the belly of a **whale**.
5. By prayer Elijah **caused** it to **rain**.
6. By prayer Elisha **raised a boy from** the **dead**.
7. By prayer Samson received **supernatural strength**.
8. By prayer Solomon received **supernatural wisdom**.
9. By prayer Hezekiah’s **life was spared**.
10. By prayer Peter was **released from jail**.
11. By prayer Jesus **endured the cross**.
Now folks, I’d say those people benefited just a little bit by praying to God, how about you? They not only received the power to overcome their enemies but also the power to overcome some pretty horrible circumstances. And people, this is the great news. Prayer to God doesn’t work just for those people in the past. **It works for you and I today!**

And people, I’m telling you, as long as you and I refuse to pray to God, we’re going to cause ourselves a lot of unnecessary pain and fear. Therefore, it **has to become a daily precedent** in our lives! Remember, Daniel chose to spend a night in the lion’s den rather then to go through one day without prayer. How about us? And if all our troubles are deep-seated and longstanding then maybe its time we try kneeling.

People, it’s not that hard to figure out. If you refuse to pray to a supernatural God then don’t expect to experience His Supernatural Power. It’s that simple. But not only that. It might also be a sign you’re losing your first love!

And people, this is the great news. As soon as we turn away from these temptations and get our faith back in and start praying to God again **like we used to when we first fell in love with Him**, then guess what? We’re going to experience the same power and passion like we did before. It’s really that easy! In fact, sometimes it’s as simple as returning to that child-like faith like we automatically had when we first got saved, like this lady learned.

“It was the summer of 2002 and it was a bittersweet time for my three young children and I. We had just moved and needless to say we were struggling financially.

One afternoon after picking my two youngest kids up from school my 7-year old son asked if we could have pizza for supper. My heart broke a little when I replied that we couldn’t afford pizza. But my 9-year old daughter spoke up and
told my son that if he really wanted pizza he should just pray for it because God could afford it.

So my son proceeded to lift his little request up to God with all of the faith a child has. And for a split second, I envied his childlike faith and wondered at what point in my life I lost the ability to just believe.

Also, during the course of his prayer, my son remembered we were out of toilet paper so he prayed, ‘God, could You also get us some toilet paper?’

And she said, ‘I was slightly embarrassed that he would ask our Creator, the Lord of Heaven and earth for such a thing but I just let him pray.’

Well, the rest of the afternoon was uneventful but about 4:45 the doorbell rang and my two youngest children went to look through the window to see who it was. Fully expecting them to tell me it was one of their friends, I was not in any way prepared for what came next.

My son yelled out, ‘MOM! The pizza dude’s here!’ ‘The who?’ I asked. As I made my way to the front door in a state of confusion, my son came running thru the house shouting, ‘It’s an angel! God sent an angel to bring us pizza!’

So I went to the door to clear up the confusion as I was sure this ‘pizza dude’ was at the wrong house. I was also worried though about the disappointment my son would feel when this delivery boy realized he was at the wrong house.

So I greeted the pizza boy and explained we hadn’t ordered pizza. To which the delivery boy replied, ‘I know ma’am. Someone called the order in and paid for it with a credit card and we were asked to deliver to you around 5:00.

And she said, ‘I must have been quite a sight standing there with my two daughters and our mouths hanging open in total disbelief and my son standing behind us saying, ‘See, I told you God sends angels to deliver pizza!’’

So the delivery boy handed me 4 large pizzas and I carried our feast into the kitchen still in shock. I spent the rest of the evening trying to absorb what had just happened.
And just as I was pondering these things my son yelled from the garage ‘Mom! I was looking through this box and guess what I found! Four rolls of Charmin toilet paper!’

Well, apparently I had packed the toilet paper in that box some 3-years ago from one of our previous moves. So I just broke down and cried thanking God for the miracles he had showered over us that day.

That summer of 2002 turned out to be one of the best of my life. I learned to “simply believe” no matter what life looks like. Why? Because God is good and yes He does send angels to deliver pizza.”¹¹

People, if it ever feels like God’s a million miles away, guess who moved? Not God, you did! And people this is the great news. Even if you’ve been tricked into living like a practical atheist, you don’t have to stay that way. Like that lady discovered, sometimes it’s as easy as becoming a child again. Sometimes you just need to go back to having faith in God and praying to God for the seemingly impossible like that little boy. Why? Because you too will discover that yes, God still sends angels to deliver pizzas!

And people this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people really can have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe before it’s too late!” But people, I’m telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we’ve got to stop acting like practical atheists. We’ve got to start demonstrating by our lips as well as our lives that God is Powerful!
“There was an elderly lady who was well known for her faith and for her boldness in talking about it. She would stand on her front porch and shout, ‘PRAISE THE LORD!’

Well, next door to her lived an atheist who would get so angry at her proclamations he would shout back, ‘There ain’t no Lord!’

One day, hard times set in on the elderly lady and she prayed for God to send her some assistance. So she stood on her porch and shouted, ‘PRAISE THE LORD. GOD I NEED FOOD! I’M HAVING A HARD TIME. PLEASE LORD SEND ME SOME GROCERIES!’

And sure enough, the next morning the lady went out on her porch and noticed a large bag of groceries and shouted, ‘PRAISE THE LORD!’

But just then the neighbor jumped from behind a bush and said, ‘Ha ha! I told you there ain’t no Lord. I bought those groceries. God didn’t.’

And at this the lady started jumping up and down and clapping her hands and saying, ‘PRAISE THE LORD! He not only sent me groceries, but HE made the devil pay for them. PRAISE THE LORD!’”
Now that lady’s faith in God paid off big time, didn’t it? So much so that she saw with her own eyes how God will use even an atheist to do His bidding, didn’t she? But folks, did you know that for many Christians, just the opposite is true. You see, many Christians have stopped having faith in God and are now doing the devil’s bidding. How? By acting like atheists themselves. And if that wasn’t bad enough, because many Christians refuse to study the Bible, it’s also producing a generation of Churches that are full of Christians acting like practical atheists.

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our lips and by our lives, we act like He’s not there. And this not only keeps us from growing in our own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christians living like practical atheists by not knowing Who God Is, we’re going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, “Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?”

We’ve already seen that the very first thing we need to know about God is that God Is Real. The second thing we need to know about God is that God Is Personal. The third thing we need to know about God is that God Is Wise. And in the last five chapters we saw that the fourth thing we need to know about God is that God Is Powerful. And in the last chapter we began to explore the question, “Okay, I understand what God’s Power is like and I even understand what it can do for me. But why don’t I experience it?” And there we saw the main reason why we don’t experience God’s Power in our lives is Because We Don’t Love God Like We Used To or in other words, we’ve lost our first love. And there we saw two reasons why Christians lose their first love for God and that was when We No Longer Have Faith In God and when We No longer Pray To God.
But unfortunately folks, that’s not all. The **third sign** to indicate that we’ve lost our first love is that **We No Longer Read the Word of God.** But hey, don’t take my word for it. Let’s listen to God’s.

**Romans 12:1-2** “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will.” (NIV)

Now folks, according to our text, if you and I want to live a life that is **pleasing to God** and even know what His will is, what do we need to do? We’re to no longer be conformed to this world, but **renew our minds**, right? And can anyone guess what we’re to renew our minds with? The Word of God, right? In fact, the picture that’s used here is that when you and I read the Word of God, we are **un-brainwashing** ourselves from the brainwashing of this world. And once we do that, we clearly understand God’s will for our lives. And how many of you would like to know the will of God for your life?

**But here’s our problem.** We all talk about the Bible, we believe in the Bible, we own several Bibles, but do we ever get around to reading the Bible? No! And here’s what happens. **Over time,** instead of starting the day off with the Word of God, we immerse ourselves in the word of man. Instead of spiritual exercise, **we do physical exercise!** And pretty soon we come up with the all time biggest excuse of all, “**I Don’t Have Time To Read the Bible.**” How many of you guys heard that one before? But people, I’m telling you this is one of the biggest lies from the pit of hell.

You see, I’ve learned over the years that it’s not that we don’t have time to read the Bible. No! It’s that we don’t take the time to read the Bible. How do I know? Because we don’t seem to have a problem **finding time** for all sorts of
other things. For instance, how about the morning ritual of watching the news or reading the newspaper? Oh, it might be worldly informative but it not spiritually inspiring. And this is what the Apostle Paul warned us about.

**Philippians 4:8,9** “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. And the God of peace will be with you.” (NIV)

Now folks let me ask you, is the news true? Is it pure and lovely? Is it excellent and praiseworthy? Then why in the world would we spend the majority of our time with Dan Blather instead of the Bible? Is he where we get our peace from? People, is the weather report more important than the Weather Maker? Is Oprah Winfrey more important than the Word of God? Just who’s the real source of power here?

**Oh, but that’s not the only distraction.** Whether its physical exercise or the latest food diet, we don’t even bat an eye at spending hours doing whatever it takes to whip our bodies into shape. In fact, Barna Research shows that 91% of adults consider good physical health as their top priority in life, making it the highest-rated priority of all.² Now don’t get me wrong. I believe in a well-balanced diet. To me a well-balanced diet is a cheeseburger in both hands.³ But the point is, I think we’re starting to get just a little bit off-balanced when it comes to physical care. Once again, Paul warns us about this.

**1 Timothy 4:7-8** “Spend your time and energy in training yourself for spiritual fitness. Physical exercise has some value, but spiritual exercise is much more important, for it promises a reward in both this life and the next.” (NLT)

And folks, this is precisely your problem. We have allowed ourselves to become more consumed with external care instead of internal care. And people, don’t get me wrong, there is nothing wrong with exercising and trying to
eat healthy. Please be responsible. But our problem is that even these healthy things can quickly become unhealthy if they steal away our time with the Lord. That’s why we need to ask ourselves. Is a low-fat bagel more important than the Bible? Is Richard Simmons more important that the Savior? Then why in the world would we spend the majority of our time on physical exercise instead of spiritual exercise? Who’s the real source of power here?

People, it’s not that we don’t have time to read the Bible. It’s that we don’t take the time to read the Bible. We waste our time on non-spiritual things! And just to make sure we realize just how powerful Bible reading can be, let’s take a look at what it’s done for some folks in the past.

**Abraham Lincoln:** “I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to man. All the good from the Savior of the world is communicated to us through this book.”

**W.E. Gladstone:** “I have known ninety-five of the world’s great men in my time, and of these eighty-seven were followers of the Bible.

**George Washington:** “It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible.”

**Daniel Webster:** “If there is anything in my thoughts or style to commend, the credit is due to my parents for instilling in me an early love of the Scriptures. If we abide by the principles taught in the Bible, our country will go on prospering and to prosper; but if we and our posterity neglect its instructions and authority, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us and bury all our glory in profound obscurity.”

**John Ruskin:** “Whatever merit there is in anything that I have written is simply due to the fact that when I was a child my mother daily read me a part of the Bible and daily made me learn a part of it by heart.”

**W.H. Seward:** “The whole hope of human progress is suspended on the ever growing influence of the Bible.”
Patrick Henry: “The Bible is worth all other books which have ever been printed.”

Horace Greeley: “It is impossible to enslave mentally or socially a Bible-reading people. The principles of the Bible are the groundwork of human freedom.”

Andrew Jackson: “That book, sir, is the rock on which our republic rests.”

Robert E. Lee: “In all my perplexities and distresses, the Bible has never failed to give me light and strength.”

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say those people benefited just a little bit from reading the Bible how about you? In fact, they not only got the power to form our great country the USA, but they got the power to transform their lives each and every day. And people, this is the great news. Reading the Bible doesn’t work just for those people in the past. It works for you and I today! But I’m telling you, as long as you and I refuse to read the Bible, we’re going to cause ourselves a lot of unnecessary pain and fear. Therefore, reading the Bible has to become a daily precedent in our lives like it was with this guy.

“Once, there was a man in Kansas City who was severely injured in an explosion. His face was badly disfigured, and he lost his eyesight as well as both hands.

What made it worse was that he just became a new Christian, and one of his greatest disappointments was that he could no longer read the Bible.

Then he heard about a lady in England who read Braille with her lips. And so hoping to do the same, he sent for some books of the Bible in Braille. But much to his dismay, he discovered that the nerve endings in his lips had also been destroyed by the explosion.

So one day as he brought one of the Braille pages to his lips, his tongue happened to touch a few of the raised characters and he could feel them.
Then in a flash he realized, “I can read the Bible using my tongue.” And in just a short amount of time, the man had already read through the Bible four times...with his tongue!"

Now folks, if anybody has some great excuses for not reading the Bible, it’s this guy. Yet, what did he do? He hungered for the Word of God so much so that he figured out how to do it with his tongue. So the question we need to ask ourselves is this. How about you and I? Do we long to read the Word of God that much? No? Well folks, if we don’t, we better! Why? Because stop and think about it. How are we ever going to know if we are being lied to if we never get acquainted with the truth? How are we ever going to be protected from the liars and false teachers out there who only desire to rip you off or lead you to hell, unless we know what the Bible says? People, when are we going to realize that the only way to fight truth decay is to brush up on the Bible each and every day. And if you see a Bible that is falling apart, it probably belongs to someone who isn’t.

People, it’s not that hard to figure out. If you refuse to read the words of a supernatural God then don’t expect to experience His Supernatural Power. It’s that simple. But not only that. It might also be a sign you’re losing your first love!

Oh, but that’s not all. The fourth sign to indicate that we’ve lost our first love is that We’re No Longer Obedient to God.

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 “Here is my final conclusion: Fear God and obey his commands, for this is the duty of every person. God will judge us for everything we do, including every secret thing, whether good or bad.” (NLT)

Now folks, if you’ve ever wondered what the Christian life is all about, it’s right here in our text. You don’t need to go to a seminar or even buy a book. In fact, God’s made it simple for us. He’s narrowed it down to two things. And
that is, **fear God** and **obey His commands**, right? And why do we need to do that? Because God’s going to judge everything we do whether good or bad. There are no secrets with Him.

But here’s our problem. We all talk about obedience, we believe in obedience, and we encourage each other to be obedient, but do we ever get around to being obedient to God? No! And here’s what happens. **Over time**, we lose our fear of God. We’re more afraid of man than our Maker. We’re afraid of what our friends might think. We’re afraid of what our family might say. In fact, we’re more afraid of our employer instead of our Creator. And when the fear of man supercedes the fear of God, guess what happens? We’re no longer obedient to God! Or in other words, **we start to backslide**. And people, the problem with backsliding is it’s not only going to be judged in the future, but it’s got **serious consequences** for today, like these guys learned!

“One winter a ski resort in Breckenridge, Colorado, posted signs instructing skiers to keep off a certain slope. The signs were very large and distinct and said, ‘DANGER! OUT OF BOUNDS!’

But in spite of the warnings, several skiers went into the area. The result? A half-mile-wide avalanche buried 4 of the trespassers beneath tons of snow and rock. And the tragedy never would have happened if the signs had been heeded.”

And people, it’s the same thing with God’s commands. He asks us to be obedient not because He’s trying to ruin our fun. He’s not being a Big Ol’ Meany. No! His commands are for our own good and protection. And how sad it is that many Christians are walking around in life suffering an avalanche of problems and are buried under a ton of pain, **especially** when they don’t have to! **Why?** Because they’ve been tricked and seduced into losing the fear of God and they no longer obey Him.
People, when are we going to learn that the cost of obedience is nothing compared with the cost of disobedience. **You cannot backslide without suffering.** Therefore, obedience **has to become a daily precedent** in our lives!

**Why? Because backsliding begins when obedience stops!**

People, it’s not that hard to figure out. If you refuse to obey a supernatural God then don’t expect to experience His Supernatural Power. It’s that simple. But not only that. It might also be a sign you’re losing your first love!

And people, this is the great news. As soon as we turn away from these temptations and get back to reading the Word of God and being obedient to God **like we used to when we first fell in love with Him**, then guess what? We’re going to experience the same power and passion like we did before. It’s really that easy! **Why?** Because when we **truly believe** that our Heavenly Father is watching over us, it’ll **empower you** to live a life beyond your wildest dreams, like it did with this boy.

“Some years ago, Columbia University had a great football coach by the name of Lou Little. One day Lou had a boy try out for the varsity team who wasn’t really very good. But Lou noticed that there was something unique about him.

While he wasn’t nearly good enough to make the team, he had such contagious enthusiasm that Lou thought, **He’ll never be able to play, but I’ll leave him on the team to encourage the others.**

Well, as the season went on, Lou began to develop a tremendous admiration and love for this boy. One of the things that especially impressed him was the manner with which the boy obviously cared for his father.

Whenever the father would come for a visit, the boy and his father would always be seen walking together, arm in arm, an obvious indication of an exceptional bond of love between them. They could always be seen on Sunday going to and from the university chapel. It was obvious that theirs was a deep and mutually shared Christian faith.
Then, one day, a telephone call came to Coach Little. He was informed that the boy’s father had just died – would he be the one to tell the boy? With a heavy heart Lou informed the boy of his father’s death, and he immediately left to go home for the funeral.

A few days later though, the boy returned to the campus, only two days before the biggest game of the season. Lou went to him and said, ‘Is there anything I can do for you? Anything at all?’

And to the coach’s astonishment the boy said, ‘Let me start the game on Saturday!’ Lou was taken aback. He thought, *I can’t let him start – he’s not good enough.* But he remembered his promise to help and said, ‘All right – you can start the game,’ but he thought to himself, *I’ll leave him in for a few plays and then take him out.*

Well, the day of the big game arrived and to everyone’s surprise the coach started this boy who had never played in a game in the whole season. But imagine even the coach’s surprise when, on the very first play from scrimmage, that boy was the one who single-handedly made a tackle that threw the opposing team for a loss.

In fact, he played so good that Lou left him in for the entire game and the boy eventually led his team to victory and he was voted the outstanding player of the game.

And when the game was finally over Lou approached the boy and said, ‘Son, what got into you today?’ And the boy replied, ‘Do you remember when my father would visit me here at school and we would spend a lot of time together walking arm in arm around the campus?’

And Lou replied, ‘Yes, I remember.’

And the boy continued, ‘Well, you see, my father and I shared a secret that nobody around here knew anything about. You see, my father was blind – and today was the first time he ever saw me play.’

People of God, this is the great news. Even if you’ve been tricked into living like a practical atheist, *you don’t have to stay that way.* Sometimes you
just need to go back to **reading the Word of God** and **being obedient to God** like when you first got saved. **Why?** Because it shows that you **truly believe** your Heavenly Father’s there watching over you. You’re not acting like an atheist. And folks, once you do that, then you’ll discover just like that boy **overnight** you’ve just been empowered to run the game of life beyond your wildest dreams! **Why?** Because God **is watching over you** and He loves you and He doesn’t want to you to lose your love for Him. That’s how powerful He is!

And people this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people **really can** have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe **before it’s too late!”** But people, I’m telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we’ve got to stop acting like practical atheists. We’ve got to start demonstrating by our **lips** as well as our **lives** that **God is Powerful**!
“One day a farmer got pulled over by a state trooper for speeding and the trooper started to lecture the farmer about his speed. And then the trooper began to throw his weight around to try to make the farmer feel extra uncomfortable.

Well finally, the trooper got around to writing out the ticket, and as he was doing this he kept swatting at some flies that were buzzing around his head.

And the farmer noticed this and then said, ‘Having some problems with circle flies there, are ya?’

And the trooper stopped writing the ticket and said, ‘Well, yeah, if that’s what they are, I never heard of circle flies.’

So the farmer says, ‘Well, circle flies are common on farms. You see, they’re called circle flies because they’re almost always found circling around the back end of a horse.’

And the trooper says, ‘Oh,’ and goes back to writing the ticket. Then after a minute he stops and says, ‘Hey, wait a minute, are you trying to call me a name?’

The farmer says, ‘Oh no, officer. I have too much respect for law enforcement and police officers to even think about saying you’re the back end of a horse.’
So the trooper says, ‘Well, that’s a good thing,’ and he goes back to writing the ticket.

But after a long pause the farmer says, ‘Hard to fool them flies though.’”

Now how many of you would say that guy was just about ready to get another ticket? Oh, he said he respected the law but his behavior was saying something else, wasn’t it? But folks, did you know this is the same scenario with many Christians? Oh, we say we respect the law of God, but a lot of the time our behavior is saying something else too? How? By acting like practical atheists.

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our lips and by our lives, we act like He’s not there. And this not only keeps us from growing in our own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christians living like practical atheists by not knowing Who God Is, we’re going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, “Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?”

We’ve already seen that the very first thing we need to know about God is that God Is Real. The second thing we need to know about God is that God Is Personal. The third thing we need to know about God is that God Is Wise. And in the last six chapters we saw that the fourth thing we need to know about God is that God Is Powerful. And previously we explored the question, “Okay, I understand what God’s Power is like and I even understand what it can do for me. But why don’t I experience it?” And there we saw the main reason why we don’t experience God’s Power in our lives is Because We Don’t Love God Like We Used To or in other words, we’ve lost our first love. And in the last two chapters we saw four reasons why Christians lose their first love for God and that was when We No Longer Have Faith In God, We No Longer Pray To
God, We No Longer Read the Word of God, and We’re No Longer Obedient to God.

But you might be asking yourself, “So what do I do if that’s me? What if I’ve lost my first love? Is it too late? Can I get it back? Is there any hope?” Great question. I’m glad you asked. Let’s take a look.

Revelation 2:1-5 “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands. I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.

Yet I hold this against you. You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.” (NIV)

Now folks, believe it or not, this passage is full of great news. According to our text here, God not only reveals the problem of losing our first love, but He also reveals the solution to getting it back. And folks, it’s pretty clear. The first step to getting your first love back is to Remember Your Previous Behavior.

1 John 1:8-9 “If we say we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and refusing to accept the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong.” (NLT)

You see, when we confess our sinful behavior, we’re acknowledging or admitting our current situation, right? That we have sinned against God by not loving Him like He deserves. But if we’re ever going to get around to confessing, we first need to remember what our previous behavior was, right? We need to recall those early days of being saved and how we passionately longed to be with God.
But herein lies our problem. Instead of remembering how we used to love God so we can confess our current problem of not loving God, we give into denial. As soon as the Word of God convicts us of this, we deny we have a problem in the first place. We assume the preacher is talking about our neighbor, our spouse, that other guy in the pew, those weird people down south! And just to make sure they know it’s them and not us, we give them the elbow or the evil eye, the head nod thing, right? But people, hello! If you’re ever going to face a problem, you first have to admit you got one, right? For instance, how can a person be taught unless they admit they need to be taught? Or how can a doctor treat a patient unless the patient admits they need a doctor? And if this is true in the physical realm, how much more true is it in the spiritual realm?

Oh but we don’t stop there. If denying doesn’t work, we still don’t want to remember, so we start blaming. For instance, we say, “My health isn’t what it used to be,” or “My job requires so much of my time,” or “My spouse doesn’t love God like I do and it’s hard.” But people, blaming others for all your problems will get you nowhere fast. In fact, sometimes it downright embarrassing, like this lady learned.

“A woman was waiting for her flight at the airport so she bought a book and a bag of cookies to pass the time. As she was reading her book, she noticed the man sitting next to her take a cookie from her bag.

This, of course, made her furious and she thought to herself, ‘If I wasn’t a Christian, I’d give this guy a black eye!’ But it didn’t stop there. Every time she took a cookie, he too took a cookie. And this went on until only one cookie was left.

And now, she wondered, what would this cookie thief do? Well, with a smile on his face and a nervous laugh, he took the last cookie and broke it in half and offered her half as he ate the other.
So she snatched the cookie from this rude man and fumed about his behavior. Just then her flight was called, so without even looking at the thief, she got up and boarded her plane.

But as she got into her seat, she reached into her bag to pull out her book and gasping with surprise, she pulled out *her* bag of cookies.

‘If mine are here,’ she moaned with despair. ‘Then the others were his and he tried to share!’ Too late to apologize, she realized with grief, That SHE was the rude one, she was the cookie thief!”

Now that lady was blaming all her problems on somebody else *when the whole time*, who was the problem? She *was*, wasn’t she? And people I’m telling you, it’s the same thing with you and I. We can blame all kinds of people or things as to why we don’t love God like we should, *but* do you really think that God, *Who is beside you right now*, is going to fall for it? I don’t think so!

People, that’s why we’ve got to realize that denying or blaming others for our spiritual condition isn’t going to change a thing! In fact, all it guarantees is that our condition *will never change*. People, we’ve got to take that first step and *remember our previous behavior* so we can confess our current behavior. Why? Because unless we do, our lives will never change, and we’ll never get that first love for Jesus back again. It’s that simple.

Oh but that’s not all. The *second step* to getting your first love back is to **Repent of Your Current Behavior**.

**Revelation 2:5**  “Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.” (NIV)

You see, folks, it’s not enough to merely confess your sins. If you really want that first love back, you need to repent or **turn away from** your sins. But herein lies our problem. Hey, if denying or blaming others for our problem doesn’t work, we simply start **making excuses** for our problem. **Why?** Because
our flesh **hates** the word repent. Why, that involves change, that involves sacrifice! And if that wasn’t bad enough, now our society **feeds our natural desire** of not wanting to repent by making an art form our of excuse-making.

For instance, our society today no longer calls sin, sin. Are you kidding! They’ve **changed the terminology for sin.** For instance, sinful behavior is now being called a “disease” or a “social dysfunction” or a “psychological aberration.” People are no longer sinners. No! **They’re victims!** And people it’s because of this victim mentality that people are no longer repenting of their sins, but they’re actually getting paid for their sins!

- A man who was shot and paralyzed while committing a burglary in New York recovered damages from the store owner who shot him. His attorney told a jury that the man was first of all a victim of society, driven to crime by economic disadvantages. Now, the lawyer said, he is a victim of the insensitivity of the man who shot him. Because of that man’s callous disregard of the thief’s plight as a victim, the poor criminal will be confined to a wheelchair for the rest of his life. Therefore, he deserves some compensation. Believe it or not, the jury agreed. So the store owner paid a large settlement. And several months later, the same man, still in his wheelchair, was arrested while committing another armed robbery.

- After mugging and brutally beating an elderly New York man in the subway, Bernard McCummings was shot while fleeing the scene. Permanently paralyzed, he sued and won $4.8 million in compensation from the New York Transit Authority. The man he mugged, a cancer patient, is still paying doctor bills. McCummings, the mugger—whom the courts deemed the greater victim—is now a multimillionaire.

- In two separate cases in England, a barmaid who stabbed another woman to death in a barroom brawl, and a woman who angrily drove her car into her lover were both acquitted of murder after they claimed acute PMS hampered their thinking and caused them to act in ways they could not control. Both received therapy rather than punishment.

- A San Francisco city supervisor murdered a fellow supervisor and Mayor George Moscone but claimed it was because of too much junk food—
especially Hostess Twinkies—that made him act irrationally. Thus the famous ‘Twinkie’ defense was born. A lenient jury bought the line and produced a verdict of voluntary manslaughter rather than murder. They ruled that the junk food resulted in ‘diminished mental capacity,’ which mitigated the killer’s guilt. He was out of prison before the mayor’s next term would have been complete.³

Now folks, you can call sin a PMS problem or a Twinkie problem. I don’t care. And neither does God. Call it what you will but sin is still sin and it needs to be repented of, if you’re ever going to get your first love back. And no amount of excuses is going to change that!

Oh but that’s not all. If denying, blaming, or excuses don’t work we simply start rationalizing. For instance we say, “Well, none of my friends love God like they used to” or “At least I show up on Sunday each week” or “No one can love God all the time. Eventually your fire for God will die down. It happens all the time. But people, once you head down this road, you’re going to start to label your behavior as a necessary evil. And once you call it a necessary evil, it starts to look more and more necessary and less and less evil. And you will actually rationalize your lack of love for God as something not to be repented of but a necessary evil! And do you really think that God, Who’s still right beside you, is going to fall for that? I don’t think so!

Therefore, we’ve got to get rid of our excuses and stop our rationalizing and make a clean break. We’ve got to repent and do whatever it takes to ensure that we never go back where we came from, like Julius Caesar did with his army.

“When Julius Caesar landed on the shores of England with his well-armed legions, he simultaneously made a bold and decisive move to guarantee the success of his campaign.
He marched his men to the edge of the Cliffs of Dover and ordered them to look down at the ships that had brought them across the channel. Every one of them was ablaze! General Caesar had cut off the possibility of a pullback.

Now that his soldiers were unable to return to the continent, there was nothing left for them to do but advance and conquer. And that is precisely what they did.

People, if it’s been a long time since you’ve advanced in your walk with Christ, then maybe it’s because you’ve been **retreating by rationalizing**. And if it’s been years since you’ve walked in victory with Jesus, then maybe it’s time to **burn your boatload of excuses**. People of God, we’ve got to take that **second step** and **repent our current behavior**. Why? Because unless we do, our lives will never change, and we’ll never get that first love for Jesus back again. It’s that simple.

Oh but that’s not all. The **third step** to getting your first love back is to **Redo the Right Behavior**.

**Revelation 2:5** “Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.” (NIV)

Now according to our text here, Jesus says that the test of **true repentance** is not in what you **say** about your sin, but in what you **do about it**, right? People, repentance isn’t just being sorry for your sins. It being sorry enough to stop your sins **right now**. In fact, He says if we don’t do something about it **right now** we’re in some serious danger aren’t we?

But herein lies our problem. Hey, if denying, blaming, excuses, or rationalizing doesn’t work, we simply start **procrastinating**. For instance, we say, “Okay, first thing Monday morning” or “Okay, that will be my New Year’s resolution” or “Okay, the first thing I’m going to do when I retire is…” and on
and on it goes! But people, hello! If we ever want to experience personal revival, it requires immediate action NOT good intentions!

Patrick Morley states, “The Church’s integrity problem is in the misconception that we can add Christ to our lives, but not subtract sin. It is a change in belief without a change in behavior. It is revival without reformation, revival without repentance.”

And I got to thinking about this whole process of repentance and procrastination. I thought, “Gee, maybe this is the whole reason why the moral fiber of our country is going down the tubes so fast. Maybe the problem with our nation isn’t so much with the unsaved rebel but the saved rebel. Maybe the problem isn’t with the world, but the Church.” Why? Because we’re quick to pray for revival tomorrow, but we don’t practice repentance today! We want the whole world to change but we don’t want to change ourselves! But people, if you want that first love back, you need to turn around today. If you want our country to get back on track then we the Church need to get back on track! No more delay!

People when are we going to realize that delaying in doing something about our spiritual condition isn’t going to change a thing? All it guarantees is that our condition will never change. People, we’ve got to take that third and final step and redo our previous behavior today! Why? Because unless we do, our lives will never change, and we’ll never get that first love for Jesus back again. It’s that simple.

But you might be thinking, “Ah, come on. You’re making a big deal out of nothing. Okay, so my love for Jesus isn’t what it used to be. It’s not that big of a deal. Besides, my behavior only affects me.” But folks, if you really think that, then you need to listen to how one life not only affects other lives today, but future ones as well in a profound way.
“America’s greatest theologian, Jonathan Edwards and his wife Sarah had eleven children. Despite a rigorous work schedule that included rising as early as 4:30 a.m. to read and write in his library, extensive travels, and endless administrative meetings, he always made time for his children.

Indeed, he committed to spending at least one hour a day with them. And if he missed a day because he was traveling, he diligently made up the hour when he returned.

One scholar decided to chart the 1,394 known descendents of Edwards. What he found was an incredible testament to Jonathan Edwards. Of his known descendents there were 13 college presidents, 65 college professors, 30 judges, 100 lawyers, 60 physicians, 75 army and navy officers, 100 pastors, 60 authors of prominence, 3 United States senators, 80 public servants including governors, ministers to foreign countries, and one vice-president of the United States.

The story of Jonathan Edwards is an example of what some sociologists call the “five-generation rule.” But the five-generation rule works both ways.

Consider the case of Max Jukes, a contemporary of Edwards. As an adult, Jukes had a drinking problem that kept him from holding a steady job. It also kept him from showing much concern for his wife and children. He would disappear sometimes for days and return drunk and made little time for loving and instructing his children.

Of Jukes’ known descendents, 310 died as paupers, at least 150 were criminals (including 7 murderers), more than 100 were drunkards and half of his female descendents ended up as prostitutes.

The stories of Jonathan Edwards and Max Jukes offers a powerful lesson about the legacy we will all leave. Five generations from now, it is likely that our professional accomplishments will be forgotten.

In fact, our descendents may know little about us or our lives. But the way we live today will directly affect not only our children, but also our grandchildren, our great-grandchildren and the generations that follow.”

People of God, whether you realize it or not, the decisions you make today not only affect your life, but they affect your legacy. And the kind of
legacy you leave for the future, will always hinge on what you do with Christ today. People please hear my heart. Don’t give into procrastination. Don’t stay in the pigpen of life. Come back to the Father today!

And people, this is the great news. God is so gracious to His children. I mean think about it. He could nuke us on the spot for not loving Him like we should, but He doesn’t! Every single day He lovingly, patiently waits for you and I to fall in love with Him again. How? By remembering, repenting and redoing right now! And people, once you do that, then you’ll discover just like with the prodigal son, you’re not only out of that pigpen, but God’s going to wrap His arms around you and shower you with His love just like when you first got saved. Why? Because he loves you and he doesn’t want you to lose your first love for Him!

And people this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people really can have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe before it’s too late!” But people, I’m telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we’ve got to stop acting like practical atheists. We’ve got to start demonstrating by our lips as well as our lives that God is Powerful!
Part IV

God is Holy
“One day it was election time and a politician decided to go out to the local Indian reservation and try to get the Native American vote. And when he got there, the Indians were all assembled in the Council Hall to hear the speech.

So the politician began his speech and as he worked up to his big finale, the crowd was getting more and more excited.

So the politician continued, ‘And I promise better education opportunities for Native Americans!’

Well at this, the crowd went wild, shouting, ‘Hoya Hoya.’

So now the politician is really encouraged by their enthusiasm so he keeps going and says, ‘And I promise more government housing for the downtrodden on the Reservation!’

And the crowd cried, ‘Hoya! Hoya!’ as they stomped their feet.

So the politician continued, ‘And I promise more social reforms and job opportunities for Native Americans!’

And at this the crowd reached a frenzied pitch shouting, ‘Hoya! Hoya! Hoya!’
So, after the speech, the Politician was feeling pretty confident about the image he had established with the Indians, so he decides to further deepen his relationship with them by asking for a tour of the Reservation.

And so the Indians agreed, and the first thing the politician saw was a tremendous herd of cattle. And since he was raised on a ranch, and knew a little bit about cattle, the politician asked the Chief if he could get closer to take a look at the cattle.

And the chief said, ‘Sure, just be careful not to step in the hoya.’¹

Now how many of you would say that politician’s day just got ruined by that one statement? Oh, he thought he made a huge impact with his speech, didn’t he? But did the Indians fall for it? No way! Why? Because they could care less about his speech. They wanted substance. And folks, did you know this same scenario is true for the American Church? You see, our world could care less about what we say about God. They’ve heard all the speeches. They’ve read all the books. What they want is some substance. They want to see God in our lives. And people, that’s why now more than ever, we desperately need to stop living like practical atheists.

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our lips and by our lives, we act like He’s not there. And this not only keeps us from growing in our own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christians living like practical atheists by not knowing Who God Is, we’re going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, “Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?”

We’ve already seen that the very first thing we need to know about God is that God Is Real. The second thing we need to know about God is that God Is Personal. The third thing we need to know about God is that God Is Wise. And in the last seven chapters we saw that the fourth thing we need to know about...
God is that **God Is Powerful**. And there we saw that if we’re missing out on the Power of God by losing our first love that we need to **Remember Our Previous Behavior, Repent of Our Current Behavior**, and **Redo the Right Behavior**.

But folks, believe it or not, that’s not the only thing we need to know about God if we’re going to refrain from being practical atheists. The **fifth thing** we need to know about God is that **God Is Holy**. But hey, don’t take my word for it. Let’s listen to God’s.

**Revelation 4:7-11** “‘In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.

Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.” (NIV)

Now according to our text here, John sees a vision of the actual throne room of God Himself. And what does he see? He sees angels and saints not only **praising God**, but falling **prostrate on the ground**. Why? Because what was it they were shouting? Day and night they never stopped saying, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty.” And because of this, they we’re sucking carpet, right? And this is precisely the American Church’s problem today. This is why we act like practical atheists. You see, we don’t feel a need to suck carpet or **revere** God because we’ve lost sight of the Holiness of God. **Why**? Because we’re **too familiar** with the term. We use it all the time in an **unholy** way.
For instance, we say holy cow, or holy smokes Batman, or holy macaroni, or even holy blankety blank. But folks, the Greek word for holy is “hagios” and it means “something sacred, something pure from every fault, something immaculately clean.” And don’t get me wrong, cow is pretty good but I don’t think it deserves being called sacred or pure. Don’t tell my wife I said that. But seriously, since we use the word so flippantly, it shows we’ve lost sight of it’s meaning.

You see, the word holy speaks of God’s absolute perfection. He has no darkness, no shadows, and no sin within Him. He never does anything wrong, unlike you and I. Why? Because He alone is holy! One guy put it this way. He said, “Imagine a guy who could hit a hole in one on a par five not just once in his life, but every single time he ever tried. But not only that, he expected you to do the same.”

Folks, that’s just a small idea to get your brain going about what it means that God Is Holy. But even that pales in comparison to what the Holiness of God is really like. And notice God’s called holy not once, not twice, but three times. No other attribute of God is mentioned three times. You never read, “God is love, love, love” or “God is just, just, just.” But what we do see is that God is holy, holy, holy. Therefore, I’d say God’s trying to emphasize this one attribute of His, how about you? I’d say there’s something sacred about it, how about you?

And people, that’s why if we had even the slightest idea what the word holy meant when applied to God, we would shut our mouths in an instant! We would never ever ever use the term holy in a casual way. Therefore, if we’re ever going to understand the Holiness of God and get back to a reverence for God, I think we’d better see what the Holy Word of God has to say about it, how about you?
And folks, it’s pretty clear. The first way the Bible describes what God’s Holiness is like is in the Reaction of People. And the first persons to react to God’s Holiness are The Israelites.

**Exodus 20:18-19** “When the people heard the thunder and the loud blast of the horn, and when they saw the lightning and the smoke billowing from the mountain, they stood at a distance, trembling with fear. And they said to Moses, You tell us what God says, and we will listen. But don’t let God speak directly to us. If he does, we will die!” (NLT)

Now here we see the classic response of the Israelites to the actual presence of God. You see, God not only led them out of Egypt, but one day He Personally showed up to say hi. And so the question is, “What was the response of the people?” Was it like the American Church’s attitude today, “Oh, hey, God, great to see you buddy ol’ pal friend of mine. Come on over here and give me a high five!” Was that it? Or did they tremble and shake in utter terror at the very voice of God and cry out, “Please! Please! Don’t let God speak to us, or we will die!”

So folks, correct me if I’m wrong, but I’d say according to the Word Of God that one true glimpse of the Holiness of God is something that strikes fear in your bones, how about you? In fact, I’d venture to say that the American Church has totally forgotten this.

Oh, but that’s not all. The second person to react to God’s Holiness is Samson’s Parents.

**Judges 13:20-22** “As the flame blazed up from the altar toward heaven, the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame. Seeing this, Manoah and his wife fell with their faces to the ground. When the angel of the LORD did not show himself again to Manoah and his wife, Manoah realized that it was the angel of the LORD. We are doomed to die! he said to his wife. We have seen God!” (NIV)
Now here we see the next **amazing** response to the presence of God by **Samson’s parents**, the mighty man of God. And here they were, barren with no children for who knows how long. And one day God not only promises them a son, but He Personally shows up to tell them the good news. And the question is, “What was their response?” Was it like the American Church today, “Well it’s about time you did something God! Don’t you how long I’ve been dealing with this situation? Don’t you see the pain we’re in? What’s wrong with you?” **Was that it?** Or did they crumble to the ground and scream, “Oh no! Oh no! We have seen God and we’re doomed to die!”

So folks, correct me if I’m wrong, but I’d say according to the Word of God that one **true glimpse** of the Holiness of God is something that’ll **make you fear for your very life**, how about you? In fact, I’d venture to say that the American Church has totally forgotten this.

Oh, but that’s not all. The **third person** to react to God’s Holiness is **Daniel**.

**Daniel 10:7-9** “Only I, Daniel, saw this vision. The men with me saw nothing, but they were suddenly terrified and ran away to hide. So I was left there all alone to see this amazing vision. My strength left me, my face grew deathly pale, and I felt very weak. Then I heard the man speak, and when I heard the sound of his voice, I fainted and lay there with my face to the ground.” (NLT)

Now here we see the next **interesting** response to the presence of God by **Daniel**, the great prayer warrior of God. And here was, **praying for three weeks** for an answer from God. And so one day God not only answered his prayer, but He Personally sends one of His holy angels to give the answer. And so the question is, “What was Daniel’s response?” Was it like the American Church today, “Well now you tell me! Haven’t you seen how long I’ve been praying about this? Don’t you see how much time I could’ve saved if you’d been here
earlier?” Was that it? Or was Daniel physically drained causing him to drop face
down in the dirt? And that was the response to encountering a holy angel from
God. What would have happened if he encountered the actual presence of God?

So correct me if I’m wrong, but I’d say according to the Word of God
that one true glimpse of the Holiness of God is something that’ll make you suck
carpet real fast, how about you? In fact, I’d venture to say that the American
Church has totally forgotten this.

Oh, but that’s not all. The fourth person to react to God’s Holiness is
Job.

**Job 42:3,5-6** “You asked, Who is this that obscures my counsel without
knowledge? Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful
for me to know. My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you.
Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.” (NIV)

Now here we see the next humbling response to the presence of God by
Job, the great man of God. And here he was complaining about the way his life
turned out asking God, “Why, why, why?” And so one day, God Personally
showed up to give Job an attitude adjustment. And so the question is, “What was
Job’s response?” Was it like the American Church today, “Hey God! What’s the
deal here? Why do I have to suffer like this? This ain’t fair! This ain’t right!
Don’t you know what you’re doing up there?” Was that it? Or did Job moan in
despair, “Oh God, I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes!”

So again, correct me if I’m wrong, but I’d say according to the Word of
God that one true glimpse of the Holiness of God is something that’ll cause you
to shut your mouth, how about you? In fact, I’d venture to say that the
American Church has totally forgotten this.

Oh, but that’s not all. The fifth person to react to God’s Holiness is
Isaiah.
Isaiah 6:1,3,4,5 “It was in the year King Uzziah died that I saw the Lord. He was sitting on a lofty throne, and the train of his robe filled the Temple. They were calling out to each other, Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Heaven’s Armies! The whole earth is filled with his glory! Their voices shook the Temple to its foundations, and the entire building was filled with smoke. Then I said, It’s all over! I am doomed, for I am a sinful man. I have filthy lips, and I live among a people with filthy lips. Yet I have seen the King, the LORD of Heaven’s Armies.” (NLT)

Now here we see the next awesome response to the presence of God by Isaiah, the mighty prophet of God. And here he was, privileged to see the very throne room of God Himself in all His glorious splendor. And so the question is, “What was Isaiah’s response?” Was it like the American Church today, “Hey God, show me Your presence so I can feel good! Take me into your presence Lord so I can get goosebumps on top of my goosebumps!” Was that it? Or did Isaiah scream aloud, “Woe is me! I am as good as dead! I have seen the face of God and I am doomed!”

So again, correct me if I’m wrong, but I’d say according to the Word of God that one true glimpse of the Holiness of God is something that’ll shock you to the core, how about you? In fact, I’d venture to say that the American Church has totally forgotten this.

But you might me thinking, “Gee whiz Pastor Billy. Don’t you think you’re being a little hard on the American Church. Don’t you think you’re blowing this a little out of proportion here?” But folks, stop and think about it! Even asking that question reveals the answer to the question. It only shows we still don’t get it. We still don’t understand the holiness of God nor the consequences of not getting it. You see, the great crime of the American Church is that we’ve lost our reverence for God because we don’t understand the Holiness of God. And now we live in an age where man is deified and God is
humanized. God is no longer God. He’s merely our Butler in the sky Who only exists to serve our selfish desires. And if you don’t believe me, then let’s take a look at what some so-called Christians are saying about God.

1. **Morris Cerullo**: “You’re not looking at Morris Cerullo – you’re looking at God. You’re looking at Jesus.”

2. **Kenneth Copeland**: “satan conquered Jesus on the cross.”

3. **Kenneth Hagin**: “Because Jesus was recreated from a satanic being to an incarnation of God, you too can become an incarnation – as much an incarnation as Jesus Christ of Nazareth.”

4. **Jerry Savelle**: “By using your tongue to release the force of faith, you can speak whatsoever you desire into existence.”

5. **Benny Hinn**: “Adam could fly like a bird, swim underwater like a fish, and even transport himself to the moon.”

6. **John Avanzini**: “Jesus was wealthy and prosperous. He lived in a big house, handled big money, and even wore designer clothes.

7. **Benny Hinn**: “Never, ever, ever go to the Lord and say, ‘If it be thy will…’ Don’t allow such faith destroying words to be spoken from your mouth.”

8. **Frederick Price**: “God has to be given permission to work in this earth realm on behalf of man…Yes! You are in control! So if man has control, who no longer has it? God.”

9. **Kenneth Copeland**: “Your word is God’s command.”

Now I don’t know about you, but I’d say that in light of our study on the Holiness of God that those statements are nothing short of a sickening blasphemy to the highest degree. And do you really think that if the American Church had even the slightest understanding of the Holiness of God that those men would last five seconds behind a pulpit! I don’t think so!
But unfortunately, it doesn’t stop there. You see, our lack of knowledge about the Holiness of God not only allows the entrance of false teachers, but it paves the way for the exit of unbelievers, like it was for this girl.

“A high school girl wrote the following letter to a friend:

I attended your Church service yesterday. Although you had invited me, you were not there. I looked for you, hoping to sit with you but I sat alone. As a stranger I wanted to sit near the back but those rows were all packed with regular attenders.

So an usher took me to the front. I felt as though I was on parade. During the singing of the hymns I was surprised to note that some of the Church people weren’t singing. Between their sighs and yawns, they just stared into space.

Three of the kids that I had respected on campus were whispering to one another throughout the whole service. Another girl was giggling. I really didn’t expect that in your Church.

The Pastor’s sermon was very interesting, although some members didn’t seem to think so. They looked bored and restless. One kept smiling at someone in the congregation. There were several people who left and then came back during the sermon. I thought, ‘How rude!’

I could hear the constant shuffling of feet and doors opening and closing as the Pastor spoke about the reality of faith. The message got to me and I made up my mind to speak to someone about it after the service. But utter chaos reigned after the benediction.

I said good morning to one couple, but their response was less than cordial. I looked for some teens with whom I could discuss the sermon, but they were all huddled in a corner talking about the newest music group.

My parents don’t go to Church. I came alone yesterday hoping to find a place to truly worship and feel some love. I’m sorry, but I didn’t find it in your Church. And I won’t be back.”
People of God we’ve got to realize that people today, like that girl, could care less about what we say about God. They’ve heard all the speeches. They’ve read all the books. They simply want substance. They want to see God in our lives. And people, I’m telling you, when we lose sight of the Holiness of God we will stop having a reverence for God. And when we stop having a reverence for God, people no longer want to have anything to do with God.

And gee, could this be why the growth rate of the Protestant Church is now 0.3%? Could this be why 64% of North America has not responded to the Gospel? Could this be why fifty to seventy-five Churches close their Sanctuary doors permanently every single week? Could it be we’ve forgotten about the Holiness of God? People of God, if we’re ever going to get our lives let alone our country back on track, then it’s high time we remind ourselves that God is Holy Holy Holy!

And people this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people really can have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe before it’s too late!” But people, I’m telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we’ve got to stop acting like practical atheists. We’ve got to start demonstrating by our lips as well as our lives that God is Holy!
Chapter Twenty-One

God’s Holiness Creates a Removal

The following letter is reported to be from a Christian Grandmother telling about the amazing day she had. All I have to say is, I hope she wasn’t from Lewiston.

“The other day, I went up to a local Christian bookstore and saw a ‘Honk if you love Jesus’ bumper sticker. Well, I was feeling particularly sassy that day, because I’d just come from a thrilling choir performance, followed by a thunderous prayer meeting, so I bought the sticker and put it on my bumper.

And boy, I’m glad I did! What an uplifting experience that followed!! I was stopped at a red light at a busy intersection, just lost in thought about the Lord and how good He is... and I didn’t notice that the light had changed. It is a good thing someone else loves Jesus because if he hadn’t honked, I’d never have noticed!

Why, with that bumper sticker, I found that LOTS of people love Jesus! In fact, the guy behind me started honking like crazy, and then he leaned out of his window and screamed, ‘For the love of GOD!! GO! Jesus Christ, GO!’

And I thought, ‘What a great cheerleader for Jesus he was!’ And then everyone started honking! So I just leaned out of my window and started waving and smiling at all these loving people. I even honked my horn a few
times to share in the love!

Then I saw another man waving in a funny way with only his middle finger stuck up in the air. So I asked my teenage grandson in the back seat, what that meant. And he said that it was probably a Hawaiian good luck sign or something. Well, I’ve never met anyone from Hawaii, so I leaned out the window and gave him the good luck sign back.

Well, this apparently got a couple of the people so caught up in the joy of the moment that they got out of their cars and started walking towards me. I bet they wanted to pray or ask what church I attended, but this is when I noticed the light had changed. So I grinned and waved to all my brothers and sisters, and drove on through the intersection.

But I noticed I was the only car that got through the intersection before the light changed again, and I felt kind of sad that I had to leave them especially after all the love we had shared; so I slowed the car down, leaned out of the window, and one last time I gave them all the Hawaiian good luck sign as I drove away. Praise the Lord for such wonderful folks!

Love, Grandma!

Now how many of you would say that Grandmother was lucky to escape with her life? Oh, she thought was she doing a great job of sharing the love of Jesus, didn’t she? But her behavior was doing something else, wasn’t it? In fact, she was absolutely clueless to the destruction she was leaving behind. But folks, did you know the same thing is true for many Christians? How? By acting like practical atheists.

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our lips and by our lives, we act like He’s not there. And this not only keeps us from growing in our own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christians living like practical atheists by not knowing Who God Is, we’re going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, “Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?”
We’ve already seen that the very first thing we need to know about God is that God Is Real. The second thing we need to know about God is that God Is Personal. The third thing we need to know about God is that God Is Wise. The fourth thing we need to know about God is that God Is Powerful. And in the last chapter we saw that the fifth thing we need to know about God is that God Is Holy. And there we saw that if we want to know about the Holiness of God then one of the best ways is to simply look at the Reaction of People when they encounter the presence of God. And there we saw the reaction of the Israelites, Samson’s Parents, Job, Daniel, and Isaiah, which showed us that God’s Holiness is something that will fill you with fear, cause you to shut your mouth and suck carpet, and shock you to the core.

But folks, seeing the Reaction of People is not the only way to understand the Holiness of God. The second way to understand the Holiness of God is in the Removal of People. But hey, don’t take my word for it. Let’s listen to God’s.

Exodus 32:19-28 “When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain. And he took the calf they had made and burned it in the fire; then he ground it to powder, scattered it on the water and made the Israelites drink it. He said to Aaron, What did these people do to you, that you led them into such great sin?

Do not be angry, my lord, Aaron answered. You know how prone these people are to evil. They said to me, Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don’t know what has happened to him. So I told them, Whoever has any gold jewelry, take it off. Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!

Moses saw that the people were running wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughingstock to their enemies. So he stood at the entrance to the camp and said, Whoever is for the LORD, come to me. And all the Levites rallied to him.
Then he said to them, This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Each man strap a sword to his side. Go back and forth through the camp from one end to the other, each killing his brother and friend and neighbor. The Levites did as Moses commanded, and that day about three thousand of the people died.” (NIV)

Now according to our text here, Moses goes up to get the Ten Holy Commandments from God but when he returns he sees the people engaged in some unholy behavior, right? And then, instead of giving the Israelites a huge lecture or even a dreaded time out, what does Moses do? He gives orders to have them killed on the spot. They were permanently removed from God’s presence. And if we’re honest, most of us will look at that passage and say, “Gee whiz God, don’t you think that’s a little bit extreme?” But folks, the only reason we dare question the Holy Word of God is because we try to understand the Holiness of God from man’s perspective. C.S. Lewis talks about this problem in the following story.

“There was a wise mystical barnacle that was at the bottom of the ocean. And one day this barnacle gathered his disciples around him and in a moment of religious vision, he got a glimpse of what man was like.

So he began to share what his concept of man was. He said first of all that from his point of view, man does not have a shell, that man is not attached to a rock, and that he is not surrounded by water like we barnacles. So this led the barnacles to begin to speculate on the nature of man.

And soon they we’re teaching other barnacles that since man has no shell, he must be a shapeless blob of jelly. And since he is not attached to a rock, he obviously has no location. And since there’s no water surrounding him to float food to him, man must not even need to eat.

Thus from their own environment and their own nature, the barnacles came up with an extremely limited and warped concept of man. And he says this.
If we too begin with ourselves in order to discover what God is like, we too will end up with an extremely limited and warped concept of God, which will be far less than what He truly is.”

Now from their perspective the barnacles thought they had humans figured out, right? But they were way off base, weren’t they? And people, I’m telling you, it’s the same thing with you and I. As long as we try to understand the Holiness of God from our perspective, we’re always going to end up with a warped view of God. People, God is absolutely Holy whether we like it or believe it or not. Our personal belief or perspective is not going to change God’s holiness. And the whole lesson in that passage from Exodus is not just that God has no sin in Himself, but that He has a zero tolerance for sin from us.

And this is precisely the American Church’s problem today. This is why we act like practical atheists. You see, we already have a hard time thinking we need to revere God. But what makes it worse is we see absolutely no need to fear God, especially when it comes to our sin. Therefore, if we’re ever going to understand the Holiness of God and His zero tolerance for sin, I think we’d better see what the Holy Word of God has to say about it, how about you?

And folks, it’s pretty clear. The first way the Bible describes God’s zero tolerance for sin is in the Removal of Nadab & Abihu.

Leviticus 10:1-3 “And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, and put incense on it, and offered strange and unholy fire before the Lord, as He had not commanded them. And there came forth fire from before the Lord and killed them, and they died before the Lord.

Then Moses said to Aaron, This is what the Lord meant when He said, I and My will, not their own will be acknowledged as hallowed by those who come near Me, and before all the people I will be honored. And Aaron said nothing.” (AMP)
Now here we see the **amazing** account of the removal of **Nadab** and **Abihu** from the walks of life. And here they were, not only the sons of the great man of God Aaron, but they were priests of God Himself. And so one day they decided to **try something new**. Oh, the orders from God were very clear, but they wanted to spice things up a little bit. You know, try something new instead of the same ol’ boring routine. And so my question is, “What was God’s response? How did He react when this unholy behavior was committed in His Holy presence?” Was it like the American Church today, “Hey man, there’s nothing wrong with having a little fun once in awhile. Come on, lighten up! Nobody can live a perfect life. Besides God knows I need to relieve some stress once in awhile.” **Was that it?** Or did God immediately send forth fire and burn both of them to a crisp causing Aaron to shut his mouth?

So folks, correct me if I’m wrong, but I’d say according to the Word of God the Holiness of God shows us that God **absolutely does not tolerate** even the slightest bit of sin, how about you? In fact, I’d venture to say that the American Church has totally forgotten this.

Oh, but that’s not all. The **second way** the Bible describes God’s zero tolerance for sin is in the **Removal of Achan**.

**Joshua 7:1,24-26** “But Israel was unfaithful concerning the things set apart for the LORD. A man named Achan had stolen some of these things, so the LORD was very angry with the Israelites. Then Joshua and all the Israelites took Achan, the silver, the robe, the bar of gold, his sons, daughters, cattle, donkeys, sheep, tent, and everything he had, and they brought them to the valley of Achor.

Then Joshua said to Achan, Why have you brought trouble on us? The LORD will now bring trouble on you. And all the Israelites stoned Achan and his family and burned their bodies. So the LORD was no longer angry.” (NLT)

Now here we see the **incredible** account of the removal of **Achan** from the walks of life. And here he was, a fellow Israelite, one of the special people of
God fighting for the Promised Land. And so one day he decides to acquire something new. Oh, the orders from God were very clear, “Don’t take anything from these people. You get the land but don’t touch their possessions.” But Achan thought that a little compromise here and there was no big deal. And so my question is, “What was God’s response? How did He react when this unholy behavior was committed in His Holy presence?” Was it like the American Church today, “Hey come on, what’s the big deal? So I fudge a little here and there. Everybody’s entitled to a few mistakes now and then. Besides, God knows I’m only human.” Was that it? Or was not only Achan but his whole family immediately stoned to death and burned to quench the very anger of God Himself?

So folks, correct me if I’m wrong, but I’d say according to the Word of God the Holiness of God shows us that God absolutely does not tolerate even the slightest bit of sin, not even a tiny bit of compromise, how about you? In fact, I’d venture to say that the American Church has totally forgotten this.

Oh, but that’s not all. The third way the Bible describes God’s zero tolerance for sin is in the Removal of Uzzah.

2 Samuel 6:6-7 “When they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God, because the oxen stumbled. The LORD’s anger burned against Uzzah because of his irreverent act; therefore God struck him down and he died there beside the ark of God.” (NIV)

Now here we see the mind-boggling account of the removal of Uzzah from the walks of life. And here he was, privileged enough to be walking beside the ark of God, which was now being brought to the city of David. It was a great day of celebration. And so on that day, Uzzah decides to help God out. Oh, the orders from God were very clear. If there was one thing you never ever did, it was to touch the ark of God. Why? Because it represented the actual Holy
Presence of God. And so my question is, “What was God’s response? How did He react when this unholy behavior was committed in His Holy presence?” Was it like the American Church today, “Hey listen God, I know You said I need to do this, but really, I think I got a better way. I’m going to try doing it my way for a little while and if it doesn’t work out, I’ll admit You were right, okay?” Was that it? Or did God’s anger strike him dead on the spot for his lack of reverence for the will of God?

So folks, correct me if I’m wrong, but I’d say according to the Word of God that the Holiness of God shows us that God absolutely does not tolerate even the slightest bit of sin, not even a small deviation from His will, how about you? In fact, I’d venture to say that the American Church has totally forgotten this.

Oh, but that’s not all. The fourth way the Bible describes God’s zero tolerance for sin is in the Removal of Ananias & Saphira.

Acts 5:1-5 “There was also a man named Ananias who, with his wife, Sapphira, sold some property. He brought part of the money to the apostles, but he claimed it was the full amount. His wife had agreed to this deception. Then Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart? You lied to the Holy Spirit, and you kept some of the money for yourself. You weren’t lying to us but to God. As soon as Ananias heard these words, he fell to the floor and died. Everyone who heard about it was terrified.” (NLT)

Now here we see the awesome account of the removal of Ananias and Saphira from the walks of life. And here they were, not only Christians, but obedient Christians in supporting the work of the Lord. And so one day they decided to stretch things a little. Oh, the orders from God were very clear. It was the ninth Commandment. You shall not bear false witness or in other words, lie, let alone lie in the presence of God. And so my question is, “What was God’s response? How did He react when this unholy behavior was committed in His
Holy presence?” Was it like the American Church today, “Okay, so I stretched
the truth a little. Everybody does it. Besides, it was only a little white lie. I mean,
surely, you can’t expect me to be totally honest, not in this day and age.” Was
that it? Or did they immediately drop dead on the floor filling everyone else with
the fear of God?

So folks, correct me if I’m wrong, but I’d say according to the Word of
God the Holiness of God shows us that God absolutely does not tolerate even
the slightest bit of sin, not even a little bitty lie, how about you? In fact, I’d
venture to say that the American Church has totally forgotten this.

But you might be thinking, “Gee whiz, come on Pastor Billy, here you go
again. I know that’s what the text says, but there’s got to be another way to look
at this. I mean, it just seems too harsh!” But people, stop and think about it. It
only seems harsh if you’re ignorant of the Holiness of God. “Yeah, but come on.
Isn’t that a bit extreme?” But who are you to question the Holiness of God?
Could it be that just like the barnacles we are suffering from a warped view of
God? “Yeah but that’s just not fair!” Who are we to question the Holiness of
God? Are we God?

You see, the second great crime of the American Church is that we’ve
lost our fear of God because we don’t believe in the absolute Holiness of
God. And now we have refashioned God into the image of our unholy desires.
He’s no longer God. He’s merely our Cosmic Buddy in the sky Who winks at our
sin and lets us do whatever we want. And if you don’t believe me, then let’s take
a look at what some so-called Christians are saying about God and His view of
sin.

1. Darryl, 17 - “Kids at school are pressuring me and my girlfriend to have
sex. I want to wait until marriage, but I worry about how this makes me
look.”
2. Kendra, 14 - “I know the Bible says you can’t have sex before marriage. But why can’t you, if you’re in love with the person? It doesn’t feel wrong.”

3. Of those polled on a Christian Internet forum, 63.79% thought that it was perfectly fine to be a Wiccan.

4. 4% of Christians and 3% of non-Christians said they had consulted a medium or spiritual advisor, within the past month.

5. A Monday night ABC special reported that Mary Magdalene was actually Jesus’ wife. The show was based on a book that also asserts that Magdalene fled Jerusalem with Jesus’ child after his crucifixion. ABC’s Elizabeth Vargas said. “For me, it’s made religion more real and, ironically, much more interesting – which is what we’re hoping to do for our viewers.”

6. A United Methodist minister has written a book on Jesus that claims that Jesus not only condoned homosexual relationships, but that Jesus Himself was involved in one. The minister has not been reprimanded by his denomination.

7. Roughly 4,000 Americans were killed on 9/11 in one day and this brought America to her knees. Yet 6,850 Americans are killed every single day by abortion and nearly 50 million have been killed since 1973. Oh, and worldwide, we now kill about 42 million a year.3

Now I don’t know about you, but I’d say that in light of our study on the Holiness of God that those people who made those statements are in for a rude awakening on the other side, how about you? And I’d also say that last statistic about abortion is something that’s going to be judged by God real soon. Why? Because if God doesn’t judge that sin, He’ll have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah. But folks, I don’t know if you’ve learned this one or not but God doesn’t give apologies. Therefore, judgment’s coming unless we turn around real fast and pray for God’s forgiveness like Pastor Joe Wright did.
“On January 23, 1996, Joe Wright, Senior Pastor of Central Christian Church in Wichita, was invited to pray at the opening session of one chamber of the Kansas General Assembly.

“Heavenly Father, we come before you today to ask Your forgiveness and to seek Your direction and guidance. We know Your Word says, ‘Woe on those who call evil good,’ but that’s exactly what we have done. We have lost our spiritual equilibrium and reversed our values.

We confess that: We have ridiculed the absolute truth of Your Word and called it pluralism. We have worshipped other gods and called it multi-culturalism. We have endorsed perversion and called it an alternative lifestyle.

We have exploited the poor and called it the lottery. We have neglected the needy and called it self-preservation. We have rewarded laziness and called it welfare. We have killed our unborn children and called it a choice.

We have neglected to discipline our children and called it building self-esteem. We have abused power and called it political savvy. We have coveted our neighbor’s possessions and called it ambition.

We have polluted the air with profanity and pornography and called it freedom of expression. We have ridiculed the time-honored values of our forefathers and called it enlightenment.

Search us, O God, and know our hearts today; cleanse us from every sin and set us free. Amen.”

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say that’s a pretty good prayer for our country, how about you? I’d say it acknowledges God’s Holiness and our great need to be set free from our sins, how about you? But what you need to know is that as he prayed that prayer, some of the legislators who couldn’t stand the truth actually demonstrated their defiance by walking out.

And therefore, I make the same challenge to the America Church. Will you acknowledge God’s Holiness and change your behavior today? Or will you defy the truth and walk out of here totally unchanged? People of God the Bible is
clear. Judgment starts with the house of God. The only hope to turn our nation around is you and I the Church. Therefore if we’re ever going to get our country, let alone our lives, back on track, then we’ve got to get back to a reverence for God AND a holy fear of God when it comes to our sins. How? By reminding ourselves that God is Holy Holy Holy!

And people this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people really can have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe before it’s too late!” But people, I’m telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we’ve got to stop acting like practical atheists. We’ve got to start demonstrating by our lips as well as our lives that God is Holy!
“One day a 2,000 member Baptist church was filled to overflowing one Sunday morning. And on this day, the preacher was just about ready to start the sermon when two men, dressed in long black coats and black hats entered thru the rear of the church.

Then one of the two men walked to the middle of the church while the other one stayed at the back. Then all of a sudden, both of them reached under their coats and pulled out automatic weapons.

And the one in the middle shouted, ‘Everyone willing to take a bullet for Jesus stay in your seats!’

Well, naturally, the pews emptied fast, followed by the choir. Then all the deacons ran out followed by the choir director and even the assistant Pastor.

And in just a few moments, there were only about 20 people left sitting in the Church with the Pastor holding steady in the pulpit.

Then all of a sudden, the men put their weapons away and said, gently, to the preacher, ‘Okay Pastor, all the hypocrites are gone. You can start the service.’"
Now how many of you would like to try that technique next Sunday?

Well, fortunately there’s a less painful way of finding out who’s being a hypocrite. You see, you don’t need to ask who’ll take a bullet for Jesus. All you have to do is look at their behavior. And can anyone guess what behavior that might be? Hey, that right. It’s when we act like practical atheists.

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our lips and by our lives, we act like He’s not there. And this not only keeps us from growing in our own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christians living like practical atheists by not knowing Who God Is, we’re going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, “Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?”

We’ve already seen that the very first thing we need to know about God is that God Is Real. The second thing we need to know is that God Is Personal. The third thing we need to know is that God Is Wise. The fourth thing we need to know is that God Is Powerful. And in the last two chapters we saw that the fifth thing we need to know about God is that God Is Holy. And there we saw that if we want to know about the Holiness of God then one of the best ways is to simply look at the Reaction of People and in the last chapter the Removal of People. And there we saw the removal of the Nadab and Abihu, Achan, Uzzah, and Ananias and Sapphira, which showed us that God’s Holiness has a zero tolerance for sin. He will not put up with the slightest bit of compromise, a small deviation from His will, or even a teensy weensy lie.

But folks, the Reaction and Removal of People are not the only ways to understand the Holiness of God. The third way to understand the Holiness of God is in Reminders for People. And the first way God reminds people that He
is Holy and we are not is The Tabernacle. But hey, don’t take my word for it.

Let’s listen to God’s.

**Exodus 25:1-9** “The LORD said to Moses, Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from each man whose heart prompts him to give. These are the offerings you are to receive from them: gold, silver and bronze; blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen; goat hair; ram skins dyed red and hides of sea cows; acacia wood; olive oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense; and onyx stones and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breastpiece. Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you.” (NIV)

Now according to our text here, we see the amazing orders from God to make a traveling sanctuary made out of precious gems, fine linen, goat hair and even the hide of a sea cow. **Is that not incredible or what!** Now you might think, “Wowee. Whip de doo! So they built a giant tent thing made out of weird animal skins. So what!” But people, I’m telling you, there’s much more than meets the eye here. What did our text say? God said to make Him a sanctuary so He can dwell with us. And do you have any idea of the significance of what that means? God loves His people so much, He doesn’t want a far away external religion with them. No! He wants an actual intimate personal relationship with His people. Is that incredible or what?

**But** there’s a problem. He is Holy and we are not. Therefore, we can’t have an intimate relationship with Him. So how is a Supernatural Multi-dimensional Infinite Holy God going to communicate this problem to tiny finite unholy human beings? That’s right! He uses an external teaching tool. **This is what the Tabernacle was for.** It was an ongoing visual object lesson designed by God to remind us that God not only wants fellowship with us, but we need somebody to save us from our unholiness so we can have fellowship with Him. And can anyone guess who that might be? Jesus!
And just to make sure we know it’s Jesus, God in His wisdom provided clues hidden in the very articles of the Tabernacle itself. So what are these clues reminding us that Jesus is the One Who brings us into fellowship with God? Hey, great question. I’m glad you asked. The **first clue** reminding us that we need Jesus to get to God is in **The Gate**.

**Exodus 27:9,16** “Then make a courtyard for the Tabernacle, enclosed with curtains made from fine linen. For the entrance to the courtyard, make a curtain that is 30 feet long. Fashion it from fine linen, and decorate it with beautiful embroidery in blue, purple, and scarlet yarn. It will be attached to four posts that fit into four bases.” (NLT)

Now according to our text here, the **first thing you need to do** if you’re going to build a sanctuary for God is to establish a perimeter right? And this is precisely what we have here. The Israelites were to construct a perimeter of fine white linen representing the Holiness of God. And this showed that God was on the inside of this structure and the people were where? On the outside, right? Thus it revealed our **separation** from God. However, God made an entrance of a different size and color to show us His desire for fellowship. Oh, we can get access to Him **but** it must be through His way, through His **gate**.

So the question is, “How are unholy creatures **cut off from God** going to get through this **gate**? How can we break through this barrier separating us from God and fellowship with Him? Well hey, did somebody say Jesus?

**John 10:9** “Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. Wherever they go, they will find green pastures.” (NLT)

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say God’s trying to teach us something. I’d say maybe He’s trying to show us that He is Holy and we are not and that Jesus is the **gateway** to a relationship with God, how about you?
Oh, but that’s not all. The second clue reminding us that we need Jesus to get to God is in The Altar of Sacrifice.

**Exodus 27:1,8** “Using acacia wood, make a square altar 7 1/2 feet wide, 7 1/2 feet long, and 4 1/2 feet high. The altar must be hollow, made from planks. Be careful to build it just as you were shown on the mountain.” (NLT)

Now according to our text here, the very first thing you encounter when you enter into the Tabernacle was a sacrificial altar. It was a massive wooden box that served for one purpose: to offer up an innocent victim, an animal, for the forgiveness of guilty sinful behavior. And this showed that if we’re going to approach God then something innocent, something without sin must pay the price and die in our place.

So the question is, “Where are unholy guilty creatures going to get an innocent sacrifice, especially when the Bible says the blood of animals could never really take away sin? Well hey, did somebody say Jesus?

**Romans 3:25** “For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed His life, shedding his blood.” (NLT)

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say God’s trying to teach us something. I’d say maybe He’s trying to show us that He is Holy and we are not and that Jesus is the sacrifice needed for a relationship with God, how about you?

Oh, but that’s not all. The third clue reminding us that we need Jesus to get to God is in The Laver of Cleansing.

**Exodus 30:18-20** “Make a bronze washbasin with a bronze stand. Place it between the Tabernacle and the altar, and fill it with water. Aaron and his sons will wash their hands and feet there. They must wash with water whenever they go into the Tabernacle to appear before the LORD and when they approach the altar to burn up their special gifts to the LORD – or they will die!” (NLT)
Now according to our text here, the second thing you encounter when you enter into the Tabernacle was a laver of cleansing. It was a large basin of water the priests had to wash themselves with before they entered the Holy Place. Why? Well, just a minor thing. If they didn’t they would die! And this showed that if we’re going to approach a Holy God then we need something to cleanse us from all our defilement, or in other words, our sins.

So the question is, “Where are unholy sinful creatures going to get something to cleanse us from our sins, especially when the Bible says that water can’t do it? Well hey, did somebody say Jesus?

**Hebrews 9:22,14** “And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (NAS)

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say God’s trying to teach us something. I’d say maybe He’s trying to show us that He is Holy and we are not and that Jesus is the One to cleanse us for a relationship with God, how about you?

Oh, but that’s not all. The fourth clue reminding us that we need Jesus to get to God is in The Table of Showbread & Lampstand.

**Exodus 25:23,30,31,37,40** “Make a table of acacia wood – two cubits long, a cubit wide and a cubit and a half high. Put the bread of the Presence on this table to be before me at all times. Make a lampstand of pure gold and hammer it out, base and shaft; its flowerlike cups, buds and blossoms shall be of one piece with it. Then make its seven lamps and set them up on it so that they light the space in front of it. See that you make them according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.” (NIV)

Now according to our text here, the next thing you encounter when you enter into the Holy Place of the Tabernacle was a table with bread and a
Lampstand. Bread back in those days was a staple food at mealtime. And mealtime represented **sustenance** and **fellowship**. And to have a source of light, **especially at night**, was a really big deal. It symbolized not only light, **but life**. If you didn’t have light, you’re life could be in danger. Therefore, what the bread and light in the Tabernacle showed us was that if we’re going to have a **sustained life** and a **source of life** with God then we need to get our hands on some Holy Bread and Holy Light, right?

But the question is, “Where are unholy creatures going to get **Holy Bread** and **Holy Light** from? We can’t cook it up ourselves. Well hey, did somebody say Jesus?

**John 6:51, 8:12** “I am the living bread that came down out of heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever. I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won’t be stumbling through the darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.” (NLT)

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say God’s trying to teach us something. I’d say maybe He’s trying to show us that He is Holy and we are not and that Jesus is the **source of Light and Life** for a relationship with God, how about you?

The **fifth clue** reminding us that we need Jesus to get to God is in **The Veil** and **The Ark of the Covenant**.

**Exodus 26:31,33;25:10,18,22** “Make a curtain of blue, purple and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen, with cherubim worked into it by a skilled craftsman. Hang the curtain from the clasps and place the ark of the Testimony behind the curtain. The curtain will separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. Have them make a chest of acacia wood – two and a half cubits long, a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit and a half high. And make two cherubim out of hammered gold at the ends of the cover. There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the Testimony, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites.” (NIV)
Now according to our text here, **the last thing you encountered** before you left the Holy Place and entered the Holy of Holies was a veil and the ark of God. And the veil was a huge massive curtain that served as a final protective barrier from the actual presence of God, which was represented by the ark of God. In fact, when the ark was moved the priests would walk in backwards and cover it with a cloth so they wouldn’t look at it and die. And each year, only once a year, the High Priest and only the High Priest entered to sprinkle blood on the mercy seat of the ark to obtain God’s forgives for the people. And just in case it wasn’t accepted or the Priest did something wrong and got killed by God, they tied a rope to his ankle so they could pull him out!

So the question is, “Where are unholy creatures going to find a High priest to go through the veil let alone offer blood so God can forgive us? We can’t do it! What will we do? Well hey, did somebody say Jesus?

**Matthew 27:51; Hebrews 10:19,21,22** “At that moment, the Temple curtain was ripped in two, top to bottom. There was an earthquake, and rocks were split in pieces. And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven’s Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. And since we have a great High Priest, let us go right into the presence of God.” (NLT)

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say God’s trying to teach us something. I’d say maybe He’s trying to show us that He is Holy and we are not and that Jesus is the **High Priest Who takes us right into the presence** of God, how about you?

But you might me thinking, “Okay Pastor Billy, that was kind of a cool presentation there and yeah, it’s kind of neat seeing all that symbolism about Jesus and how He gets us to God. But I already know all that stuff. What’s the big deal?” WHAT’S THE BIG DEAL?? People, if this is really your attitude, it only shows **you don’t know** all that stuff. And **the big deal is** that it not only
shows us how to get to heaven, **but how to live life on earth** before we get to heaven. **How?** Well, have you not read? The Bible says, get this, that when we get saved, we become the actual temple of God!

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 “Don’t you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you? God will bring ruin upon anyone who ruins this temple. For God’s temple is holy, and you Christians are that temple.” (NLT)

And people, the point is this. If you had even the slightest idea what it means to be a Holy Temple of a Holy God, your behavior would change overnight, like it did with this boy.

“One day a mother visited her son at college and upon entering his room, her eye swept across the walls and noticed they were plastered with about a dozen suggestive pictures. Her heart was grieved but she said nothing to him.

Several days later though, the mailman delivered a package to the young man. It was a gift from his mother – a beautifully framed picture of Jesus. So proudly, the boy hung the picture on the wall above his desk.

But immediately, things began to change. That night, before he went to bed, the boy removed the pin-up picture, which hung closest to the picture of Jesus. And then the next day, another picture was consigned to the wastebasket.

In fact, day after day, the pictures began to disappear from the walls until finally only one remained – the picture of Jesus.”

Now that boy’s behavior changed instantly overnight, didn’t it? **Why?** Because he was simply confronted with an external picture of Jesus. That one holy picture got rid of a lot of unholy behavior, didn’t it? Now folks, here comes the punch line. We Christians don’t have an external picture of Jesus on our walls, we’ve got the actual Spirit of Jesus in our hearts. **We’ve become the temple of God.**
But herein lies our problem. We think that God exists for us instead of we for Him. We think He’s to serve our every whim instead of us serving His. And this is why the third great crime of the American Church is that we’ve lost our obedience to God because we don’t believe in the Holiness of God.

People, understand our study today loud and clear. When we get saved, the Bible says we no longer belong to ourselves. Why? Because we’ve become His temple. We are now what the Scripture calls, “Priests of God.” And just like the priests of old, we are to serve the Holy Living God in the new traveling Tabernacle, our bodies. And stop and think about what this means.

The same God Whose Holiness caused people to shut their mouths, fear for their lives, fall flat on their face, and suck carpet, is inside of us! The same God Whose Holiness has a zero tolerance for sin and thus instantly killed people for the slightest bit of compromise or a tiny deviation from His will or even a teensy weensy lie, is where? Inside of us! That means everything we see, He sees. Everything we listen to, He listens too. Everything we say He hears it all. And everything we do He watches it all, good or bad. And I don’t know about you but I’d say that really is a big deal, how about you? I’d say knowing that will spur on a lot more obedience than just a mere picture on the wall, how about you? In fact, I’d venture to say the American Church has totally forgotten this, how about you?

People of God, when are we going to realize that the only hope to turn our nation around is you and I the Church. If revival is ever going to come to heal our land then people need to see God working in us. Therefore if we’re ever going to get our country back on track, then we’ve got to remind ourselves that God’s is Holy Holy Holy!
And people this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people **really can** have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe **before it’s too late**!” But people, I’m telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we’ve got to stop acting like practical atheists. We’ve got to start demonstrating by our **lips** as well as our **lives** that **God is Holy**!
“One day a guy was walking across a bridge and he saw another fellow who looked like he was ready to jump off the bridge. So, he thought he’d try to stall him until the authorities showed up.

So he yelled to the guy, ‘Don’t jump!’ To which the guy replied, ‘Why not? Nobody loves me.’

‘Well, God loves you. You believe in God, don’t you? ‘Yes, I believe in God,’ he said.


‘Me, too! Independent Baptist or Southern Baptist?’ ‘Independent Baptist,’ he said.

‘Me, too! New Evangelical Moderate Independent Baptist or Conservative Independent Baptist?’ ‘Conservative Independent Baptist,’ he said.

‘Me, too! Calvinistic Conservative Independent Baptist or Lose-Your-Salvation Armenian Conservative Independent Baptist?’ ‘Calvinistic Conservative
Independent Baptist,’ he said.

‘Me, too! King James Only Calvinistic Conservative Independent Baptist OR Modern Versions Calvinistic Conservative Independent Baptist?’

And the guy said, ‘Modern Versions Calvinistic Conservative Independent Baptist,’ he said.

And the other guy said, ‘What??!! You heretic!’ And he pushed him over the bridge.”

Now is that a classic example of Christians disagreeing on non-essentials or what? It’s not only dumb, it’s dangerous. It cost that one guy his life, didn’t it? But unfortunately, it doesn’t stop there. You see, we even seem to disagree on the essentials as well. And the results are just as deadly. And can anybody guess what essential truth might that be? Hey, that’s right! The dangers of acting like a practical atheist.

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our lips and by our lives, we act like He’s not there. And this not only keeps us from growing in our own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christians living like practical atheists by not knowing Who God Is, we’re going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, “Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?”

We’ve already seen that the very first thing we need to know about God is that God Is Real. The second thing we need to know is that God Is Personal. The third thing we need to know is that God Is Wise. The fourth thing we need to know is that God Is Powerful. And in the last three chapters we saw that the fifth thing we need to know about God is that God Is Holy. And we’ve been seeing that if we want to know about the Holiness of God then some of the best ways is to simply look at the Reaction of People, the Removal of People, and in
the last chapter, the **Reminders for People**. And there we saw the **first Reminder** God gave us declaring that He is Holy and we are not, is in **The Tabernacle**. And there we saw that the very articles of the Tabernacle, the **gate**, the **altar of sacrifice**, the **laver**, the **bread**, the **lampstand**, the **veil**, and the **ark of the covenant** clearly reminds us that God is Holy and we are not and that we need Jesus to get to heaven.

But folks, did you know **The Tabernacle’s** not the only **Reminder** that God gave us to show us that He is Holy and we are not? The **second way** God reminds us that He is Holy and we are not is **The Ten Commandments**. But hey, don’t take my word for it. Let’s listen to God’s.

**Romans 3:9-20** “What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written: There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.

Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know. There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.” (NIV)

Now folks, according to our text here, Paul just blows away every single self-love teaching from our secular society. He declares that man is not basically good, man is basically bad, bad to the bone. What did Paul say? He said, “Nobody is righteous, you’re worthless, you don’t understand, you’re mouths are deceitful and you’re full of bitterness, you don’t seek God and you don’t even fear Him, **when you should!”** And why does Paul say all this? Is he just trying to
ruin our self-esteem? **Precisely!** But not only that, he’s trying to show us the purpose of the law.

You see the **Ten Commandments were not given just as a mode of behavior. They were given to reveal our need of a Savior.** What did Paul say? He said, “through the law you become conscious of sin.” And why is this an important thing to do? Because, if we’re honest with ourselves, we’re not going to readily admit that we’re sinners cut off from God! Are you kidding! I mean, how many of you get up everyday and say, “I just can’t wait to get out in public so I can declare to everyone I meet that I’m a dirty rotten stinking filthy sinner!” No way man! And people, **this is precisely our problem.** God wants a relationship with us but we’re disqualified because He is Holy and we are not and we don’t want to admit it.

So here’s the dilemma. How is a Supernatural Multi-dimensional Infinite Holy God going to communicate this problem to tiny finite unholy human beings? That’s right! He uses an external teaching tool called the **Ten Commandments.** People, the Ten Commandments were Gods’ loving way to get us to admit our problem so we can get to the solution. And can anybody guess Who that solution might be? Jesus!

So how are these commandments **reminding us** that God is Holy and we are not and we need Jesus to get to God? Great question. I’m glad you asked. The **first commandment** reminding us that God is Holy and we are not is **You Shall Have No Other gods.**

*Exodus 20:1-3*  “Then God instructed the people as follows: I am the LORD your God, who rescued you from slavery in Egypt. Do not worship any other gods besides me.”  (NLT)

Now according to our text here, the very **first test** that God puts us through revealing His Holiness and our sinfulness is the prohibition of
worshipping other gods. And you might say, “Well hey, I don’t worship other gods. I know God exists. I believe in Him.” Well folks, it’s one thing to say you believe in and worship God but it’s another thing to demonstrate it with your behavior. You see, the word “worship” means “to have a reverence for, to pay homage to, or show obedience to.” Therefore, if you want to know a person’s God then all you got to do is look at how they behave. Why? Because whoever dictates your behavior, in essence, THAT is your God.

For instance, many people say they worship God but in reality their friends tell them what to do. They say, “Hey, come one man. Everybody’s doing it. What are you, some kind nerd? You don’t want to be a loser do you?” And the next thing you know, people are more concerned about what their friends might think then what God thinks. And so this makes their friends, in essence, what? Their god, right?

Or many people say they worship God but in reality their employer tells them what to do. They say, “Now listen, it’s not really lying, it’s just withholding information. Besides, you don’t want to lose your job do you?” And the next thing you know, people are more afraid of disobeying their employer than they are of God. And so this makes their employer, what? Their god, right?

Or many people say they worship God but in reality their society tells them what to do. They say, “Now listen, the polls say that the majority of people think abortion is okay. What’s your problem? And everyone I talk to says that they don’t have a problem with homosexuality. Who are you to say its wrong?” And the next thing you know, people are more open to society’s teaching than to God’s teaching. And so this makes their society, what? Their god, right?

Or many people say they worship God but in reality their self tells them what to do. They say, “Now God, I know You said this is what I’m supposed to
do, but I think I’ve got this one figured out. I’m going to try it my way.” And the next thing you know, people are more obedient to themselves than they are to God. And so this makes their self, what? Their own god, right?

And you might be thinking, “Hey come one. I’m only human. Surely worshipping another god once in awhile isn’t that big of a deal is it?” But folks, what you need to know, it really is a big deal. Why? Well, first of all if you worship another god you’re going to end up unsatisfied, like these people were.

“In New York City, there are eight million cats and eleven million dogs. And since New York City is basically just concrete and steel, when you have a pet and it dies, you can’t just go out in the back yard and bury it.

So the city authorities decided that for $50 they would dispose of your deceased pet for you. Well, one enterprising lady thought she could render a service to people in the city and save them money. So she placed an ad in the newspaper that said, ‘When your pet dies, I will come and take care of the carcass for only $25.’

And what this lady would do is go to the local Salvation Army and buy an old suitcases for $2 a piece and when someone would call about his or her pet, she would go to the home and put the deceased pet in the suitcase.

Then she would take a ride on the subway, where there were known thieves. Then she would set the suitcase down, and act like she wasn’t watching. And sure enough a thief would come by and steal her suitcase.

And the writer of the article said, ‘And my guess is that the people who stole those suitcases got a real surprise when they got home.’”

And you see the point is this. Many of us are just like those thieves. We chase after happiness and we grab onto what we think will give us happiness or security; our friends, employer, society, or even ourselves. But when all is said and done, it never quite delivers. It never satisfies. It’s like opening that suitcase
and finding a dead cat! **Why?** Because we’re worshipping something else besides God.

Oh but that’s not all. The **second** thing that happens when you worship another god is that you’ll end up **sorry**. Why? Because **worshipping another god** is called a sin. And the penalty for sin against a Holy God is called **death**.

**Romans 3:23,6:23** “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (NIV)

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say God’s trying to teach us something here in the Ten Commandments. I’d say He’s trying to show us that He is Holy and we are not **and we all deserve to die** and go to hell for **worshipping other gods. Why?** Because that’s how Holy He really is!

Oh, but that’s not all. The **second commandment** reminding us that God is Holy and we are not is **You Shall Have No Idols**.

**Exodus 20:4-6** “You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.” (NIV)

Now according to our text here, the **second test** that God puts us through revealing His Holiness and our sinfulness is the prohibition of **worshipping idols**. And you might say, “Well hey, I don’t worship idols. I’m not one of those people that rub Buddha’s belly, or venerate a religious figurine, or pray to a so-called dead holy person. I worship God alone.” Well folks, it’s one thing to **say** you worship God alone but it’s another thing to demonstrate it with your **behavior**.

You see, an **idol** is simply a false or phony god that gets the same amount of time and attention as the real God. D. Martin Lloyd-Jones states, “A
man’s god is that for which he lives, for which he is prepared to give his time, his energy, his money, that which stimulates, rouses, excites, and enthuses him.” Therefore, this means that whatever gets the majority of your time and affection, is your what? Your god, right? And if it’s not the God of the Bible, it’s called an idol!

For instance, many people say they worship God but in reality they spend the majority of time with their sports. Many people don’t bat an eye getting wild and crazy and displaying all kinds of emotion over a silly game. They paint their faces, get all excited, and scream their lungs out. But when it comes to God? They just can’t seem to find time for Him. And when they do, they show no emotion, they keep their mouth shut, and usually aren’t very excited at all. Therefore, I’d say this makes their sports what? Their god, right?

Oh, but that’s not all. You see, many people say they worship God but in reality they spend the majority of time and affection with their body. For instance, many people don’t even think twice about getting up early and daily devoting themselves to a rigorous exercise and a restrictive diet. Why, they’ll buy any book and listen to any tape that guarantees them the perfect body. But when it comes to God? They just can’t seem to find time for Him. And when they do, they show no devotion, they refuse to study, and they hate even thinking about a spiritual restriction. Therefore, I’d say this makes their body what? Their god, right?

Oh but that’s not all. You see, many people say they worship God but in reality they spend the majority of time and affection with their possessions. For instance, many people don’t even hesitate to commit all their resources to building up that home with all the latest pleasantries or to sacrifice hour after hour in the blazing heat to get that car to shine like a mirror. But when it comes
to God? They just can’t seem to find time for Him. And when they do, they show no commitment, won’t share their resources, and can’t even seem to sacrifice one hour a week to God. Therefore, I’d say this makes their possessions what? Their god, right?

And you might be thinking, “Hey come on. I’m only human. Surely worshipping an idol once in awhile isn’t that big of a deal is it?” But folks, what you need to know, it really is a big deal. Why? Because worshipping an idol is called a sin. And the penalty for sin against a Holy God is called death. Ezekiel 18:4 “For all people are mine to judge – both parents and children alike. And this is my rule: The person who sins will be the one who dies.” (NLT)

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say God’s trying to teach us something here in the Ten Commandments. I’d say He’s trying to show us that He is Holy and we are not and we all deserve to die and go to hell for worshipping idols. Why? Because that’s how Holy He really is!

People of God, if we are ever going to get our society back on track, then we’ve got to remember the purpose of the Ten Commandments. They’re not merely a mode of behavior, they show us our need of a Savior. Why? Because no external law can change man’s internal heart. And this is what our country has totally forgotten! And if you don’t believe me, then ask Darrell Scott. Who’s he? He’s the father of Rachel Scott who was shot and killed at Columbine. And here’s a portion of what he shared at a congressional hearing and you tell me if he’s got the answer to our societal problems figured out.

“The death of my wonderful daughter, Rachel Joy Scott, and the deaths of that heroic teacher, and the other eleven children who died must not be in vain. Their blood cries out for answers.

In the days that followed the Columbine tragedy, I was amazed at how quickly fingers began to be pointed at groups such as the NRA. I am not a member of the
NRA. I am not a hunter. I do not even own a gun. I am not here to represent or defend the NRA because I don’t believe that they are responsible for my daughter’s death.

I am here today to declare that Columbine was not just a tragedy – it was a spiritual event that should be forcing us to look at where the real blame lies! And much of the blame lies here in this room.

What has happened to us as nation? We have refused to honor God, and in so doing, we open the doors to hatred and violence. No amount of gun laws can stop someone who spends months planning this type of massacre. The real villain lies within our own hearts.

And so I wrote a poem just four nights ago that expresses my feelings best.

Your laws ignore our deepest needs, Your words are empty air.
You’ve stripped away our heritage, You’ve outlawed simple prayer.

Now gunshots fill our classrooms, And precious children die.
You seek for answers everywhere, And ask the question “Why?”

It’s because you regulate restrictive laws, Through legislative creed.
And yet you fail to understand, That God is what we need!”

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I think that father hit the nail on the head, how about you? It’s like what another person said, “Blaming guns for Columbine is like blaming spoons for Rosie O’Donnell being fat!” People, when are we going to wake up and realize like Darrell Scott that man-made laws will never fix man’s wicked heart? What we need is God! And this is what God’s been trying to remind us in the Ten Commandments. And people, I’m telling you, the reason why our nation is going to hell is because we’re telling God to do the same. How? By trying getting rid of the Ten Commandments. Don’t believe me? Ask God!
Psalm 9:9,17 “The LORD will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. (But) the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.” (NKJV)

People, God is not messing around. If we as a nation get rid of the Ten Commandments, we are in essence trying to get rid of God. And if you personally or we nationally refuse to receive God’s gracious offer and ask Jesus to forgive us of our hellish behavior, then make no mistake about it folks, God says, “THEN TO HELL YOU WILL GO!” Why? Because God is Holy, Holy, Holy. And He never has and never will mess around with sinning against Him.

And people this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people really can have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe before it’s too late!” But people, I’m telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we’ve got to stop acting like practical atheists. We’ve got to start demonstrating by our lips as well as our lives that God is Holy!
“One Sunday a Preacher was finishing up his sermon on temperance and with great conviction he said, ‘And if I had all the beer in the world, I’d take it and throw it into the river!’

Well at this, the congregation nodded their heads in approval and shouted, ‘Amen Preacher!’

So with even greater conviction the Preacher added, ‘And if I had all the wine in the world, I’d take it and throw it into the river!’

And the people shouted, ‘Amen Preacher!’

So finally, the Preacher concluded and said, ‘And if I had all the whiskey in the world, I’d take it and throw it into the river too!’

And the people shouted even louder, ‘Amen Preacher!’

Well, at this the Preacher sits down, as the song leader stands up to conclude the service and as he does, he looks over at the Preacher cautiously and announced with a nervous smile, ‘Uh, for our closing song, let us sing Hymn #365: ‘We Shall Gather at the River.’”
To which the people shouted, ‘Amen Preacher!’”¹

Now was that bad timing for that hymn or what? Oh my goodness, it totally undermined that Preacher’s message, didn’t it? But folks, did you know that’s not the only way our message gets undermined? Hey that’s right. One of the biggest ways our message gets ruined is when we act like practical atheists.

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our lips and by our lives, we act like He’s not there. And this not only keeps us from growing in our own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christians living like practical atheists by not knowing Who God Is, we’re going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, “Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?”

We’ve already seen that the very first thing we need to know about God is that God Is Real. The second thing we need to know is that God Is Personal. The third thing we need to know is that God Is Wise. The fourth thing we need to know is that God Is Powerful. And in the last four chapters we saw that the fifth thing we need to know about God is that God Is Holy. And there we’ve been seeing that if we want to know about the Holiness of God then some of the best ways is to simply look at the Reaction of People, the Removal of People, and the Reminders for People. And in the last chapter we saw the second Reminder God gives us that He is Holy and we are not, is in The Ten Commandments. And there we saw the first two commandments, don’t worship other gods and don’t worship idols. Why? Because if we break these commands, the penalty is what? Death. Why? Because that’s how holy God really is.
But folks, did you know that’s not the only commandments God gave us to show us that He is Holy and we are not? The third commandment reminding us that God is Holy and we are not is **You Shall Not Use God’s Name in Vain.**

**Exodus 20:7** “You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.” (NIV)

Now according to our text here, the **third test** God puts us through revealing His Holiness and our sinfulness is the prohibition of using His Name in vain. And you might say, “Well hey, I don’t use God’s Name in an irreverent manner. I don’t use it in a vain or silly way.” Well folks, it’s one thing to say you honor God’s name with your lips but it’s another thing to demonstrate it with your words. You see, the word “vain” means “emptiness of speech, or using something in a false or worthless manner.” And folks this is precisely our problem. You see most people think breaking this Commandment is no big deal. But people, what you need to know, is that it really is a big deal. **Why?** Because God is so Holy that He has even declared that His Name is Holy!

**Isaiah 57:15** “For this is what the high and lofty One says – He who lives forever, whose name is holy: I live in a high and holy place.” (NIV)

**Luke 1:49** “For He Who is almighty has done great things for me – and holy is His name [to be venerated in His purity, majesty and glory]!” (AMP)

And people the point is this. When you realize that even the very Name of God is also Holy, it explains why the Jewish people behaved the way they did. You see, **they were afraid** to even say God’s Name, let alone use it in a vain manner. In fact, every time when they came across God’s Name when copying manuscripts they would get up, wash themselves, change clothes, and get a new pen for the occasion. **Every single time!** In fact, they had a saying that said, “When God gave the third Commandment, the whole world trembled.”² And
folks, I don’t know if you’ve noticed this, but our whole world has totally forgotten this. Of all names to have been turned into a cuss word, it’s what? Jesus Christ, isn’t it?

And what you need to realize is that this danger is not only for those who use God’s Name as a cuss word, but for every person who uses God’s Name as a common word. This means using God’s Name in vain includes such statements as “Well, by God I’m going to make it this time” or “Oh, my God!” or “God what’s the big deal here.” You see, believe it or not, using God’s name is this way is just as sinful as using it as a cuss word. Why? Because both ways are treating it not as something Holy, but something cheap and worthless.

And you might be thinking, “Hey come on. I’m only human. Surely using God’s Name in vain once in awhile isn’t that big of a deal is it?” But folks, what you need to know, is that it really is a big deal. Why? Because using God’s Name in vain is called a sin. And the penalty for sin against a Holy God is called death.

Psalm 139:19,20 “O that You would slay the wicked, O God. For they speak against You wickedly and Your enemies take Your name in vain.” (NAS)

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say God’s trying to teach us something here in the Ten Commandments. I’d say maybe He’s trying to show us that He is Holy and we are not and all of us deserve to die for using His Name in vain, how about you? Why? Because that’s how Holy God really is.

Oh, but that’s not all. The fourth commandment reminding us that God is Holy and we are not is You Shall Keep the Sabbath.

Exodus 20:8-11”Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days a week are set apart for your daily duties and regular work, but the seventh day is a day of rest dedicated to the LORD your God. On that day no one in your household may do any kind of work.
This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you. For in six days the LORD made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; then he rested on the seventh day. That is why the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy.” (NIV)

Now according to our text here, the fourth test God puts us through revealing His Holiness and our sinfulness is the prohibition of **not keeping the Sabbath** or in other words setting aside one day a week as a Holy Day for Him. And originally the Sabbath was on Saturday, but ever since Jesus rose from the grave on Sunday, this has become the Christian’s day set aside for God.

And you might say, “Well hey, I believe in going to Church services on Sunday. I mean, I went last week, didn’t I?” Well folks, it’s one thing to say you set aside a Holy day for God but it’s another thing to demonstrate it with your **behavior**. You see, most people think the fourth Commandment is merely an option. In fact, they treat it not as a command **but as a convenience**. And now this attitude has become an epidemic in the American Church. Don’t believe me? Then take a look at what this Church did to try to stave off a lack of attendance. They came up with what they called, “No Excuse Sunday.”

1. Cots will be placed in the vestibule for those who say, ‘Sunday is my only day to sleep.’

2. Murine will be available for those with tired eyes—from watching TV too late on Saturday night.

3. There will be steel helmets for those who say, ‘The roof would cave in if I ever came to a Church service.’

4. Blankets will be furnished for those who think the sanctuary is too cold, and fans for those who say it is too hot.

5. We will have hearing aids for those who say, ‘The Minister speaks too softly’ and cotton for those who say, ‘The Preacher’s too loud.’
6. Scorecards will be available for those who wish to list the hypocrites present.

7. Some relatives will be in attendance for those who like to go visiting on Sundays.

8. There will be TV dinners for those who can’t go to a Church service and cook dinner also.

9. One section of the sanctuary will be devoted to trees and grass for those who like to seek God in nature.

10. Finally, the sanctuary will be decorated with both Christmas poinsettias and Easter lilies for those who have never seen it without them.

Now how many of you think we should try that technique the next Holiday? Hey, it might increase attendance but I still think it teaches the wrong lesson. You see, the Apostle Paul tells us that we Christians are no longer to worship God just one day a week. No! Now we are to worship God every single day of the week! How? By offering our bodies as living sacrifices. Therefore, our lives are to become a perpetual Sunday Church service. People are to look at us and get a sermon by our lives! But what do we have today? Jesus rose from the dead but the American Church can’t even get out of bed! We’re supposed to worship God twenty-four hours a day but we can’t even make it one hour a week!

And you might be thinking, “Hey come one. I’m only human. Surely not worshipping God once in awhile isn’t that big of a deal is it?” But folks, what you need to know, is that it really is a big deal. Why? Because not worshipping God is called a sin. And the penalty for sin against a Holy God is called death. Numbers 15:32,36 “One day while the people of Israel were in the wilderness, they caught a man gathering wood on the Sabbath day. So the whole community
took the man outside the camp and stoned him to death, just as the LORD had commanded Moses” (NLT)

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say God’s trying to teach us something here in the Ten Commandments. I’d say maybe He’s trying to show us that He is Holy and we are not and all of us deserve to die for not worshipping Him like He deserves, how about you? Why? Because that’s how Holy God really is.

Oh, but that’s not all. The fifth commandment reminding us that God is Holy and we are not is You Shall Honor Your Parents.

Exodus 20:12 “Honor your father and mother. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the LORD your God will give you.” (NLT)

Now according to our text here, the fifth test God puts us through revealing His Holiness and our sinfulness is the command to honor our parents. And you might say, “Well hey, I honor my parents. I respect them for who they are and for what they’ve done.” Well folks, it’s one thing to say you honor your parents, it’s another thing to demonstrate it with your behavior.

You see, the word “honor” means “to glorify, to consider great, or to be rich towards.” And again, when it comes to this Commandment most people not only think it’s no big deal, but they think it only applies to adolescence. But people, that’s not what Jesus said. Let’s take a look.

Matthew 15:3,4,5,6 “Jesus answered: Why do you disobey God and follow your own teaching? Didn’t God command you to respect your father and mother? But you let people get by without helping their parents when they should. Is this any way to show respect to your parents? You ignore God’s commands in order to follow your own teaching.” (CEV)

Now folks, in this one statement here, Jesus declares that this command to honor your parents applies not only to the teenage years, but the what? The
**adult years** as well, right? And why would Jesus say this? Well, I think He was trying warn us of a principle of Scripture. It’s called reaping what you sow. And yes, believe it or not, it applies to how you treat your parents, like this couple learned.

“There once was an old man whose hands trembled when he ate. And because of this, he clattered the silverware, missed his mouth with the spoon, and dribbled his food on the tablecloth. Now he lived with his married son, because he had nowhere else to live. But his son’s wife didn’t like the arrangement.

So one day she said, ‘I can’t have this. It interferes with my right to happiness.’ So she and her husband took the old man gently but firmly by the arm and led him to the corner of the kitchen. There they set him on a stool and gave him his food in an earthenware bowl. So from then on he always ate in the corner.

But one day his hands trembled more than usual and the earthenware bowl fell and broke. So the daughter-in-law barked, ‘If you’re going to act like a pig then you need to eat out of a trough.’ So they made the old man a little wooden trough and from then on, he got his meals in that.

Well, these people had a four-year-old son of whom they were very fond. And one evening the young man noticed his boy playing intently with some bits of wood and he asked him what he was doing.

And the boy smiling for approval said, ‘I’m making a trough to feed you and Mamma out of when I get big.’

Well at this, the man and his wife looked at each other, and for a moment, there was dead silence. But then the tears began to flow as they went to the corner, took the old man by the arm, and led him back to the table.

From then on, they sat him in a comfortable chair, gave him his food on a plate, and never once scolded him when he clattered or spilled or broke a single thing.”

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say that couple learned a powerful lesson just in the nick of time, how about you? But folks, what you need to know, is that most people today still aren’t getting it. How do I know?
Well, you’ve heard the jokes, “You better be nice to your kids because they’re the ones picking out your nursing home!” But folks, maybe God doesn’t want you to pick your parents out a nursing home, maybe He wants you to honor them by taking them into your home. People, my father paid for and built with his own hands an addition to his house so my grandmother could die at home. And my in-laws are on their second set of parents sacrificing their retirement years to take care of them. Why? Because what comes around goes around. And whether you realize it or not, your behavior today might be building your trough for tomorrow.

And folks, don’t get me wrong. I know there are circumstances where a nursing home is necessary. But come on, let’s be honest. Most of the time it’s not. And we sacrifice our parents on the altar of personal convenience, just like it was in Jesus’ day. And that’s why not honoring your parents like God said to is called a sin. And the penalty for sin against a Holy God is called death. Matthew 15:4 “For God commanded, Honor your father and your mother, and, He who curses or reviles or speaks evil of or abuses or treats improperly his father or mother, let him surely come to his end by death.” (AMP)

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say God’s trying to teach us something here in the Ten Commandments. I’d say maybe He’s trying to show us that He is Holy and we are not and all of us deserve to die for not honoring our parents like we should, how about you? Why? Because that’s how Holy God really is.

People of God, if we are ever going to get our society back on track, then we’ve got to remember the purpose of the Ten Commandments. They’re not merely a mode of behavior, they show us our need of a Savior. Why? Because no external law can change man’s internal heart. And this is what our country
continues to forget! And if you don’t believe me, then let’s take a little test. See if you can guess who this organization is.

“Can you imagine working at the following Company, or hiring any of its employees? It has a little over 500 employees with the following statistics:

- 29 have been accused of spousal abuse
- 7 have been arrested for fraud
- 19 have been accused of writing bad checks
- 117 have bankrupted at least two businesses
- 3 have been arrested for assault
- 71 cannot get a credit card due to bad credit
- 8 have been arrested for shoplifting
- 21 are current defendants in lawsuits
- In 1998 alone, 84 were stopped for drunk driving

Can you guess which organization this is? It’s the 535 members of your United States Congress, the same group that perpetually cranks out hundreds upon hundreds of new laws designed to keep the rest of us in line.”

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say the laws these guys are passing by the truckloads aren’t having any effect on their hearts, how about you? And you see, it’s not only true for the people of congress, but the people of our country. Why? Because no amount of man-made laws, 10 or 10,000 is ever going to fix man’s wicked heart! What we need is God! And this is what God’s been trying to remind us in the Ten Commandments. And if we as a nation get rid of the Ten Commandments, we are in essence trying to get rid of God. And once we do that, we are headed for destruction. Don’t believe me? Then ask God. Deuteronomy 8:19-20 “But I’m warning you – if you forget the LORD your God and worship other gods, the LORD will destroy you, just as he destroyed the nations you fought.” (CEV)
People, God is not messing around. If you personally or we nationally refuse to receive God’s gracious offer and ask Jesus to forgive us of our destructive behavior, then make no mistake about it, God says, “FINE, THEN DESTRUCTION YOU WILL GET!” Why? Because God is Holy, Holy, Holy. And He never has and never will mess around with sinning against Him.

And people this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people really can have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe before it’s too late!” But people, I’m telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we’ve got to stop acting like practical atheists. We’ve got to start demonstrating by our lips as well as our lives that God is Holy!
Chapter Twenty-Five

God’s Holiness Generates a Reminder

7-9

“One day a lady went into the sporting section at Wal-mart to buy her husband a fishing rod for Christmas. So she goes up to the salesclerk and said, ‘I’m here to buy a rod for my husband. Can you help me pick out a good one?’

And the man replied, ‘To tell you the truth, Ma’am, I’m blind, but if you drop a rod on the counter, I’ll tell you what it is.’

And the lady, a bit mystified by his comment said, ‘Uh, okay, sure.’

So she picked up a rod and dropped it on the counter, and sure enough, the blind guy knew everything about it. He began to drone on and on about it.

He said, ‘Why that’s a Zebco rod and reel made of a highly flexible yet durable space-age fiberglass with a 15 pound test line...’

‘Okay, okay,’ said the lady, totally amazed, ‘That seems like a good rod, how much is it?’

And the man said, ‘$19.99.’

So the lady said, ‘Okay then I’ll buy it.’
Well, as she was standing there waiting for the guy to ring her up, she accidentally broke wind. So embarrassed, she looked around and was relieved to see that nobody was close to her. ‘In fact,’ she thought, ‘the salesclerk won’t know it’s me, because he’s blind.’

Just then the man said, ‘That will be $25.89 Ma’am.’

And the lady, confused said, ‘Wait a second. I thought the rod was $19.99?’

And the man replied, ‘Yeah, it is. But the duck call is $3, and the catfish bait is $2.’

Now that lady thought she was going to get away with sharing her inner self, didn’t she? But come on, that guy may have been blind but he wasn’t deaf! Therefore, the truth was impossible to hide, wasn’t it? But folks, did you know that lady’s not the only one trying to hide some stinky behavior to no avail?

Hey that’s right! We Christian’s do the same thing? How? By acting like practical atheists.

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our lips and by our lives, we act like He’s not there. And this not only keeps us from growing in our own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christians living like practical atheists by not knowing Who God Is, we’re going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, “Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?”

We’ve already seen that the very first thing we need to know about God is that God Is Real. The second thing we need to know is that God Is Personal. The third thing we need to know is that God Is Wise. The fourth thing we need to know is that God Is Powerful. And in the last five chapters we saw that the fifth thing we need to know about God is that God Is Holy. And there we’ve been seeing that if we want to know about the Holiness of God then the best way
is to simply look at the **Reaction of People**, the **Removal of People**, and the **Reminders for People** in the Tabernacle and the Ten Commandments. And so far we’ve seen the **first five commandments** where God reminds us that He is Holy and we are not, which are **don’t worship other gods, don’t worship idols, don’t use God’s Name in vain, keep the Sabbath** and **honor your parents** like He says to. Why? Because if we break these commands, the penalty is what? **Death.** Why? Because that’s how holy God really is.

But folks, did you know that’s not the only commandments God gave us to show us that He is Holy and we are not? The **sixth commandment** reminding us that God is Holy and we are not is **You Shall Not Murder.**

*Exodus 20:13* “You shall not murder.” (NAS)

Now according to our text here, the **sixth test** God puts us through revealing His Holiness and our sinfulness is the prohibition of **Murder.** And folks, I don’t know if you’ve realized this or not, but our country not only breaks this commandment all the time, but it seems to be having a love affair with it. Don’t believe me? Then lets check out some stats.

1. A murder occurs every 23 minutes.
2. Violent Crimes are up 995%.
3. Teenage suicide is up 200%.
4. Every day 13 youth commit suicide and 16 are murdered.
5. More people have died in America in the last 30 years from murders and suicides then from all the wars in the history of the United States.²

Now I don’t know about you, but I’d say somebody could **care less** about this commandment, how about you? But folks, as horrible as those stats on the murder of adults are, it’s NOTHING compared to the murder of children. Since 1973 we as a nation have murdered 39 million babies.³ Do the math and
that averages about 6,850 a day or one every 13 seconds. In fact, by the time you’re done reading this chapter another 115 babies will be murdered.

And folks, **what makes it even more horrible** is that many so-called Christians are starting to slide on this issue? **Why**? Because they’ve fallen for a lie! Yes, they say abortion is murder, but now they’ve been conditioned to think it’s okay under **certain circumstances**. And to show you what I mean, let’s take a little so-called **abortion test**. You tell me if its ever acceptable.

“Would you consider abortion in the following situations?

1. There’s a preacher and wife who are very, very, poor. They already have fourteen kids. Now she finds out she’s pregnant with her fifteenth. They’re living in tremendous poverty. Considering their poverty, and the excessive world population, would you consider recommending she get an abortion?

2. The father is sick with sniffles, the mother has TB. They have four children. The first is blind, second is dead, third is deaf, fourth has TB. She finds she’s pregnant again. Given the extreme situation, would you consider recommending abortion?

3. A white man raped a thirteen year old black girl and she got pregnant. If you were her parents, would you consider recommending abortion?

4. A teenage girl is pregnant. She’s not married. Her fiancé is not the father of the baby, and he’s very upset. Would you consider recommending abortion?

If you said yes in the first case, you have just killed John Wesley. One of the great evangelists in the nineteenth century.

In the second case, you have killed Beethoven.

In the third case, you have killed Ethel Waters, the great black gospel singer.

And if you said yes to the fourth case, you have just declared the murder
of Jesus Christ!”

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’m certainly glad that Joseph didn’t counsel Mary to get an abortion, how about you? Why? Because we’d not only miss out on our Messiah, but we’d be guilty of murder!

But you might say, “Well hey, I’m not one of those people who killed an adult or a baby. I never murdered anything in my life.” Well folks, its one thing to say you haven’t murdered anyone, but it’s another thing to demonstrate it with your mouth. I didn’t say that, Jesus did.

**Matthew 5:21-22** “You have heard that the law of Moses says, Do not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment. But I say, if you are angry with someone, you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot, you are in danger of being brought before the high council. And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell.” (NLT)

Now folks, in this one statement here, Jesus declares that murder in God’s eyes not only includes death with a weapon, but death with your what? Your mouth, right? That means that any time you get angry with someone to the point where you call them an idiot or you curse at them, you’re just as guilty as a serial killer. Why? Because you killed them with your words!

And you might be thinking, “Hey come on. I’m only human. Surely murdering somebody with your words once in awhile isn’t that big of a deal is it?” But folks, what you need to know, is that it really is a big deal. Why? Because murder is called a sin. And the penalty for sin against a Holy God is called death.

**Numbers 35:20-21** “Or suppose you get angry and kill someone by pushing or hitting or by throwing something. You are a murderer and must be put to death.” (CEV)
Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say God’s trying to teach us something here in the Ten Commandments. I’d say maybe He’s trying to show us that He is Holy and we are not and all of us deserve to die for murdering somebody else, how about you? Why? Because that’s how Holy God really is.

Oh, but that’s not all. The seventh commandment reminding us that God is Holy and we are not is You Shall Not Commit Adultery.

Exodus 20:14”You shall not commit adultery.” (NAS)

Now according to our text here, the seventh test God puts us through revealing His Holiness and our sinfulness is the prohibition of Adultery. And folks, if you thought we as a nation are having a so-called love affair with the last commandment, it’s nothing compared to this one. We really are having a love affair with this one. Then lets check out some stats.

WORLD STATISTICS

1. Unmarried couples living together are up 725%.
2. Illegitimate births are up 400%.
3. Unwed pregnancies among 10-14 yr. olds are up 553%.
4. Sexually transmitted diseases among 10-14 yr. olds are up 385%.
5. The divorce rate is now 70%.
6. In some parts of California the rate of divorce is one for every marriage.5

Now I don’t know about you, but I’d say somebody could give a rip about this command to not commit adultery, how about you? But folks, as shocking as those stats on adultery are from the world, its NOTHING compared to the adultery of Christians.

CHRISTIAN STATISTICS

1. 33% of Christians now say homosexuality is okay.
2. 39% of Christians now say its okay for couples to live together before marriage.
And believe it or not, Christians are now more likely than non-Christians to get a divorce (27% vs. 24%)\(^6\)

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say the Church is in a heap of trouble. If the Church can’t keep this command, why in the world would we expect the world to keep it? And we wonder why families are falling apart!

But you might say, “Well hey, I’m not one of those people who committed adultery. I’ve always been true to my spouse.” But folks, it’s one thing to say you’ve never committed adultery, but it’s another thing to demonstrate it with your eyes. I didn’t say that, Jesus did.

**Matthew 5:27-28** “You have heard that it was said, Do not commit adultery. But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” (NIV)

Now folks, in this one statement here, Jesus declares that **adultery in God’s eyes ALSO INCLUDES lusting with your own eyes**, right? And folks, if you don’t think that we as a nation aren’t having a **good ol’ time** breaking this commandment, then you better explain these stats to me.

1. Annual rentals and sales of adult videos and DVD’s top $4 billion.
2. The pornography industry churns out 11,000 titles each year, which is 20 times as many as Hollywood.
3. There are more than 15,000 adult bookstores in the United States.
4. The pornography industry is larger than the commercial movie and record industries combined.
5. The circulation of Playboy and Penthouse is 24 million, which is twice that of Newsweek and Time combined.
6. 75% of video stores sell pornography, which makes up 50% - 60% of sales.
7. Profits from pornographic videos are at least $100 million per year and box office receipts are $500 million per year.
8. Pornography is a $4-6 billion dollar a year industry in the United States alone.
Now gee folks, I’d say we as a nation really love this sin, how about you? And just in case you might be one of those people out there who has never looked at something pornographic, which I don’t know how you can be with today’s TV standards, you still need to recall what Jesus said. Remember, He said adultery is committed anytime you lust with your eyes. Therefore, it doesn’t have to be a magazine or a movie. It applies to anything moving! And when you do, you’re just as guilty as if you hopped in bed with them. Only you did it with your eyes!

And you might be thinking, “Hey come on. I’m only human. Surely committing adultery with your eyes once in awhile isn’t that big of a deal is it?” But folks, what you need to know, is that it really is a big deal. Why? Because adultery is called a sin. And the penalty for sin against a Holy God is called death.

Leviticus 20:10 “If a man commits adultery with another man’s wife, both the man and the woman must be put to death.” (NLT)

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say God’s trying to teach us something here in the Ten Commandments. I’d say maybe He’s trying to show us that He is Holy and we are not and all of us deserve to die for committing adultery, how about you? Why? Because that’s how Holy God really is.

Oh, but that’s not all. The eighth commandment reminding us that God is Holy and we are not is You Shall Not Steal.

Exodus 20:15 “You shall not steal.” (NAS)

Now according to our text here, the eighth test God puts us through revealing His Holiness and our sinfulness is the prohibition of Stealing. And you might say, “Well hey, I may have blown it on those other ones, but I think I got this one down. Why, I’ve never stolen anything in my life!” Well, first of all,
yeah right! But second, “It’s one thing to say you’ve never stolen something, but it’s another thing to demonstrate it with your behavior.

You see, the word “steal” means “to take something wrongly, without right or without permission.” Therefore, stealing something applies not just to robbing a bank, but by your behavior. For instance, many people say they’ve never robbed anyone but they don’t even think twice about cheating on a test or their tax forms. But folks, isn’t that taking something wrongly? Therefore, it’s what? Stealing, right?

Or many people say they’ve never robbed anyone but they don’t even bat an eye showing up for work late or sneaking out a little early each day. But is that right according to your employer? Therefore, it’s what? Stealing, right?

Or many people say they’ve never robbed anyone but they don’t pause to “borrow” something from somebody without even asking. But folks, isn’t that taking something without permission? Therefore, it’s what? Stealing, right?

And on and on its goes! We steal all the time without even thinking about it!

And you might be thinking, “Hey come on. I’m only human. Surely stealing something once in awhile isn’t that big of a deal is it?” But folks, what you need to know, is that it really is a big deal. Why? Because stealing is called a sin. And the penalty for sin against a Holy God is called death.

Ezekiel 18:18 “As for his father, because he practiced extortion, robbed his brother and did what was not good among his people, behold, he will die for his iniquity.” (NAS)

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say God’s trying to teach us something here in the Ten Commandments. I’d say maybe He’s trying to show us that He is Holy and we are not and all of us deserve to die for stealing things, how about you? Why? Because that’s how Holy God really is.
People of God, if we are ever going to get our society back on track, then we’ve got to remember the purpose of the Ten Commandments. They’re not merely a mode of behavior, they show us our need of a Savior. Why? Because no amount of man-made laws, 10 or 10,000 is ever going to fix man’s wicked heart! What we need is God! And this is what God’s been trying to remind us in The 10 Commandments.

And unless we the Church get motivated and lead the way by example, we are headed for annihilation. Don’t believe me? Then ask Martin Niemoeller. Who’s he? He was a Pastor in WWII under Hitler’s regime who saw the Church respond a little too late to the crisis in their day. You tell me if his words don’t apply to us today.

“Martin Niemoeller, the Lutheran minister who lived in Hitler’s Germany during the 1930s and 1940s, his words echo down to us over succeeding decades:

‘In Germany they came first for the Communists, and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a Communist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a Jew.

Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn’t speak up because I was a Protestant.

Then they came for me, and by that time no one was left to speak up.’”

**People, when are we the Church going to wake up?** When are we going to wake up let alone speak up before it’s too late? Right now it’s the issue of the removal of the Ten Commandments. But based on Martin’s experience, do you really think it’s going to stop there? No way! Therefore it’s high time we get motivated! Now is the time, this is the place, this is the generation! And we need
to **speak up now** not only for the Church’s protection but for our country’s preservation. Why? Because if we as a nation get rid of the Ten Commandments we are in essence trying to get rid of God. And once we do that we are heaping up God’s wrath upon ourselves. I didn’t say that, God did!

**Deuteronomy 28:20** “The LORD himself will send against you curses, confusion, and disillusionment in everything you do, until at last you are completely destroyed for doing evil and forsaking me.” (NLT)

People, God is not messing around. If you personally or we nationally **refuse to receive God’s gracious offer** and ask Jesus to forgive us for forsaking Him, then make no mistake about it, God says, “FINE, THEN I WILL FORSAKE YOU TOO!” **Why? Because God is Holy, Holy, Holy.** And He never has and never will mess around with sinning against Him.

And people this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people **really can** have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe **before it’s too late!**” But people, I’m telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we’ve got to stop acting like practical atheists. We’ve got to start demonstrating by our **lips** as well as our **lives** that **God is Holy**!
Now folks, I know this may come as a surprise, but did you know that Christians can say and do some pretty goofy things once in awhile? I know, I know. It’s a shocker. But you see, I’ve got some proof. I came across a list of some Church Bulletin Bloopers! Let’s take a look.

1. The ladies of the Church have cast off clothing of every kind. They may be seen in the basement on Friday afternoon.

2. Please place your donation in the envelope along with the deceased person you want remembered.

3. Attend this week’s conference and you will hear an excellent speaker and heave a healthy lunch.

4. The Church will host an evening of fine dining, superb entertainment, and gracious hostility.

5. The Church is glad to have with us today Rev. Jack Smith as our visiting guest monster.
6. Low Self-Esteem Support Group will meet Thursday at 7 to 8:30 p.m. Please use the back door.

7. This evening at 7 P.M. there will be a hymn sing in the park across from the Church. Bring a blanket and come prepared to sin.

8. For the pancake breakfast next Saturday, the Pastor would appreciate it if the ladies of the congregation would lend him their electric girdles.

9. The Associate Minister unveiled the Church’s new stewardship campaign slogan last Sunday: “I Upped My Pledge - Up Yours.”

10. Next Sunday is the family hayride and bonfire at the Fowlers’. Everyone come for a fun time. Bring your own hot dogs and guns.

11. Barbara remains in the hospital and needs blood donors for more transfusions. She is also having trouble sleeping and requests tapes of Pastor Jack’s sermons.

12. This Christmas season, smile at someone who is hard to love and say “hell” to those who don’t care much about you.

13. Our concluding song on Christmas Day is “Angels We Have Heard Get High.”

Yes, the proof is in the pudding. We Christians can pull some pretty big bloopers once in a while, can’t we? But folks, we not only make bloopers in bulletins, we make them with our behavior as well. And can anybody guess what kind of behavioral blooper that might be? Hey that’s right! It’s when we act like practical atheists.

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our lips and by our lives, we act like He’s not there. And this not only keeps us from growing in our own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christians living like practical atheists by not knowing Who
God Is, we’re going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, “Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?”

We’ve already seen that the very first thing we need to know about God is that God Is Real. The second thing we need to know is that God Is Personal. The third thing we need to know is that God Is Wise. The fourth thing we need to know is that God Is Powerful. And in the last six chapters we saw that the fifth thing we need to know about God is that God Is Holy. And there we’ve been seeing that if we want to know about the Holiness of God then some of the best ways is to simply look at the Reaction of People, the Removal of People, and the Reminders for People in the Tabernacle and the Ten Commandments. And so far we’ve seen the first eight commandments that God reminds us that He is Holy and we are not, don’t worship other gods, don’t worship idols, don’t use God’s Name in vain, keep the Sabbath and honor your parents, don’t murder, don’t commit adultery, and don’t steal. Why? Because if we break these commands, the penalty is what? Death. Why? Because that’s how holy God really is.

But folks, did you know that’s not the only commandments God gave us to show us that He is Holy and we are not? The ninth commandment reminding us that God is Holy and we are not is You Shall Not Bear False Witness. Exodus 20:16 “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.” (NAS)

Now according to our text here, the ninth test God puts us through revealing His Holiness and our sinfulness is the prohibition of bearing false witness. And the word “false witness” means “to deceive, to do something fraudulent, or to lie.” And folks, I don’t know if you noticed, but we not only break this commandment all the time, but we do so without even thinking about it.
For instance, how many of you have ever told a lie? Well, guess what? For those of you who didn’t raise your hand, **you just did**! You just proved my point! People, we not only lie all time but we even **lie about lying**. Oh, but that’s not all. If we can’t lie about lying, we simply resort to **making excuses for lying**. We say, “Well, it was just a **little** lie. It was just a teensy weensy one. It ain’t going to hurt anybody.” But folks, did God say you shall not bear a **small** false witness? Or did He say you shall not bear false witness **at all**! Oh but that’s still not all. If size doesn’t work we try to **color** it. For instance we say, “Hey man, it was just a **white** lie. What’s the big deal? Nobody’s going to know the difference.” But folks, did God say you shall not bear a **certain color of** false witness? Or did He say you shall not bear false witness **at all**!

And people, I’m telling you, it’s because of this flippant attitude towards this commandment against lying is why people could not only care less about it, but get this, they’re even **cashing in on it**! For instance, last week I came across a website that is now offering the so-called “perfect alibi” for those who are committing adultery. Here’s what they said:

For a small fee our “Agency will provide the perfect alibi to your spouse to cover your deception. We’ll post invitations to events you’ll never attend, we’ll make telephone calls to your spouse posing as a secretary or hotel clerk confirming an event. And that’s right, we will even take calls for you as if they were at hotels, including the caller hearing them trying your room and paging you.”

Can you believe that? People have actually created a business out of lying! And do you know what the website was? Yeah, right! Like I’m going to tell you!!! Hello, I am a Pastor after all.

Oh, but that’s **still not all**. One of the biggest ways we cash in on breaking this commandment against lying is every single year at **Christmas**. People, stop and think about it! Christmas is no longer a time to celebrate the gift
of a Savior. No! It’s a time to get a gift from Santa! We no longer tell our kids the truth about God sending His Only Son to save the world. No! We tell them it’s about a fat ol’ jolly guy who gives toys to boys and girls. And to show you how much we love to lie about this, let’s look at these annual facts.

1. In England, about 7 million children leave mince pies and a drink for Santa on Christmas Eve.
2. In the U.S. kids leave an estimated 812 million cookies out for Santa on Christmas Eve.
3. New York City Post Office gets about 250,000 letters to Santa each year.
4. The North Pole receives close to a half million letters to Santa each year.
5. The U.S. post office gets over 1 million letters to Santa each year.
6. The average number of Santas hired per shopping mall each year is about 4.
7. More than 25 million kids visit Santa in malls nationwide each year.³

And folks, you might think that it’s no big deal and fibbing about a Santa claus ain’t going to hurt anyone. But folks, I’m telling you, the results of this lying about the true meaning of Christmas is disastrous! For instance, most people think that **Christmas is just like another day at the office. Why?** Because you do all the work and some fat guy in a suit gets all the credit!⁴ Or listen to what these kids had to say about Christmas.

“Two boys were walking home from Sunday school after hearing some strong preaching about the devil. One said to the other, ‘What do you think about all this devil stuff?’ The other boy replied, ‘Well, you know how Santa Claus turned out. He’s probably just your dad.’”⁵

And folks, the point is this. If you lie about a Santa whom they’ve never seen, then maybe you’re also lying about a Savior they’ve never seen! And if you lie about a Santa whom they’ve never seen, then maybe you’re lying about a devil they’ve never seen. Do you see the obvious conclusion? And people, just in case you don’t know how to **break the truth** to your kids, let me share with you the **scientific** answer.
“Based on the population of people that believe in Santa Claus, Santa would have to make an estimated 108 million stops. This would be a total trip of 75.5 million miles, not counting bathroom stops or breaks.

This means Santa’s sleigh would have to move at 650 miles per second or 3,000 times the speed of sound.

And assuming that each child gets on average one gift weighing 2 pounds, the sleigh would have to carry over 500 thousand tons, not counting Santa himself.

But 500,000 tons traveling at 650 miles per second creates enormous air resistance. This would heat the reindeer up in the same fashion as a spacecraft re-entering the earth’s atmosphere.

Therefore, the reindeer would be vaporized within 4.26 thousandths of a second, or right about the time Santa reached the fifth house on his trip.

Not that it matters, however, since Santa, as a result of accelerating from a dead stop to 650 m.p.s. in .001 seconds, would be subjected to acceleration forces of 17,500 g’s.

This would pin Santa Claus to the back of the sleigh by 4,315,015 pounds of force, instantly crushing his bones and organs and reducing him to a quivering blob of pink goo. Therefore, if Santa did exist, he’s dead now.”

People come on. Let’s be honest. If we’re not going to spend time this holiday honoring the birth of Jesus and instead proclaim a mythical figure then don’t lie and call it Christmas, call it what it is. Call it santamas!

If our greatest need was information, God would have sent us an educator; If our greatest need was technology, He would have sent us a scientist; If our greatest need was money, He would have sent us an economist; If our greatest need was pleasure, He would’ve sent us an entertainer; If our greatest need was toys, He would’ve sent us a Santa BUT our greatest need was forgiveness, so God sent us a Savior!”
People a so-called santa may put gifts under your tree. But JESUS became our gift and died on a tree. That’s what Christmas is all about and that ain’t no lie!

And you might be thinking, “Hey come on. I’m only human. Surely lying once in awhile or fibbing about santa claus isn’t that big of a deal is it?” But folks, what you need to know, is that it really is a big deal. Why? Because lying is called a sin. And the penalty for sin against a Holy God is called death.

**Deuteronomy 19:18-21** “Then both you and the accused must be taken to the court at the place where the LORD is worshiped. There the priests and judges will find out if you are lying or telling the truth. If you are lying and the accused is innocent, then you will be punished without mercy. You will receive the same punishment the accused would have received if found guilty, whether it means losing an eye, a tooth, a hand, a foot, or even your life.” (CEV)

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say God’s trying to teach us something here in the Ten Commandments. I’d say maybe He’s trying to show us that He is Holy and we are not and all of us deserve to die for lying, especially about the true meaning of Christmas, how about you? Why? Because that’s how Holy God really is.

Oh, but that’s not all. The **tenth commandment** reminding us that God is Holy and we are not is **You Shall Not Covet**.

**Exodus 20:17** “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.” (NIV)

Now according to our text here, the **tenth test** God puts us through revealing His Holiness and our sinfulness is the prohibition of coveting. And the word “coveting” means “to eagerly desire what belongs to another or to wish for enviously.” And folks, I don’t know if you noticed, but we not only break this commandment, but our American economy banks on it! And if you don’t
believe me then pay attention to the commercials. They don’t tell you anything about the product anymore. They just tell you that so and so has one and if you want to be **as envious as them** you better get one too. And instead of being content with what we have as the Bible says, they manipulate us into coveting what we don’t have, like this man shares.

“There was a time when ads gave us information about the products, but that was when we needed what was being sold. Advertising has to be far more sophisticated if it is to appeal to those of us whose basic needs have already been satiated.

To listen to the ads is to be assured that everything needed for spiritual well-being can be secured if we just have enough money. Hamburgers are sold by appealing to our sense of losing out on life:

‘You deserve a break today…at McDonald’s.’ In reality all you get for your money is some ground meat.

Or ‘Buick is something you can believe in!’ Here you thought a Buick was an automobile, and the ad makers tell you it’s a religious conviction!

Or there’s a big time beer ad in which some guys are seated by a stream cooking fish over an open fire. It is evening and it’s obvious that these sportsmen have had a good day.

A deep voice sings out, ‘Here’s to good friends. Tonight is kind of special…’ Then one of the guys rips off a can from a six pack, tears off the tab, holds it up, and with deep sincerity says to his friends, ‘You know guys, it doesn’t get any better than this.’

*We’re looking at a can of beer*, but the ad conveys the idea that what comes with the beer is a sense of intimacy with good friends.

Then there’s the most famous ad of all time. In it we are shown people from all the nations of the world. There are blacks and whites from South Africa. There are people from Asia and Latin America, and ethnic types from all over Europe. They are holding hands.
They are singing together in unison, ‘I’d like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony…’ And what is it that brings perfect harmony to broken humanity? It’s Coca-Cola. And if there’s any doubt about the validity of the claim, a strong authoritative voice assures us, ‘It’s the real thing.”

Now folks, I don’t know about you but I’d say we are clearly being manipulated into coveting, how about you? There’s big money in it! And people, it’s bad enough we are so easily manipulated into breaking this commandment against coveting, but can anyone guess what time of year we are most guilty of doing so? Christmas! Hey that’s right! It’s no longer a time to celebrate the coming of the Christ child. No! It’s a time to covet and covet like wild! And to show you how much we love to covet at Christmas, let me share some stats with you.

1. Individual shoppers are expected to spend an average of $1,342 on gifts.
2. In one year, Americans used 28,497,464 rolls and sheets of wrapping paper.
3. In one year we use 16,826,362 packages of tags and bows.
4. The percentage of adults who buy gifts for themselves while holiday shopping is 73%.
5. The National Retail Federation estimates that we will spend about $217 billion this year on gifts, decorations and other holiday-related goodies.
6. And partly because of this, Americans now owe over $400 billion on their credit cards.

Now folks, I’d say somebody’s doing a pretty good job at getting us to covet, how about you? And yes, I’m sure all this coveting on Christmas is an economic bliss, but it’s a slap in the face to the purpose of Christmas! For instance, most people have lost any sense of reverence for Christmas at all. Most people think it’s just a plain weird holiday. Why? Because when else do you sit in front of a dead tree and eat candy out of your socks? And folks all this coveting is not only making Christmas seem weird to most people, but it’s ruining what should be a time of joy. Why? Because every year we are
pressured into expending ourselves financially even the point of debt to buy
things nobody needs. And if we don’t, we’re considered rotten parents and or
stingy family members. Don’t believe me? Listen to this man again.

“If people like you and me, whose needs have already been met, are going to
keep America going, we are going to have to buy what we don’t need. And we
are going to have to buy what we don’t need in larger and larger quantities. As
absurd as all of this may seem, the survival of our way of life depends on this.

Just think about last Christmas season. Your biggest problem was probably not
figuring out where you would get enough money to buy presents for family
members and friends. Instead, it was trying to figure out what to buy for people
who had everything.

The answer to that problem should have been self-evident. What should you buy
for those who have everything, is nothing. But you didn’t have guts to pull it off,
did you? No!

Instead you went up and down the aisles of department stores having anxiety
attacks. Panic-stricken, you searched, yea, even prayed, that somebody
somewhere had invented some new things that nobody needs so you could buy
them for people who have everything.

This is not an absurd description of a reasonable world. It is a rational description
of an absurd world.”

And folks, I don’t know if you’ve learned this one yet, but the word debt
stands for Dumb Excuse for Buying Things! And what dumber excuse is there
for buying things than being pressured into coveting at Christmas! People the
whole point is this. If you’re not going to spend time this holiday honoring the
birth of Jesus and instead celebrate an economic boost then don’t lie and call it
Christmas, call it what it is. Call it consumermas! People Christmas is not about
buying enough stuff to fill our stockings high. It’s about Jesus being born in a
stable so we’d have a mansion when we die!
And you might be thinking, “Hey come on. I’m only human. Surely coveting once in awhile isn’t that big of a deal is it?” But folks, what you need to know, is that it really is a big deal. Why? Because coveting is called a sin. And the penalty for sin against a Holy God is called death.

Deuteronomy 7:25-26 “The images of their gods you are to burn in the fire. Do not covet the silver and gold on them, and do not take it for yourselves, or you will be ensnared by it, for it is detestable to the LORD your God. Do not bring a detestable thing into your house or you, like it, will be set apart for destruction.” (NIV)

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say God’s trying to teach us something here in the Ten Commandments. I’d say maybe He’s trying to show us that He is Holy and we are not and all of us deserve to die for coveting things, especially at Christmas, how about you? Why? Because that’s how Holy God really is.

People of God, it’s bad enough that we break these last two commandments, proving yet again that God is Holy and we are not. But let’s not make things worse by making it an annual event. And folks, I know it may sound like science fiction, but it really is true. Each one of us needs the life of a baby to save our own, like this couple discovered.

“In 1947, Eleanor Munro contracted tuberculosis. It came on so fast and lodged in such a difficult place - the lower lobe of her lung - that it stymied every doctor who tried to help her. Well finally, Eleanor was listed as a hopeless case and was sent to die at a TB hospital in December.

When she arrived, she was 23, a mother of a year-old child, and was down to 87 pounds. There was no beauty left in her, but even at this last stage of her fight with TB, she had not lost her smile. And it was that smile that caused Dr. Joseph McDougall to make one more attempt to save her life.

He decided to try a new experimental procedure to force air into the cavity below the lungs, pushing the diaphragm up against the lung. It was hoped that this
would force the TB cavity to shut, allowing it to grow back together.

But the next day when they tried the procedure, it nearly killed Eleanor. So Dr. McDougall told her that medically, they were whipped. If anything was to be done to save her, it must come from God.

Eleanor took it quietly but then she made a request of the Doctor. ‘If I’m still alive on Christmas Eve, I would like your promise that I can go home for Christmas.’ Well, McDougall knew she shouldn’t for she was highly contagious but since he didn’t believe she could survive that long, he went ahead gave her his promise.

But against all odds, when Christmas arrived, Eleanor was still clinging to life. And although her condition was worsening, she held the doctor to his promise. So he warned her not to have contact with her child and instructed to wear a surgical mask when talking to others, and an ambulance took her home.

She returned the next day, Christmas Day, and her condition worsened. At the end of February, she weighed less than 80 pounds. Then, a new complication set in. She became nauseous, even when there was no food in her stomach. And unable to explain this new development, McDougall called in a senior doctor who jokingly asked McDougall if he thought Eleanor could be pregnant.

Well, the idea was ridiculous. There was no way a woman in her condition could conceive. Nevertheless, a pregnancy test was done and it came back positive. And when she was told of the results, Eleanor simply smiled, and blushed because as it turned about, when Eleanor went home on Christmas Eve, she and her husband shared what they believed was to be their last night of intimacy together.

And even with her life-threatening condition, Eleanor and her husband rejected the idea of an abortion when it was offered to them, and Eleanor was instead fed intravenously.

And every day, the staff expected her to die but soon an amazing thing began to happen. Eleanor’s condition began to improve. Her fever went down. She regained an appetite and began to put on weight. And a chest x-ray showed that the TB cavity had actually begun to heal. How?
Well, as it turned out, the child growing in her womb was pushing her diaphragm up against the lower lobe of her lung. The baby was doing what medicine had failed to do: pressing the sides of the deadly hole in her lungs together so that it could heal.

And so against all odds and when all hope was lost, Eleanor made a full recovery. Why? Because on Christmas Eve, 1947, God gave her a baby to save her life.¹³

Now I’d say that couple was very pleased with the gift that God gave them that Christmas, how about you? And folks, in a nutshell, that’s what Jesus came to do. Like that baby He came to give us life. Remember, the word “holiday” comes from Holy Day. And the reason why Christmas is a Holy Day is because that’s when our Holy God came to die for unholy people to take them to a holy place called heaven. And I don’t know about you, but I’d say that’s the greatest gift that any of us could ever receive! That’s what Christmas is all about!

And people this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people really can have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe before it’s too late!” But people, I’m telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we’ve got to stop acting like practical atheists. We’ve got to start demonstrating by our lips as well as our lives that God is Holy!
“One day, while visiting his niece, an elderly man had a heart attack. So his niece drove wildly to get him to the emergency room. And after what seemed like a very long wait, the E.R. doctor appeared, wearing his scrubs and a long face.

And with a sad tone in his voice he said, ‘Ma’am, I’m afraid that your uncle’s brain is dead, but his heart is still beating.’

Well at this the woman clasped her hands to her face and cried out in utter shock, ‘Oh no! We’ve never had a Democrat in the family before!’”

Yes, sometimes life can be pretty shocking, can’t it folks? Life is full of surprises. But folks, did you know I’ve discovered something even more shocking than that? And can anybody guess what shocking reality that might be? Hey that’s right! It’s when Christians act like practical atheists.

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our lips and by our lives, we act like He’s not there. And this not only keeps us from growing in our own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christians living like practical atheists by not knowing Who
God Is, we’re going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, “Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?”

We’ve already seen that the very first thing we need to know about God is that God Is Real. The second thing we need to know is that God Is Personal. The third thing we need to know is that God Is Wise. The fourth thing we need to know is that God Is Powerful. And in the last seven chapters we saw that the fifth thing we need to know about God is that God Is Holy. And there we’ve been seeing that if we want to know about the Holiness of God then some of the best ways is to simply look at the Reaction of People, the Removal of People, and the Reminders for People in the Tabernacle and the Ten Commandments.

But folks, did you know the Reaction, Removal, and Reminders for People are not the only ways to understand the Holiness of God? The fourth way to understand God’s Holiness is in His Retribution for People. But hey, don’t take my word for it. Let’s listen to God’s.

Matthew 22:1-14 “Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. Then he sent some more servants and said, Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.

But they paid no attention and went off – one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

Then he said to his servants, The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find. So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. Friend, he asked, how did you get in here without
wedding clothes? The man was speechless. Then the king told the attendants, Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are invited, but few are chosen.” (NIV)

Now according to our text here, we see one of the many parables by Jesus about the **Kingdom of Heaven**. And in it we see some good news and some bad news. The good news is that God has made a way through His Son for people to join Him in heaven, right? What did we read? God wants people to come to heaven and party with Him, right? **But** the bad news is what? The **response of the people**. What did the majority of them do? They shrug off God’s offer like it’s no big deal. It’s as if they say, “So what God if You’re Holy and I’m not! What’s the big deal? Besides, I don’t have time for that religion stuff.” Kind of sounds like today, doesn’t it? And people, that’s why the **retribution** or punishment for ignoring God’s gracious offer is still the same today! People, if we refuse to ask Jesus to forgive us for our sins, what did our text say? One day we’ll be tied hand and foot, thrown into a dark place called hell full of weeping and gnashing of teeth. **Why**? Because that’s how Holy God is. **He does not** mess around with sin committed against Him and all sin is against Him.

Therefore, to make sure that none of us here have any doubts about God’s retribution for people who sin against Him, we’re going to take a quick look at everybody’s favorite topic, **hell**. And folks, it’s pretty simple. The **first way** we see God’s retribution for sin is in the **Necessity of Hell**.

**Luke 16:22-24** “The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.” (NIV)
Now according to our text here, I think it’s pretty obvious that a place of eternal torment, or in other words, hell really does exist, right? And please keep in mind who it was that said this. It was Jesus, right? But herein lies our problem. Instead of listening to Jesus and taking heed of His warning about hell and getting saved, most people put forth objections to hell as to why they say it cannot be true.²

For instance, the first objection to hell is called Universalism. And what universalism would have you and I believe is that everybody will universally get saved regardless of their actions or beliefs and thus nobody goes to hell because there’s no need for one. But folks, if this were true then why do we need to share the gospel? I mean, if everybody’s going to heaven then why evangelize? But folks, the truth is, Jesus did tell us to evangelize, right? And furthermore, if universalism is true then wouldn’t this mean that the devil himself will eventually go to heaven? Yet, the Bible says that Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil, not to save him. And besides, universalism denies the clear teaching as we’ve already read about two eternal places, heaven and hell, not just one.

Oh, but that’s not all. The second objection to hell is that If there is a hell, it’s only temporary. You see, some people think that those who end up in hell will somehow someway eventually be able to get out. They say it’s just too harsh to be tormented forever. But folks, that’s not what the Bible says. Matthew 25:46 “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.” (NIV)

Now folks, you can’t get anymore cut and dry than that. How long is eternal life? Forever, right? Therefore, in the exact same text there, how long is
eternal punishment? Just as long isn’t it? People, **hell is not temporary.** It’s just as forever as heaven is forever.

Oh, but that’s not all. The **third objection** to hell is called **Annihilationism.** And here is what people do. Since they can’t deny the texts that clearly reveal that hell exists, they once again try to **soften the harshness** of God’s retribution by saying something like this. “Well, if hell does exist, then people who go there don’t suffer endlessly. No! They simply cease to be or in other words they’re annihilated.” But folks, that’s not what the Bible says. 

**Revelation 20:7,10** “When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.” (NIV)

Now according to our text, it’s pretty obvious that the beast and the false prophet haven’t been annihilated there in hell, have they? No! **They’re still alive** suffering torment in hell after being there for 1,000 years! Besides folks, **annihilation would not be a punishment.** It would be a **release from punishment.** And since the Bible declares that hell is a place of punishment, annihilation can’t be true.

Oh, but that’s not all. The **fourth objection** to hell is this, “**Why doesn’t God just reform people?**” And people, yes, this may sound logical but it totally misses the point. You see, the Bible **does teach** that God tries to reform people. It’s just that the time for this reformation is called **right now.** And people, it’s simple. If you don’t want to experience God’s forgiveness and if you don’t want to experience His personal reformation right now in this life, then God will honor your decision. And that’s why, in reality, people send themselves to hell!
Oh, but that’s not all. The fifth objection to hell is this, “Isn’t eternal damnation a bit overkill?” And I’d have to admit that this seems to make sense at least from our point of view. But think about it from God’s point of view. “Here stands God on the day of creation. He looks at stars and He says, ‘All you stars move yourself to this place and start in this order and move in a circle and move exactly as I tell you until I give you another word.’ And they all obey Him.

‘Planets pick yourself up and whirl, make this formation at My command until I give you another word.’

He looks at mountains and He says, ‘Be lifted up’ and they obey Him. He tells valleys, ‘Be cast down’ and they obey Him.

He looks at the sea and He says, ‘You will come this far’ and the sea obeys.

And then He looks at you and says, ‘Come’ and you go, ‘No!’”

And people, this is why hell is not overkill. Are you kidding? Do you have any idea how wicked our rebellion against God is? Everything in the world obeys Him except us. Who do we think we are? Hell isn’t overkill! It has to exist just as long as a Righteous God exists. Why? Because only eternal punishment can suffice for sins against an Eternal God. Besides folks, without eternal separation there could be no heaven. Why? Because evil cannot exist in heaven or it would cease to be heaven!

Oh, but that’s not all. The sixth objection to hell is that Hell has no redeeming value. But people again, stop and think about it. An awful punishment fits the nature of an awe-inspiring God. Those who by choice refuse to give God glory in this life will be forced to give Him glory in the afterlife via torment. Besides, what have we been studying about for seven chapters? God is Holy and all of us have committed unholy sins against Him! Therefore, hell satisfies the justice of God for sins committed against the
Holiness of God. That’s how great and fearful a standard His Holiness is. And furthermore, the Bible is clear. Hell’s primary purpose or “value” if you will was not for people. It was for the devil and his demons.

Matthew 25:41 “Then the King will turn to those on the left and say, ‘Away with you, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his demons.’” (NLT)

People, the Bible is clear, hell was originally created for the devil and his demons, not people. But since people have rebelled against God just like the devil then to hell you will go, like this man shares.

“Think a moment of what the devil has done. And if you could design a place to make him pay for what he’s done in your life and the lives around you, what kind of place would you design?

Well God, has designed just a place. It’s called hell. And hell was originally designed by God to make the devil pay for bringing evil and rebellion into His creation. It was a place where God’s anger, His rage, His wrath would go uncut, unbridled, and uncensored.

It was designed with the devil in mind, not people. But hell does not discriminate between a person and a demon. It’s like a wood chipper that you throw big logs and branches into to grind them up into mulch.

And this is what hell is. It’s God’s divine wood chipper. Nobody cringes when they see a log ground up. But imagine if someone grabbed a log and as they through it in there, a piece of the limb grabs their pants and starts to pull them in. What would you?

Would you not grab them? Would you not pull them? Would you not scream, ‘Turn it off! Turn the machine off!’ Why? Because that chipper was not designed for grinding humans, but that chipper doesn’t care if it’s a human or if it’s a log or if it’s a rock or a stone. It is designed to crush!

And so it is with hell. It doesn’t care if it’s a demon or a human. It was designed to crush and destroy and heap pain, suffering, and agony on rebellious angels that dared to rebel against God.
There is no escape. There is no turning back. They are doomed! And so it is with anyone who has the audacity to rebel against God, human or devil. The divine wood chipper is there to suck them in!"4

People of God, even though hell was originally created for the devil and his demons, there is no discrimination! If you don’t want to receive God’s gracious offer of forgiveness through Jesus Christ, then to hell you will go! You’ll get sucked in just like the demons!

Oh, but that’s not all. The seventh objection to hell is that Hell is life on earth. Besides, if there is a hell, I’ll get to party with all my buddies. But people, anybody who makes this statement has obviously never read the Bible. They’ve obviously never studied what hell is like. And I personally like Dr. Mal Couch’s study on hell.

“Picture a time that just continues to tumble on and on forever, never ending, never slowing down, the same years and decades of torment, regret, sorrow, pain, blanketed darkness, nights never ending, constant consciousness, lostness, aloneness, loneliness, rumblings from the pit, groans, torturing fire, choking smells, unending and unending, no letting-up, no relief, no comfort, never resting, never ceasing, never relenting, no end in sight, one hundred years rolling into another one hundred years, slowly turning over into a thousand years, painstakingly evolving into another thousand years, and finally into a million years, the same grinding pain, the continual bone-racking agony, screams upon screams, weeping upon weeping, echoing sighs upon sighs!”5

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but if that’s you’re idea of a party, I’m not going. I don’t care how many times you invite me. And people, the point is this. Those who end up in hell will wish it was only as bad as life on earth. And I guarantee you, there won’t be any partying.

Oh, but that’s not all. The eighth objection to hell is that Only “rotten” people go to hell. But people, this is actually one of the biggest lies from the pit
of hell! You see, the Bible teaches that all people are currently headed for hell and that there is no neutral position.

John 8:42,44 “Jesus told them, If God were your Father, you would love me, because I have come to you from God. For you are the children of your father the devil, and you love to do the evil things he does.” (NLT)

Now folks, the Bible is clear. We either belong to God or we belong to who? The devil, right? People there is no “middle road.” We are all considered rotten because of our rotten sin! And folks, we only cease to become a child of the devil and become a child of God when we get saved. Not one second sooner, not one second later. And how ironic it is that those who think there’s a “neutral” position out there, not only still belong to the devil, but they’re still on the way to hell. And gee, I’d say that’s a pretty good trick of the devil, how about you?

Oh, but that’s not all. The ninth objection to hell is that Hell is unfair. A good and loving God would never allow for such a place. Now folks, that sounds so wonderful but its absolutely unbiblical. You see, it’s precisely because God is good that He must judge all. God must punish wickedness, otherwise He couldn’t be loving or good. Would it be loving if God allowed people to get away with the murder, rape, torture, etc. that we all know never makes it to court or even gets found out. Would it be loving or good for God to allow Hitler or the 9-11 terrorists to enjoy eternal bliss in heaven without having to deal with their wicked deeds? How loving is that? And people, it’s precisely because God is good and loving that He not only will judge all, but He’s also provided a way of out of it. And remember, He didn’t have to.

Therefore the point is this. Throw up any objection you want, but if you’re going to be true to the Scripture you cannot deny the necessity of a hell. And if you deny hell, it only shows you don’t understand the Holiness of God. You see, what makes hell so horrible is not merely its necessity, but it’s nature
as well. It’s the worst place you could ever dream of yet its not a dream. It’s your worst nightmare! And no wonder Jesus spoke more about hell then He ever did about heaven. I mean, it only makes sense that if God really loved us He would warn us about such a place, right? And people, that’s precisely what He did!

Matthew 5:22 “But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of HELL.” (NIV)

Matthew 5:29 “If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into HELL.” (NIV)

Mark 9:43 “If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into HELL, where the fire never goes out.” (NIV)

Mark 9:45 “And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into HELL.” (NIV)

Matthew 10:28 “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in HELL.” (NIV)

Matthew 23:15 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of HELL as you are.” (NIV)

Matthew 23:33 “You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to HELL?” (NIV)

Luke 12:5 “But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into HELL. Yes, I tell you, fear him.” (NIV)

And people, here’s my point. If you’re going to believe Jesus when He talks about a heaven, then how much more should you listen to Him when He
talks about a hell? And how sad it is that even though Jesus out of love for you and I clearly warned about the horrible nature of a hell, that some people still ignore Him! But get this folks, what’s even more shocking than that is that it’s not only non-Christians who are refusing to believe in hell, but even so-called Christians are refusing to believe in hell! And talk about the ultimate irony. Those who’ve been saved from hell no longer believe in hell. And one of the ways they show this denial of hell is their refusal to evangelize. I mean, even an atheist knows better that that!

“An atheist said to a Christian one time, ‘If I believe what you Christians say you believe about a coming judgment, and that rejecters of Christ will be lost eternally in hell, then I would crawl on my bare knees on crushed glass all over the city, warning men, night and day, to flee from the coming day of God’s wrath!’”

People of God, how sad it is that Christians who’ve been entrusted with God’s message of love and grace and forgiveness through Jesus Christ so as to escape hell could actually give a rip about sharing that same message? Hell is not only one place you don’t ever want to go to, but what makes it even more horrible is that once you get there, you are never ever ever getting out! Why? Because God is Holy Holy Holy and He never has and He never will mess around with sin committed against Him and all sin is against Him!

And people this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people really can have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe before it’s too late!” But people, I’m telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we’ve got to stop acting like practical atheists. We’ve got to start demonstrating by our lips as well as our lives that God is Holy!
Part V

God is Love
Chapter Twenty-Eight

God’s Love is Merciful

Now folks, maybe it’s just me, and maybe it’s just that I’m getting older, but has anyone noticed how strange things are getting? I mean, just when you think you’ve seen or heard it all, something even stranger comes along. Have you noticed? And folks, I’m not just talking about the strange things in the world. I can understand that. People, I’m talking about the strange things that go on in the American Church. Let me show you what I mean.

1. Isn’t it strange how we believe what the newspapers say, but question what the Bible says?

2. Isn’t it strange how we can be more worried about what other people think about us than what God thinks?

3. Isn’t it strange that you can’t find a word to say when you’re praying, but you have no trouble thinking what to talk about with a friend?

4. Isn’t it strange how two hours seem so long when you’re at a Church service and how short they seem when you’re watching a good movie?

5. Isn’t it strange how difficult and boring it is to read one chapter of the Bible, but how easy it is to read one hundred pages of a popular novel?
6. Isn’t it strange how we need to be informed about a Church event two to three weeks in advance so we can see if it’ll fit in our schedule yet we can adjust it at the last minute for other events?

7. Isn’t it strange how difficult it is to learn a fact about God to share with others, but how easy it is to learn, understand, extend and repeat gossip?

8. Isn’t it strange how someone can say “I believe in God” but still follow satan, who by the way, also “believes” in God?

9. Isn’t it strange how someone can be so fired up for Christ on Sunday, but be an invisible Christian the rest of the week?

10. Isn’t it strange how everyone wants to go to heaven provided they do not have to believe, think, say, or do anything the Bible says?¹

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say that’s some pretty strange behavior, how about you? But folks, believe it or not, I’ve discovered something even stranger than that. And can anyone guess what that might be? Hey, that’s right! It’s when we act like practical atheists!

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our lips and by our lives, we act like He’s not there. And this not only keeps us from growing in our own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christians living like practical atheists by not knowing Who God Is, we’re going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, “Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?”

We’ve already seen that the very first thing we need to know about God is that God Is Real. The second thing we need to know is that God Is Personal. The third thing we need to know is that God Is Wise. The fourth thing we need to know is that God Is Powerful. And in the last eight chapters we saw that the fifth thing we need to know about God is that God Is Holy. And we’ve been
seeing that if we want to know about the Holiness of God then just look at the Reaction of People, the Removal of People, the Reminders for People and last time, the Retribution for People. And there we saw how great and fearful a standard the Holiness of God is in seeing The Necessity of Hell.

But folks, believe it or not, did you know that’s not the only thing we need to know about God if we’re going to refrain from being practical atheists. The sixth thing we need to know about God is that God Is Love. But hey, don’t take my word for it. Let’s listen to God’s.

1 John 4:7-10 “Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” (NIV)

Now folks, according to our text here, the Bible is clear. God isn’t just loving or lovable. He’s what? He is love itself. And people, stop and think of what that means. That means that every single thing God has ever done or ever will do is a perfect act of love. Why? Because God Is Love. But herein lies our problem. We live in a society that has a warped view of what true love is. Most people, when you mention the word “love” think that it refers to doing something sexual. But people, God demonstrated what true love is by doing something sacrificial. He sent His Son to die for our sins. Now that is love! But even here, we’ve become so numb to this amazing act of God’s love, that we have lost any appreciation for it. Therefore, I think we better take a look at what the Bible says about God Being Love, how about you?

And folks, it’s pretty simple. The first way the Bible reveals that God Is Love is that God Gives Us Mercy. People, the word “mercy” means, “to bring help to the afflicted or the wretched.” Or in other words, “to show compassion by
withholding what we deserve.” And as we saw in the last chapter, what is it that we wretched creatures deserve for sinning against a Holy God? We deserve to go to hell. But out of mercy God sent Jesus to die for our sins so we can go to where? Not hell but heaven! Now that’s love, is it not?

But once again, we still have a problem. You see, we live in a society that no longer pleads for God’s mercy. No! They pout for justice. They think God owes them something! For instance we have people saying, “I deserve a raise, I deserve a new house, I deserve a new car, I deserve good health just like everybody else.” And even McDonalds says, “You deserve a break today.” But folks, if McDonald’s were to be Biblical they wouldn’t say “You deserve a break today,” but “You deserve to go to hell today!” But people, the point is this. Society thinks that God owes them something. They think they deserve a perfect life. And because of this, they no longer plead for God’s mercy. No! They demand justice! But folks, if there’s one thing you never want to do, it’s to ask for the justice of God. Why? Because if we got what we justly deserve we’d all be killed on the spot!

Therefore, in order to appreciate the love of God, I think we’d better take a look at the mercy of God, how about you? And folks, it’s pretty simple. The first way the Bible reveals the Merciful Love of God is that God gives His enemies a Palace in Heaven instead of a Pit in Hell.

Romans 5:10 “For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!” (NIV)

Now folks, according to our text, the Bible is clear. What were we considered in the eyes of God prior to getting saved? Was it His buddies? No! It was His enemies, right? And so if people refuse to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ and instead remain His enemies, what do they deserve for that kind
of behavior? People, the Bible is very clear. **The choice is theirs.** If they don’t want to receive the mercy of God, then the **justice of God** declares that they just earned a **pit in hell**. And why anybody would choose that is beyond me. Who in their right mind would choose that kind of place?

1. Place of Thirst: (Luke 16)
2. Place of Worms: (Mark 9)
3. Place of No Return: (Luke 16)
4. Place of Remembrance: (Luke 16)
5. Place of the Wicked Dead: (Luke 10)
6. Place of the Wicked Demons: (2 Peter 2)
7. Place of a Bottomless Pit: (Luke 8)
8. Place of a Burning Waste Dump: (Matt. 23)
9. Place of Outer Darkness: (Matt. 8)
10. Place of Fire: (Rev. 20)
11. Place of the Lake of Fire: (Rev. 20)
12. Place of Eternal Fire: (Matt. 18)
13. Place of Unquenchable Fire: (Mark 9)
14. Place of Everlasting Punishment: (Matt. 25)
15. Place of Eternal Condemnation: (Mark 3)
16. Place of Eternal Judgment: (Heb. 6)
17. Place of Everlasting Destruction: (2 Thess. 1)
18. Place of Weeping & Gnashing of Teeth: (Matt. 13)
19. Place of Torment: (Luke 16)
20. Place of Eternal Torment: (Rev. 20)

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but that doesn’t seem to be a very fun place to be. I mean, who in their right mind would want to go to a place like that, **especially** when they didn’t have to? **Why?** Because of the merciful love of God! People, get this. Talk about the love of God. We all deserve a **pit in hell** but through Jesus we can have a **palace in heaven**. Let’s check it out!

1. The Dwelling Place of God: (Psalm 2)
2. The Dwelling Place of Angels: (Matt. 18)
3. A Heavenly Country: (Heb. 11)
4. A Holy Place: (Isaiah 57)
5. An Eternal Paradise: (1 Cor. 12)
Now folks, I don’t know about you, but that’s not a very hard choice to make here. I’d much rather have a **palace in heaven** than a **pit in hell**, how about you? And to think that it’s not only free for the asking, but we don’t deserve it! **Now that’s what I call love!** R.A. Torrey said, “If you in any way abate the doctrine of hell, it will abate your zeal.” Why? It’s simple folks. Because when you understand that we all deserve a pit in hell yet **out of mercy** God will give us a palace in heaven, it’s kind of hard to keep your mouth shut about it, you know what I mean? Why? Because that’s what happens when you truly understand the **Merciful Love of God**.

Oh, but that’s not all. The **second way** the Bible reveals the **Merciful Love of God** is that God gives His enemies a **Body of Perfection instead of Body of Pain**.

**Romans 5:6** “You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.” (NIV)

Now folks, according to our text, the Bible is clear. What were we considered in the eyes of God prior to getting saved? Was it the **godly ones**. No!
It was the ungodly ones, right? And so if people refuse to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ and instead remain ungodly, what do they deserve for that kind of behavior? People, the Bible is very clear. **The choice is theirs.** If they don’t want to receive the mercy of God, then the **justice of God** declares that they just earned a **body of pain.** And why anybody would choose that is beyond me. Who in their right mind would choose a body like that? Dr. D.R. Baker gives a great description of the choice these people make.

“For a moment let us try to imagine what it would be like to die and go to hell. Try to imagine that for every single moment, throughout all eternity, a time with out end, every inch of your body will be in absolute pain.

It will be like having scalding, boiling water poured over your body every single second. You say to yourself, “Surely the pain will subside!” but it never comes. Your body will have an eternity without rest or relief.

It is writhing in pain. You scream in horror as your feet and hands blister, and your hair catches fire. You gnaw at your tongue, trying desperately to relieve the torment and your throat becomes raw from all your screaming.

You go under the surface of molten lava gnashing your teeth. As you gasp for air the burning brimstone flows into your mouth. You are on fire inside and out. You try to focus your eyes in the endless, everlasting, permanent dwelling place of total torment but they burn with such pain as though they were melting in the sockets.

Through the smoke and flame, you finally focus on the worms that have begun to totally engulf your body. They are crawling all over you, and you realize in horror that they are feasting on you. You can feel them as they crawl in and out of you, but you are not consumed.

The horrid smell of blazing sulfur combined with the sickening odor of burning hair and scorching flesh linger in your nose and nausea overwhelms you. The roar of the flames and the piercing screams of the damned seem to tear at your eardrums. Oh, for just a moment of silence! But that silence never comes. You can’t run away this time.
Your thoughts return to the time you were in a Bible-believing, preaching Church. You can still remember the time when the preacher was talking to you about this hopeless place of darkness and pain, but you didn’t want to listen. For eternity you will scream those words again and again, over and over, but alas, they are not heard.

This isn’t fantasy or imagination. No, this is reality, and your reality without Christ in hell.’5

Now folks, I don’t know about you. But that doesn’t seem to be a very fun body to have. I mean, who in their right mind would want to have a body like that, especially when they didn’t have to? Why? Because of the merciful love of God! People, get this. Talk about the love of God. We all deserve a body of pain but through Jesus we can have a body of perfection. Let’s check it out!

1 Corinthians 15:42,44 “It is the same way for the resurrection of the dead. Our earthly bodies, which die and decay, will be different when they are resurrected, for they will never die. They are natural human bodies now, but when they are raised, they will be spiritual bodies. For just as there are natural bodies, so also there are spiritual bodies.” (NLT)

Now folks, according to our text there, when a person goes to heaven, they not only get a new home but a new body as well. And what a body it is. First of all, it will be imperishable. That means, it will never die, rot, decay, break down, or age. And that means, there will be no more back aches, no more broken bones, no more disease, and yes ladies, no more anti-aging creams. Our new bodies will never wear down and they’ll never wear out! Then as if that wasn’t cool enough, our new bodies will not only be imperishable, but they’ll be spiritual. And that means that our body will be just like Jesus’ body after He was raised from the dead. And if you study the characteristics of Jesus’ resurrected body you see that He was not affected by matter. He could walk through doors. He could travel instantly anywhere at anytime. And that means in heaven,
there’ll be no traffic, no tollbooths and no more car taxes, praise God! And folks, I don’t know about you, but that’s not a very hard choice to make here. I’d much rather have a body of perfection than of a body of pain, how about you? And to think that it’s not only free for the asking, but we don’t deserve it!

**Now that’s what I call love!** A.W. Tozer had this to say.

“The vague and tenuous hope that God is too kind to punish the ungodly has become a deadly opiate for the consciences of millions.”

And why is his statement so true? Well, it’s simple folks. Because when you understand that we all deserve a body of pain yet out of mercy God will give us a body of perfection, it’s kind of hard to not want to live for Him in return, you know what I mean? Why? Because that’s what happens when you truly understand the **Merciful Love of God**.

Oh, but that’s not all. The **third way** the Bible reveals the **Merciful Love of God** is that God gives His enemies a Heavenly Greeting instead of Hellish Goodbye.

**Romans 5:8** “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (NIV)

Now folks, according to our text, the Bible is clear. What were we considered in the eyes of God prior to getting saved? Was it the saintly ones? No! It was the sinful ones, right? And so if people refuse to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ and instead remain sinners, what do they deserve for that kind of behavior? People, the Bible is very clear. **The choice is theirs.** If they don’t want to receive the mercy of God, then the **justice of God** declares they just earned a **hellish goodbye**. And why anybody would choose that is beyond me. Who in their right mind would choose a departure like that?
1. **Thomas Payne**: “I would give worlds, if I had them, if the Age of Reason had never been published. O Lord, help me! Christ, help me! Stay with me! It is hell to be left alone!”

2. **Voltaire**: “I am abandoned by God and man! I shall go to hell! O’ Jesus Christ!”

3. **David Hume**: The atheist died in utter despair with an awful scene crying out, “I am in the flames!”

4. **Karl Marx**: Was on his deathbed surrounded by candles burning to lucifer and screamed at his nurse who asked him if he had any last words, “Go on, get out! Last words are for fools who haven’t said enough.”

5. **Nietzsche**: Died insane, completely out of his mind.

6. **Sir Thomas Scott**: “Until now I thought there was no God or hell. Now I know there is both, and I am doomed.”

7. **Sir Francis Newport**: “Do not tell me there is no God for I know there is one, and that I am in his angry presence! You need not tell me there is no hell, for I already feel my soul slipping into its fires! I know that I am lost forever.”

Now folks, I don’t know about you. But that doesn’t seem to be a very fun way to go. I mean, who in their right mind would want to have a departure like that, especially when they didn’t have to? **Why**? Because of the merciful love of God! People, get this. Talk about the love of God. We all deserve a **hellish goodbye** but through Jesus we can have a **heavenly greeting**. Let’s check it out!

1. **Dwight Moody**: Awoke from sleep shortly before he died said: “Earth recedes. Heaven opens before me. If this is death, it is sweet! There is no valley here. God is calling me, and I must go.” Moody’s son said, “No, no, Father. You’re dreaming.” And Moody replied, “I am not dreaming. I
have been within the gates. This is my triumph; this is my coronation day! It is glorious!”

2. **Christian One**: “How gracious is God to me! My heart is full of thanks, there is no room for anything else.”

3. **Christian Two**: And still another said, “I am going home to my Lord and Savior. He is standing at my side giving me the security of my salvation.”

4. **Ann Delagana**: Shortly before her death she kept asking the people around her, “Can’t you hear the angels? Can’t you hear the beautiful music.”

5. **Beverly Goodman**: The very last thing Beverly did before leaving this earth behind was to look up and smile in peace. She knew her last breath here was her first breath in heaven.

6. **A Chinese Communist** through whom many Christians had been executed, said to a Pastor: “I have seen many of you die. The Christians die in a different way. What is your secret?”

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but that’s not a very hard choice to make here. I’d much rather have a **heavenly greeting** than a **hellish goodbye**, how about you? And to think that it’s not only free for the asking, but we don’t deserve it! **Now that’s what I call love!** And it’s the same conclusion that John MacArthur made.

“*The particular love of God for His own is overwhelming. It is powerful. If you don’t stand in awe of it, then you don’t really grasp its significance. We ought to be in awe, and like Israel, humiliated before such love. He does not owe it to us. Yet He condescends to love us nonetheless. If our hearts aren’t stirred with love for God in return, then there’s something terribly wrong with us.*”

People of God, if you can’t seem to appreciate the fact that through Jesus Christ, God will give His enemies a Palace in Heaven instead of a Pit in Hell, a Body of Perfection instead of a Body of Pain and a Heavenly Greeting instead of
a Hellish Goodbye, then **something is terribly wrong with you**! If we had any idea of the depths of God’s love we would not only fall on our knees in reverence and kiss the very feet of Christ but we’d get up on our feet and immediately run to tell everyone of their need of Christ! **Why?** Because that’s what happens when you truly understand the **Merciful Love of God**.

And people this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people **really can** have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe **before it’s too late**!” But people, I’m telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we’ve got to stop acting like practical atheists. We’ve got to start demonstrating by our **lips** as well as our **lives** that **God is Love**!
Chapter Twenty-Nine

God’s Love is Compassionate

Hey, how many of you guys remember the Beatitudes of Jesus? You know, where he says, “Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth” and “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.” Do you remember? Well, have you guys ever wondered if the devil has his own set of beatitudes? I mean, doesn’t it make sense that he’d have his own list of behavior that he appreciates? Well, by cracky, I came across that list.

1. Blessed are the troublemakers – They shall be called my children.

2. Blessed are the complainers – I’m all ears to them.

3. Blessed are those who are too tired, too busy, too distracted to spend an hour once a week with their fellow Christians – They are my best workers.

4. Blessed are those Christians who wait to be asked and expect to be thanked – I can use them.

5. Blessed are the touchy who stop going to Church services – They are my missionaries.
6. Blessed are those who are bored with the minister’s mannerisms and mistakes – For they get nothing out of his sermons.

7. Blessed is the Church member who expects to be invited to his own Church – For he is a part of the problem instead of the solution.

8. Blessed are those who gossip – For they shall cause strife and divisions that please me.

9. Blessed are those who are easily offended – For they will soon get angry and quit.

10. Blessed are those who don’t give of their time to carry on God’s work – For they are my helpers.

11. Blessed is he who professes to love God but hates his brother and sister – For he shall be with me forever.

12. Blessed are you who, when you read this think it is about other people and not yourself – I’ve got you too!

   Now folks, I don’t know about you, but if there really was a list of the Devil’s Beatitudes, I’d say those would be pretty close, how about you? But folks, believe it or not, I’ve discovered one that’s been left off the list. It goes something like this. Blessed are those who say they’re powerful Christians yet live their lives like practical atheists.

   Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our lips and by our lives, we act like He’s not there. And this not only keeps us from growing in our own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christian’s living like a practical atheists by not knowing Who God Is, we’re going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, “Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?”
We’ve already seen that the very first thing we need to know about God is that God Is Real. The second thing we need to know is that God Is Personal. The third thing we need to know is that God Is Wise. The fourth thing we need to know is that God Is Powerful. The fifth thing we need to know is that God is Holy. And in the last chapter we saw that the sixth thing we need to know about God is that God Is Love. And there we saw that God reveals what true love is like by Giving us Mercy. And there we saw that out of mercy God will give His enemies a Palace in Heaven instead of a Pit in Hell, a Body of Perfection instead of a Body of Pain and a Heavenly Greeting instead of a Hellish Goodbye. And I don’t know about you, but I’d say that’s an awesome kind of love, don’t you think?

But folks, believe it or not, that’s not the only way the Bible reveals that God Is Love. The second way the Bible reveals that God Is Love is that God Gives Us Compassion. But hey, don’t take my word for it. Let’s listen to God’s.

Luke 15:11-24 “Jesus continued: There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, Father, give me my share of the estate. So he divided his property between them. Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living.

After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

When he came to his senses, he said, How many of my father’s hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men. So he got up and went to his father.
But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.

But the father said to his servants, Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found. So they began to celebrate.” (NIV)

Now folks, what we have here in our text is simply the famous prodigal son story, right? And what you’ve got to understand is that it’s not just a story about the son’s need of forgiveness but of a father’s incredible compassion. You see, the word “compassion” comes from the Greek word “splanchna.” It literally means “to be moved in one’s inwards or bowels.” It was the metaphor of that day to speak of the seat of affection or emotions. For instance, today, we would say we are moved in our heart for someone. But back then they would say they were moved in their bowels for someone. So guys, next time you want to show compassion to your wife you can just say, “Hey baby, you move me in my bowels.” Actually, if you do, you might end up attending the marriage course coming up! But seriously, “splanchna” or “compassion” here wasn’t just an emotional feeling. But get this, it was “a loving action generated out of pity.” And folks, this is exactly what we see with this father here. Out of pity he refrained from giving his son what he really deserved, right? I mean, stop and think about it. If your son basically told you to hurry up and die so he can have his inheritance, and that’s what’s going on here folks, and then he went off and blew the whole thing in sinful living and came back, what would you do? You wouldn’t give him the fattened calf. Are you kidding? You’d give him the fattened casket, right? But not this father! No! What’d he do? He showed compassion
for his son! And not by just having pity for him, but he threw a party for him! Can you believe that? **Is that love or what?**

But herein lies our problem. You see, we live in a society that **no longer pleads for the compassion of God.** People, today no longer think they’re pitiful. No! They think they’re wonderful. They don’t think they need pity from God. **They think they’re owed a party from God!** But people, as we saw in the last chapter, if we got what was owed to us, what would we get? A pit in hell, a body of pain, and a hellish goodbye, right? And folks, I don’t know about you, I’d rather have pity than that kind of party!

Therefore, in order to better appreciate the **love of God,** I think we’d better take a closer look at the **compassion of God,** how about you? And folks, it’s pretty simple. The **first way** the Bible reveals the **Compassionate Love of God** is that **He Died for Those Who Wanted Him Dead.**

**Luke 23:32-34** “Two others, both criminals, were led out to be executed with him. Finally, they came to a place called The Skull. All three were crucified there – Jesus on the center cross, and the two criminals on either side. Jesus said, Father, forgive these people, because they don’t know what they are doing.” (NLT)

Now folks, according to our text, the Bible is clear. Jesus was not only killed on the cross between two criminals, but He was put there because people considered Him one. Can you imagine the sinfulness of that? I mean, here we have God Himself coming to the earth to save the lost but they rejected Him and placed Him on the cross! He came to bring us all life but people wanted to take His life. They wanted Him dead! Can you believe that? Talk about sin!

But people, believe it or not, the American Church has committed an even bigger sin than that! **How?** By becoming numb to this amazing act of the love of God. People, I don’t know if you’ve noticed but we have long forgotten
the true meaning of the cross! For your information, the cross is not just a Christian religious symbol to hang around your neck! It was a horrible instrument of suffering and death! The cross was the firing squad, the hangman’s noose, the gas chamber of our day. It was the means of which to execute the worst of criminals. Yet Jesus was not a criminal! He was the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior of the world. He who knew no sin voluntarily died to take away our sin. Even the sin of putting Him up on the cross! Why? Out of pity, out of compassion, to keep us from getting what we deserve. And lest we think this was an easy thing to do, let’s take a look at Jesus’ last minutes on the cross from a medical perspective.

“As Jesus slowly sags down with more weight on the nails in the wrists, excruciating fiery pain shoots through His fingers and up the arms to explode in the brain. The nails in the wrists are putting pressure on the median nerves.

Therefore, as he pushes himself upward to avoid this stretching torment, he places the full weight on the nail through his feet. But this causes a searing agony as the nail tears through the nerves between the bones of his feet.

Then His arms get fatigued, cramps sweep through His muscles, knotting them in deep, relentless, throbbing pain. And with these cramps come the inability to push Himself upward to breathe. Air can be drawn into the lungs but not exhaled.

So Jesus fights to raise himself in order to get even one small breath. In spasms He’s able to push himself upward to exhale and get more oxygen but each time its less and less.

He experiences hours of horrible pain, as the tissue is torn from his lacerated back trying to move up and down against the rough timber just so He can breathe. But then another agony arrives. A deep crushing pain in the chest begins as the area around His heart slowly fills with serum and begins to compress His heart.
It’s almost over. The loss of fluids has reached a critical level. The heart is struggling to pump blood as the tortured lungs make a frantic effort to gasp small gulps of air.

He can feel the chill of death creeping through His tissues.” And finally Jesus can allow His body to die but not before saying this, “Father forgive them! For they know not what they do!”

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but that doesn’t seem to be a very fun way to die. I mean, who in their right mind would volunteer to die like that, especially for people who wanted you dead! But folks, that’s exactly what Jesus did! He came to die for those who wanted Him dead! Talk about the love of God! We all deserve to die and go straight to hell but through the cross of Christ we can be forgiven and go straight to heaven! Can you believe it? And to think that it’s not only free for the asking, but we don’t deserve it! Now that’s what I call love! Oswald Chambers put it like this.

“All heaven is interested in the cross of Christ, all hell is terribly afraid of it, while men are the only beings who more or less ignore its meaning.”

And why is his statement so true? Well, it’s simple folks. When you and I realize that we all deserve to be crucified ourselves on the cross for all our sins yet out of compassion God crucified His Son instead, it’s kind of impossible to ignore, you know what I mean? Why? Because that’s what happens when you truly begin to understand the Compassionate Love of God.

Oh, but that’s not all. The second way the Bible reveals the Compassionate Love of God is that He Continually Forgives Our Continual Sins.

Hebrews 7:24-25 “But because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.” (NIV)
Now folks, according to our text, the Bible is clear. Jesus not only died on the cross to forgive us of our sins, but He always lives to intercede for our sins. And do you have any idea the significance of that statement? People, it's not just that God Himself came to the earth to die for our sins. That's only half of it. Get this. He continually forgives our continual sins. The One who died for those who wanted Him dead not only forgives them once, but again and again! Isn't that incredible? I mean, let's put it in its context. For instance, let's go back to the prodigal son story. There we saw how that father demonstrated an amazing amount of compassion to his son, right? He didn’t give him what he deserved. He gave him a party, right? But now imagine that after the party and they ate the fatted calf, the son went off the next month and did it again. And then he went out the next week and did it again. And then he went out the next day and did it again! And he kept on doing it! I mean, come on! If most of us were that father we’d be tempted to say, “Okay pal, this is the fourth time I’ve killed the fatted calf this week. Hello! What’s your problem here! Cows don’t grow on trees!” Right? But people, believe it or not, this is exactly what God does for you and I every single day. And He never runs out of cows! Why? Because Jesus is always interceding on our behalf!

And people, this means that Jesus not only died to save us from our sins but get this. He does it so we can be presented to the Father as if we had never sinned! Is that a mind-blower or what? Why? Because people stop and think about it. Who in their right mind would not only forgive those who wanted you dead, but get this, keep on forgiving them again and again. Why? So you can present them to God as if they never sinned in the first place! Can you believe it? But folks, that’s exactly what Jesus did! And to think that it’s not only free for the asking, but we don’t deserve it! Now that’s what I call love! That’s what I
call compassion. And it’s the same level of compassion this father showed for these people.

“There was a man who had the responsibility of operating a drawbridge that spanned a river. And so when a steamboat came by he would put the bridge up, then lower it so that a train could cross when it came by.

Well, one day, he brought his son to work; and together they watched the bridge go up to let a steamer go through but when it was time to lower the bridge, his son was nowhere to be found.

But just then the father heard the cries of his son and he saw to his horror that the boy was caught in the massive gears that controlled the movement of the bridge.

Then to make matters worse. A train whistle blew which meant only one thing. A trainload of people was on its way. And so in a split moment the father realized had a decision to make.

To save his son he would have to raise the bridge once more; but, if he were to do that, the train would go into the river killing many people. So with his heart wrenching, the father made his decision.

He voluntarily chose to lower the bridge and crush his boy. And a moment later the train whizzed by and the passengers waved at the man, totally oblivious to the price he had just paid for their life.”

Now folks, that’s one of the closest stories I’ve ever heard to illustrate what God did for us when He sent Jesus to die on the cross. But there’s one missing element. Yes, **God too chose let His Son die for others**. But it wasn’t for a trainload of wonderful people. It was a trainload of people who hated His guts, nailed Him on a cross and who even after being saved have the audacity to keep on sinning again and again and again!

People of God, may we never ever whiz by in this life totally oblivious to what God has done for you and I! Remember, He didn’t have to and we certainly don’t deserve it! And that’s why if we can’t seem to appreciate that Jesus died for
those who wanted Him dead and continually forgives our continual sins, then **something is terribly wrong with us! Why?** Because if we had any idea of the depths of God’s love, not a day would go by where we didn’t praise His Holy Name and tell everyone we meet to do the same! **Why?** Because that’s what happens when you truly begin to understand the **Compassionate Love of God.**

And people this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people **really can** have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe **before it’s too late!**” But people, I’m telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we’ve got to stop acting like practical atheists. We’ve got to start demonstrating by our **lips** as well as our **lives** that **God is Love!**
“Three guys, Clarence, Billy Bob and Bubba were traveling in Europe on military leave and they came across a strange old town, protected by an ancient stone wall. And since they were getting hungry, they decided to stop and look for something to eat.

But a guard dressed in heavy armor met them at the gate and said, ‘You may enter. But we have one rule here: Never step on a duck. If you step on a duck, you will be punished!’

Well, Clarence, Billy Bob, and Bubba thought this was strange, but since they were hungry they went through the gate, and found that there were ducks everywhere! It was impossible to keep from stepping on one!

And sure enough, it was only a matter of time when Clarence accidentally stepped on a duck. And when he did, suddenly, a troop of guards stormed down the street and carried him away in chains! He was taken to prison and thrown into a cell with the meanest, ugliest woman you ever saw!

Well, Billy Bob and Bubba saw this, and were extremely careful not to step on any ducks, but sure enough, it was only a few minutes later when Billy Bob stepped on one!

And so Billy Bob was immediately chained to a woman even uglier than the first
one. She was dirty and nagged constantly! Well, by this time Bubba was afraid to even take a step! It took him a half an hour just to walk a single block.

But then suddenly, for no reason, a guard ran up to Bubba and chained him to the most beautiful woman he had ever seen! She was tall, with blue eyes and long blonde hair, and wore a stunning red dress, all decked out in diamonds and gold! Why, she must have been a princess! Bubba couldn’t believe his eyes!

So he asked the princess, ‘What did I ever do to deserve this?’

And the princess replied, ‘I don’t know what you did, but I stepped on a stupid duck!’

Hey, things worked out great for Bubba but not so hot for that lady, huh? And the point is, just when you thought you had that joke figured out, it took an unexpected twist at the end, didn’t it? But folks, did you know this is the same scenario being played out with many Christians today? And no, I’m not talking about being chained to a Bubba! I’m talking about the lives of many Christians. You see, the lives of many Christians also take an unexpected twist! And the results are just as ugly! How? By acting like practical atheists.

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our lips and by our lives, we act like He’s not there. And this not only keeps us from growing in our own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christians living like practical atheists by not knowing Who God Is, we’re going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, “Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?”

We’ve already seen that the very first thing we need to know about God is that God Is Real. The second thing we need to know is that God Is Personal. The third thing we need to know is that God Is Wise. The fourth thing we need to know is that God Is Powerful. The fifth thing we need to know is that God is Holy. And in the last two chapters we saw that the sixth thing we need to know
about God is that God Is Love. And there we saw how the Bible reveals that God Is Love by God Giving us Mercy and in the last chapter by Giving Us Compassion. And there we saw that out of compassion God died for those who wanted Him dead, and that He continually forgives our continual sins. Now people, is that an awesome kind of love or what?

But folks, believe it or not, did you know that’s not the only way the Bible reveals that God Is Love? The third way the Bible reveals that God Is Love is that God Gives Us Kindness. But hey, don’t take my word for it. Let’s listen to God’s.

Titus 3:1-7 “Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men. At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.” (NIV)

Now folks, according to our text, you can’t get any plainer than this. The Bible clearly says that nobody is getting to heaven because they’re so wonderful. Are you kidding! What did the text say? At one time we too were disobedient fools, enslaved to sin, and full of hatred, right? But out of kindness what did God do? He poured out His love through Jesus Christ and saved us, in spite of ourselves. And I don’t know about you, but I’d say that’s pretty kind!

But herein lies our problem. We live in a world that no longer pleads for the kindness of God. People, today no longer think they’re disobedient fools, enslaved to sin, and full of hatred. Are you kidding! They think they’re full
of sugar and spice and everything nice, right? I mean, stop and think about it. The average person today doesn’t think they need kindness from God. They think they’re owed the Kingdom of God! But people, as we’ve been seeing, if we got what was owed to us, what would we get? We wouldn’t pass go and we wouldn’t collect $200. We’d go straight to hell!

Therefore, in order to better appreciate the love of God, I think we’d better take a closer look at the kindness of God, how about you? And folks, it’s pretty simple. The first way the Bible reveals the Loving-kindness of God is that God Takes Sinners Just as They Are.

1 Corinthians 1:26-30 “Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things – and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus.” (NIV)

Now folks, according to our text, when it came to salvation, God chose the who? He chose the foolish, the weak, the lowly, and the despised! And guess who that is? That’s you and me folks! And why did God do that? Was He just trying to ruin our self-esteem? Absolutely! To keep us from boasting before Him. But not only that, He did it to display His kindness by not waiting for us to become perfect people. Why? Because stop and think about it. If God were to wait for you and I to become perfect, He’d still be waiting, right? I mean who’s a perfect person? Well, if you think you are, just email me with your name and phone number and I’ll call your spouse later to verify! But seriously, this is the great news! Out of kindness God takes you and I sinners just as we are and then He sent Jesus to die in our place. And I don’t know about you, but I’d say that’s pretty kind, don’t you think?
And this is why all this self-love self-esteem teaching going around is so deadly. It actually gets people to boast about their so-called wonderfulness when the whole time they are filled with wretchedness. All this self-love self-esteem teaching tricks us into not looking into the mirror and seeing ourselves for who we really are! People, the fact is, this side of heaven, in light of who God is, we have no idea how grotesque our sins appear to Him. And if God were to treat us like we treat each other, He’d never even step in the same room with us, ever!

But people, here’s the good news. **In spite of our condition, God takes us just as we are** ugliness and all. He looks beyond our deformities and out of kindness, He still draws us into a relationship Him. Is that incredible or what? Talk about the love of God! And to think that it’s not only free for the asking, but we don’t deserve it! **Now that’s what I call love,** how about you?

Oh, but that’s not all. The **second way** the Bible reveals the Loving-kindness of God is that God Turns Sinners into Saints.

**Romans 1:1,7** “Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God. To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” (NIV)

Now folks the Bible is clear. Here we have the Apostle Paul writing to the Christians in Rome and he not only tells them that **they’re loved by God,** but what? He tells them **they’re saints of God!** Is that incredible or what? I mean, who in here lives like a saint? Well in case you still don’t get it, I’ll repeat myself. If you think you do, just email me with your name and phone number and I’ll call your spouse later to verify! But seriously, what we see in the text here is **out of kindness,** God not only takes sinners just as they are, but He takes sinners and turns them into saints!
And for those of you who may not know, the word “saint” means “holy ones” or literally “a most holy thing.” And I don’t know about you, but most of the things we do, they aren’t very holy, are they? So here’s the point. How in the world could God call every Christian a saint, a most holy thing? Great question, I’m glad you asked. Here’s what He does. You see, God not only accepts us for who we are and He not only forgives us of our sins, but get this, He chooses to forget our sins!

**Hebrews 10:16-17** “This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds. Then he adds: Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.” (NIV)

People, this is what is so incredible about our relationship with God. He not only forgives our sins, He chooses to forget our sins! And because of this, in His eyes it’s as if we never sinned, or in other words, we’re a saint! Can you believe that? Is that incredible or what? I mean, stop and think about it? It’s one thing to accept people for who they are and it’s one thing to forgive people for who they are. But to go ahead and treat them as if they’d never sinned? I mean, that’s out of this world!

But people, this is the great news. **That’s exactly what Jesus did when He shed His blood on the cross.** And by the way, when it comes to the blood of Jesus, most people think its kind of strange. In fact, one doctor before he got saved had the same problem. He said this.

“I used to think it strange that the Bible kept talking about the cleansing power of the blood. It seemed to me that blood was messy stuff. In fact, my white lab coats always got stained with blood and it was a chore to get them clean.

But now I understand about the cleansing power of blood. Not because of what blood does on the outside, but on the inside. You see, blood in our bodies has a very important job.
It constantly cleansing every cell, and constantly washes away all the debris that accumulates inside of us.”

And people, this is exactly what the blood of Jesus does for our sins. This is why we can be called saints even though we don’t act like it. It’s all because the blood of Jesus continually cleanses us from our sins. Therefore, God doesn’t see us as we see ourselves. No! He looks at us through those rose-colored glasses and He no longer sees us in our sins, He only sees a saint! Isn’t that amazing? And to think that it’s not only free for the asking, but we don’t deserve it! **Now that’s what I call love**, how about you?

Oh, but that’s not all. The **third way** the Bible reveals the **Loving-kindness of God** is that **God Turns Sinners into Sons**.

**Ephesians 1:4-6** “Long ago, even before He made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in His eyes. His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into His own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ. And this gave him great pleasure. So we praise God for the wonderful kindness He has poured out on us because we belong to His dearly loved Son.” (NLT)

People the Bible is clear. God not only **accepts us** for who we are, He not only **forgives us** of our sin, He not only **calls us saints** but He what? He adopts us into His family. He turns sinners into sons! And folks once again, that’s incredible! I mean, who in here lives like a son of God? Okay, you know the routine. If you think you do, just email me with your name and phone number and I’ll call your spouse later to verify!

But seriously, what we see in the text here is that **out of kindness**, God not only sent Jesus to die **for our sins**, but He adopts us as **His very own children**! Can you believe that? Stop and think about it! I mean, who in their right mind would take people who sinned against you, didn’t want to have
anything to do with you, and basically hated your guts, and then turn around and adopt them as one of your very own kids? Now that’s what I call love! That’s what I call kindness. And it’s the same level of kindness this father showed for this person. The following is a letter written to a man on death row by the Father of the man whom the man on death row had killed.

You are probably surprised that I, of all people, am writing a letter to you, but I ask you to read it in its entirety and consider its request seriously. As the Father of the man whom you took part in murdering, I have something very important to say to you. I forgive you. With all my heart, I forgive you.

I realize it may be hard for you to believe, but I really do. At your trial, when you confessed to your part in the events that cost my Son his life and asked for my forgiveness, I immediately granted you that forgiveness from my heart.

But this is not all I have to say to you. I want to make you an offer – I want you to become my adopted child. You see, my Son who died was my only child, and I now want to share my life with you.

This may not make sense to you or anyone else, but I have arranged matters so that if you will receive my offer of forgiveness, not only will you be pardoned for your crime, but you’ll also be set free from your sentence of death.

And at that point, you will become my adopted child and heir to all my riches. Also, I realize it may seem foolish to make such an offer to one who cost my Son his life, but I now have a great love in my heart for you.

I know you never will be perfect, but you do not have to be perfect to receive my offer. Some would call me foolish for my offer to you, but I wish for you to call me your Father.

Sincerely,

The Father of Jesus\(^3\)

Now folks, believe it or not, that’s exactly the kind of love God has shown to each one of us. You see, the gospel’s not just about God being willing
to **forgive** us of our sins. And it’s not just about God being willing to **forget** our sins. And it’s not even about God bringing us into His family. What’s amazing about the gospel is that He does it for those who killed His very own Son.

And people, that’s why if we can’t seem to appreciate that God takes sinners just as we are, He turns us into saints, and adopts us as His very own sons, then **something is terribly wrong with us! Why?** Because your life can **never be the same** once you truly understand the **Loving-kindness of God.**

And people this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people **really can** have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe **before it’s too late!”** But people, I’m telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we’ve got to stop acting like practical atheists. We’ve got to start demonstrating by our **lips** as well as our **lives** that **God is Love!”**
“One day there was a policeman who was testing out three guys who were training to become detectives. So to test their skills in recognizing a suspect, he shows the first guy a picture for five seconds and then hides it. ‘This is your suspect, how would you recognize him?’

And the first guy answers, ‘That’s easy, we’ll catch him fast because he only has one eye!’

The policeman says, ‘Well...hello...he has one eye because the picture shows his PROFILE, a SIDE VIEW. That’s just ONE SIDE of him!’

So slightly flustered by this ridiculous response, the police officer flashes the picture for five seconds at the second guy and asks him: ‘This is your suspect, how would you recognize him?’

And the second guy says, ‘Ha! He’d be too easy to catch because he only has one ear!’

And the policeman says in anger, ‘What’s the matter with you two? Of course only one eye and one ear are showing because it’s a picture of his profile! What is wrong with you!’

And so now the policeman’s extremely frustrated at this point, and so he shows
the picture to the third guy and in a very testy voice and says, ‘This is your suspect, how would you recognize him?’

So the third guy looks at the picture intently for a moment and says, ‘Hmmm...The suspect wears contact lenses.’

Well, the policeman is surprised and speechless because he really doesn’t know himself if the suspect wears contacts or not. So he says, ‘Well, that’s an interesting answer! Wait here for a few minutes and I’ll check his file.’

So he leaves the room and goes to his office, checks the suspect’s file and comes back smiling saying, ‘Wow! I can’t believe it! It’s true! The suspect does in fact wear contact lenses. Good work! How were you able to make such a discerning observation?’

And the third guy replied, ‘That’s easy. He can’t wear regular glasses, because he only has one eye and one ear!”

Now how many of you think those guys were going to make it as detectives? Oh, they thought they had what it takes to be a good detective, but what was missing there? They couldn’t even discern a simple profile of a criminal! But folks, did you know they’re not the only one’s having a problem with discernment? Hey, that’s right! So are many Christians. How? By not discerning the criminal behavior of acting like a practical atheist.

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our lips and by our lives, we act like He’s not there. And this not only keeps us from growing in our own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christians living like practical atheists by not knowing Who God Is, we’re going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, “Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?”

We’ve already seen that the very first thing we need to know about God is that God Is Real. The second thing we need to know is that God Is Personal.
The third thing we need to know is that God Is Wise. The fourth thing we need to know is that God Is Powerful. The fifth thing we need to know is that God is Holy. And in the last three chapters we saw that the sixth thing we need to know about God is that God Is Love. And there we saw how the Bible reveals that God Is Love by God Giving us Mercy, Compassion and in the last chapter by Giving Us Kindness. And there we saw that out of kindness God accepts sinners just as they are, He turns them into saints and then He turns them into sons. And I don’t know about you, but I’d say that’s an awesome kind of love!

But folks, believe it or not, did you know that’s not the only way the Bible reveals that God Is Love? The fourth way the Bible reveals that God Is Love is that God Gives Us Graciousness. But hey, don’t take my word for it. Let’s listen to God’s.

Ephesians 2:4-10 “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (NIV)

Now folks, according to our text, you can’t get any plainer than that. The Bible clearly says that nobody is getting to heaven because they’re so wonderful or they worked for it, right? What did the text say? We get there purely by the grace of God, right? You can’t buy it, you can’t earn it, it’s simply offered as a free gift. And for those of you who may not know, God’s grace is His free gift of
giving everything for nothing to those who don’t deserve anything! And I don’t know about you, but I’d say that’s being pretty gracious.

But folks, that’s only half of the story. What you’ve got to understand is that God not only gives us His grace to get saved, but He gives us grace even after we’re saved. How? By giving us the ability to live for Him like we should. Why? Because even though we should live for God especially after all He’s done for us, most of the time we don’t! And instead of nuking us for our wrong, He gives us grace to do what is right! Now that’s what I call love!

Therefore, in order to better appreciate the love of God, I think we’d better take a closer look at the grace of God, how about you? And folks, it’s pretty simple. The first way the Bible reveals the Graciousness of God is that He Gives Us the Ability to Obey Him when We Can’t.

Philippians 2:12-13 “Dearest friends, you were always so careful to follow my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away you must be even more careful to put into action God’s saving work in your lives, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For God is working in you, giving you the desire to obey him and the power to do what pleases him.” (NLT)

Now folks, according to our text, when it comes to obedience to God, who is actually responsible for it? Who is actually doing the work there? It’s God, right? What did the text say? God not only gives us the desire to obey but He gives us the power to obey. I mean, is that incredible or what? Stop and think about what’s going on here. You would think that someone who has freely been saved from eternal destruction in hell would naturally want to obey the person responsible, for doing that, right? But folks, what do we oftentimes see? Even after being a recipient of the grace of God, we still don’t want to obey God, right? Can you imagine the sinfulness of that? Can you imagine if God treated us
like we treat Him? Well, in case you can’t, I’m here to help you out. Let’s imagine what it would be like if God treated us like we do to Him.

1. What if...God couldn’t take the time to Bless us today because we couldn’t take the time to thank Him yesterday?

2. What if...God decided to stop leading us tomorrow because we didn’t follow Him today?

3. What if...God didn’t walk with us today because we failed to recognize it was His day?

4. What if...God stopped loving and caring for us because we failed to love and care for others?

5. What if...God took away the Bible tomorrow, because we wouldn’t read it today?

6. What if...The door to the Church Sanctuary was closed because we didn’t open the door of our hearts?

7. What if...God wouldn’t hear us today because we wouldn’t listen to Him yesterday?

8. What if...God answered our prayers the way we answer His call to service?

9. What if...God met our needs the way we give Him our lives?

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’m so glad God doesn’t treat us like we treat Him, amen? People the facts are, we’re not only saved by the grace of God, but we walk, live and breathe the grace of God every single day! We are immersed in it 24 hours a day 7 days a week! And the point is this. If we had any idea the depths of which God is being gracious to us, it would empower us to obey Him no matter the circumstances, even when it seems impossible, like it did with this man.
“David McAllister is a blind, 77-year-old ex-convict who 22 years ago kidnapped 10-year-old Chris Carrier, shot him and left him for dead in the Florida Everglades.

Although blinded in his left eye by the bullet, the boy survived. However, David McAllister escaped, and for more than two decades the case went unsolved.

That is until last fall when a distraught McAllister, his frail body bedridden in a Miami nursing home, confessed to the crime. And after learning of the confession, Carrier, now 32, visited McAllister at his nursing home.

But Chris did not go in anger or bitterness. Rather, in obedience to God, he went to pray with his would-be murderer and share the good news of how Jesus had transformed his own life.”

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but man, if most of us were ol’ Chris there, the last thing we’d want to do is to share the love of God with the person who tried to kill us, you know what I mean? But people, here’s the good news. God isn’t like you and I, amen? Out of graciousness He not only came to save us from our sins, but He came to give us the ability to live a life that pleases Him, like Chris’s there. People, whether you realize it or not, God wants us to obey Him by sharing His love with others, even if it means our own would be killer. Why? Because that’s the same kind of love He’s given to us.

And the point is this. We all know we should be willing to do this naturally but God knows we can’t! So what’s He do? Does he nuke us? No! He gives us the grace so we can! Is that incredible or what? Talk about the love if God! And to think that it’s not only free for the asking, but we don’t deserve it! Now that’s what I call love, how about you?

Oh, but that’s not all. The second way the Bible reveals the Graciousness of God is that He Gives Us the Ability to Serve Him when We Won’t.
1 Corinthians 12:1,4-6,11 “And now, dear brothers and sisters, I will write about the special abilities the Holy Spirit gives to each of us, for I must correct your misunderstandings about them. Now there are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but it is the same Holy Spirit who is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service in the Church, but it is the same Lord we are serving. There are different ways God works in our lives, but it is the same God who does the work through all of us. He alone decides which gift each person should have.” (NLT)

Now folks, according to our text, when it comes to serving God, who is actually responsible for it? It’s God, right? What did the text say? God not only gives us gifts to serve Him but He alone decides which gifts we get to serve Him with. I mean, is that incredible or what? Stop and think about what’s going on here. You would think that someone who has freely been saved from eternal destruction in hell would naturally want to serve the person responsible, for doing that, right? But folks, what do we often see, even as Christians? Even after being a recipient of the grace of God, we not only don’t want to be obedient to God, but half the time we don’t even want to serve God. Can you imagine the sinfulness of that? And as if that wasn’t bad enough, even if we finally get around to so-called serving God, we still blow it by treating service like a boring job instead of a loving ministry. And in case you don’t know the difference between the two, I came across a test. Let’s see if our service to God is a job or a ministry.

1. If you do it because no one else will, it’s a job. If you are doing it to serve the Lord, it’s a ministry.

2. It you do it just enough to get by, it’s a job. If you do it to the best of your ability, it’s a ministry.

3. If you quit because someone criticized you, it was a job. If you keep serving, it’s a ministry.
4. If you quit because no one praised you, it was a job. If you do it because you think it needs to be done, it’s a ministry.

5. If your concern is just success, it’s a job. If your concern is faithfulness to God, it’s a ministry.

6. It’s hard to get excited about a job. It’s almost impossible not to get excited about a ministry.

7. Average Churches are made up of many people doing many jobs. Great Churches are made up with many people who are involved in ministry.

8. People may say, ‘Well done,’ when you do your job. But the Lord will say, ‘Well done, thou good and faithful servant’ when you complete your ministry.”

Now folks, once again, I’m so glad that God doesn’t treat us like we treat Him! I mean think of the audacity here. The same people who’ve been saved from hell by the grace of God, look upon serving Him as a boring job! People the point is this. If we had any idea the depths of which God is being gracious to us, it would empower us to serve Him no matter the circumstance, even when it seems impossible, like it did with this man.

“Charlie Hainline is a layman at Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. He is a man who radiates the love of Christ, and is serious about sharing his faith with others.

One year, his goal was to serve God by leading 1650 people to faith in Christ (5 a day)! Once, he was out witnessing with a couple of other folks, and though he didn’t share the gospel, he sat there and smiled as a teammate did.

But when the teammate was finished and asked if the person would like to trust Christ and receive the gift of eternal life, the person replied, “If being a Christian would make me like him (point to Charlie), I want it!”
But what you need to understand is that Charlie’s life wasn’t always full of joy nor a bed of roses by any means. His daughter was kidnapped, killed, and her head was found floating in a canal.

And when the murderer of his daughter was caught and convicted, Charlie went to jail in order to share the love of God to that man.”

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but if most of us were ol’ Charlie there, the last thing we’d want to do is to share the love of God with the person who killed our daughter and chopped her head off, you know what I mean? But people, here’s the good news. God isn’t like you and I, amen? Out of graciousness He not only came to save us from our sins, but He came to give us the ability to live a life that pleases Him, like Charlie’s there. People whether you realize it or not, God wants us to serve Him by sharing His love with others, even if it means our own daughter’s killer. Why? Because that’s the same kind of love He’s given to us.

And the point is this. We all know we should be willing to do this naturally but God knows we can’t! So what’s He do? Does he nuke us? No! He gives us the grace so we can! Is that incredible or what? Talk about the love if God! And to think that it’s not only free for the asking, but we don’t deserve it! **Now that’s what I call love,** how about you?

Oh, but that’s not all. The third way the Bible reveals the Graciousness of God is that He Gives Us the Ability to Love Him when We Don’t.

*1 John 4:16,17,19* “And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. We love because He first loved us.” (NIV)

Now folks, according to our text, when it comes to loving God, who is actually responsible for it? It’s God, right? What did the text say? God not only
gives us His love but it’s because of His love we have the ability to love Him in return. I mean, is that incredible or what? Stop and think about what’s going on here. You would think that someone who has freely been saved from eternal destruction in hell would naturally want to love the person responsible for doing that, right? But folks, what do we often see, even as Christians? Even after being a recipient of the grace of God, we not only don’t want to be obedient to God, we not only don’t want to serve God, but half the time we don’t even want to love God. Can you imagine how horrible that is? And to show you how horrible this kind of behavior is, let’s take a look at another kind of love. Let’s take a look at the love of a dog.

“Archibald Rutledge wrote that one day he met a man whose dog had just been killed in a forest fire. And obviously heartbroken, the man explained to Rutledge how it happened.

Because he worked outdoors, he often took his dog with him. And on that particular morning, he left the animal in a clearing and gave him a command to stay and watch his lunch bucket while he went into the forest.

His faithful friend understood, for that’s exactly what he did. Then a fire started in the woods, and soon the blaze spread to the spot where the dog had been left. But he didn’t move. He stayed right where he was, in perfect obedience to his master’s word.

And with tearful eyes, the dog’s owner said, ‘I always had to be careful what I told him to do, because I knew he would do it out of love.’”

Now folks, the point is this. Here we have a dog lovingly being obedient to his master even unto death, yet many Christians refuse to love their heavenly Master who saved them from death. People, the facts are that most of the time we can’t even show the same level of love to God as a dog does to a man, even after all He’s done for us! And I don’t know about you but most of us would nuke the person on the spot! But people, not God! What’s He do? Out of graciousness He
empowers us to love Him not because we have to, but because we want to, like it was with this lady.

“There was a man who was a tyrant and he insisted that his wife get up real early every single morning to prepare his breakfast. He was very demanding with regard to her care of the house, he required a strict accounting of the money spent on groceries, clothes for the children, etc. Then one day he died

Well, later she married a man who was just the opposite. He was loving, tender, considerate, unselfish. And one day she was going through some of the papers of her first husband and found a list of all the things he had required her to do.

Then to her amazement, she realized she was doing all those things for her present husband but without being required to do them. She realized that she was doing them voluntarily because she loved him.”

Now folks, the reason why I like that illustration is because I think it’s how many Christians look at their relationship with God. They think of Him as that first man there. They think He’s just a big ol’ tyrant who just wants slavish obedience or they’re going to get it. But that’s not God! He’s not like you and I. He’s gracious! Even though He should treat us like that tyrant and nuke us on the spot for not loving Him, what’s He do? He knows we can’t love Him like He deserves, so He gives us grace to love Him in return! Is that incredible or what? Talk about the love if God!

And people, that’s why if we can’t seem to appreciate that God not only saves us by His grace, but he also gives us the ability to love, serve, and obey Him by His grace, then something is terribly wrong with us! Why? Because if we ever got a taste of the depths of God’s Love and His graciousness towards us, our lives can never be the same.

And people this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people really can have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe before it’s too late!” But
people, I’m telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we’ve got to stop acting like practical atheists. We’ve got to start demonstrating by our **lips** as well as our **lives** that **God is Love**!
“One day there was a lady who had just totaled her car in a horrific accident. And miraculously, somehow she was able to pry herself from the wreckage without a scratch just when a state trooper arrived.

And when he got there the trooper gasped, ‘My Goodness! Your car looks like an accordion that was stomped on by an elephant. Are you OK ma’am?’

And the lady chirped, ‘Why, yes officer. I’m just fine.’

And as the officer continued to survey the wreckage he said, ‘Well, how in the world did this happen?’

And the lady began her story, ‘Well, you see officer, it was the strangest thing! I was driving along this road when from out of nowhere this tree pops up in front of me. So I swerved to the right, but there was another tree!

So I swerved to the left and there was another tree! I swerved to the right and there was another tree! I swerved back to the left and there was....’

And the officer interrupted, ‘Hey lady, there isn’t a tree on this road for 30 miles. And he reached into the car to the rear view mirror and said, ‘That was your air freshener!’”
Now how many of you’d say that lady should not get behind the wheel? She was not only clueless but she was lucky to escape with her life, wasn’t she? But folks, did you know she’s not the only one whose behavior’s causing a lot of wrecks? Hey, that’s right! So are the lives of many Christians. How? By being clueless to the dangers of acting like a practical atheist.

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our lips and by our lives, we act like He’s not there. And this not only keeps us from growing in our own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christians living like practical atheists by not knowing Who God Is, we’re going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, “Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?”

We’ve already seen that the very first thing we need to know about God is that God Is Real. The second thing we need to know is that God Is Personal. The third thing we need to know is that God Is Wise. The fourth thing we need to know is that God Is Powerful. The fifth thing we need to know is that God Is Holy. And in the last four chapters we saw that the sixth thing we need to know about God is that God Is Love. And there we saw how the Bible reveals that God Is Love by God Giving us Mercy, Compassion, Kindness, and last time by Giving Us Graciousness. And there we saw that out of graciousness God gives us the grace not only to get saved, but He gives us grace to obey, serve, and love Him even after were saved! And I’d say that’s an awesome kind of love!

But folks, believe it or not, did you know that’s not the only way the Bible reveals that God Is Love? The fifth way the Bible reveals that God Is Love is that God Gives Us Patience. But hey, don’t take my word for it. Let’s listen to God’s.

2 Peter 3:5-9 “But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these
waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the Day of Judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

But do not forget this one thing, dear friends. With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” (NIV)

Now folks, according to our text, we’ve got some good news and we’ve got some not so good news. And the not so good news is that God’s not done punishing mankind for his wickedness, right? What did the text say? The first time it was a worldwide flood but the second time it’s going to be what? A worldwide fire, right? But praise God there’s some good news as well. What did the text say? In spite of man’s continual wickedness, God is patient with people, putting up with their wickedness day after day after day? Why? Because He doesn’t want them to perish. He wants them to repent and get saved, right? And I don’t know about you, but I’d say that’s being pretty patient, how about you? But folks, once again that’s only half of the story. What you’ve got to understand is that God’s not only patient with our sins until we get saved, He’s patient with our sins even after we’re saved. Now that’s what I call love!

Therefore, in order to better appreciate the love of God, I think we’d better take a closer look at the patience of God, how about you? And folks, it’s pretty simple. The first way the Bible reveals the Patience of God is that He Puts Up With Our Continual Slavery.

Romans 6:1-2,6-7 “Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more kindness and forgiveness? Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? Our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin.” (NLT)
Now folks, according to our text, it’s pretty clear. When it comes to the issue of sin, Jesus not only came to forgive us of it, but to set us free from it, right? People, do you have any idea what this means? It means that for the first time we have the ability through the Holy Spirit to just say no to sin. And now, we don’t have to sin like we used to. Why? Because we’re no longer slaves to sin! We actually have a choice! Is that incredible or what?

But folks, we’ve got a problem. You see, even though God’s given us ability to sin less, what do we do? We keep on sinning even more! Can you believe that? And the point is this. You would think that someone who has freely been saved from eternal destruction in hell would naturally want to stop sinning against the person responsible, for doing that, right? But what do we see? Even after all God’s done, we don’t just say no to sin. No! What do we do? We say yes to sin again and again. Can you imagine how horrible that is? Well, just in case you can’t, let’s take a look at what the Bible has to say about this kind of behavior.

2 Peter 2:21-22 “It would be better if they had never known the right way to live than to know it and then reject the holy commandments that were given to them. They make these proverbs come true: ‘A dog returns to its vomit.’” (NLT)

People of God, whether you realize it or not, when we keep on sinning again and again even after we’ve been saved, we are in essence choosing vomit over God. We’re choosing a pile of puke over Christ! Can you believe it? Oh, but that’s not all folks! It gets worse. In the book of Romans the Apostle Paul used a peculiar phrase to describe his joy about being set free from the slavery of sin. He said “Praise be to God who rescued me from this body of death!” Now folks, in order to appreciate Paul’s comment here, we need to take a look at what a “body of death” was back in those days.
“It is reported that there was an actual Roman custom that sentenced convicted murderers to an especially gruesome execution. Their unique sense of justice included strapping the dead body of the person they murdered to the back of the murderer.

Then the criminal would then be forced to drag the decomposing corpse with him wherever he went. And in a just few days, which doubtless seemed an eternity to the convicted man, the decay of the person he had killed would start to infect his own body until he was killed in return.

And it is believed that this was the torture that Paul had in mind when he expressed his joy of being freed from “the body of death.”

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I wouldn’t walk around with a dead stinking body on my back, you know what I mean? But people, whether you realize it or not, when we keep on sinning again and again even after we’ve been saved, we are in essence choosing dead body over God. We’re choosing a stinking corpse over Christ! Can you believe that? And people, let’s put it in context. How would you feel if somebody kept choosing a pile of vomit over you? How would you feel if somebody kept choosing a dead stinking rotten corpse over you? Let’s be honest people! If somebody treated us like that, what would we do? We’d nuke ‘em on the spot, right?

But people, here’s the good news. God isn’t like you and I! He’s Patient! And out of patience He not only forgives us of our sin but He puts up with our sin again and again and again! Every single day! And to think the whole time, He doesn’t have to! Especially after all He’s done. Now that’s what I call love, how about you?

Oh, but that’s not all. The second way the Bible reveals the Patience of God is that He Puts Up With Our Continual Idolatry.

1 John 2:15-16 “Stop loving this evil world and all that it offers you, for when you love the world, you show that you do not have the love of the Father in you.
For the world offers only the lust for physical pleasure, the lust for everything we see, and pride in our possessions. These are not from the Father. They are from this evil world.” (NLT)

Now folks, according to our text, it’s pretty clear. When it comes to the issue of idolatry, Jesus not only came to forgive us of it, but He came to tell us to **stay away from it**, right? What did the text say? Stop loving the things of this world! **Why?** Because God doesn’t want you to spend your time loving things. Are you kidding! He wants you to spend your time loving Him, right?

And the point is this. You would think that someone who has freely been saved from eternal destruction in hell would **naturally want to stop committing idolatry** against the person responsible, for doing that, right? But what do we see? Even though we know God wants us to stop loving things, what do we do? We keep on loving things even more! Can you imagine how horrible that is? Well, just in case you can’t, let’s take a look at what one author had to say about this kind of behavior and what it leads to.

“Leo Tolstoy once wrote a story about a successful peasant farmer who wasn’t satisfied with his lot in life. He wanted more of everything. And one day he received an offer.

For 1000 rubles, he could buy all the land he could walk around in a day. The only catch in the deal was that he had to be back at his starting point by sundown. So early the next morning he started out walking at a fast pace.

And even though by midday he was getting very tired, he kept on going, covering more and more ground. But well into the afternoon he realized that his greed had taken him very far from the starting point. So he quickened his pace and as the sun began to sink low in the sky.

He realized he had to make it back before sundown or he’d lose all the land he just gained, so he began to run faster and faster. As just as the sun began to sink below the horizon he came within sight of the finish line.
And gasping for breath, his heart pounding, he called upon every bit of strength left in his body and staggered across the line just before the sun disappeared. However, the man immediately collapsed, blood streaming from his mouth. In a few minutes he was dead.

And afterwards, his servants dug a grave. Oh, the man got his land alright. It was about six feet long and three feet wide. The title of the story was: *How Much Land Does a Man Need*?

People of God, how many things in life do we need? And people, how sad it is that we all joke about the rat race of life and how it only leads to an early grave, yet what do we do? Just like that man, we keep on running it faster and faster and faster. And it’ll not only kill your physical life but your spiritual life. Why? Because whether you realize it or not, when we keep on loving things again and again even after we’ve been saved, we are in essence choosing an early grave over God! We’re choosing a casket over Christ! Can you believe it?

Oh, but that’s not all folks! It gets worse. Let’s not just look at what an author has to say about this behavior, let’s take a look at what the Bible says about it.

**Philippians 3:7-8** “I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ.” (NLT)

People, the point is this. Whether you realize it or not, when we keep on loving things again and again even after we’ve been saved, what did Paul say? We are in essence choosing a pile of trash over God. In fact, the word there for garbage in the Greek literally means, “dung.” So that means if we are loving things we’re also choosing a pile of dung over Christ! Can you believe that?

And once again, let’s put it in context. How would you feel if somebody did that
to you? Let’s be honest people! If somebody treated us like that, what would we do? We’d nuke ‘em on the spot, right?

But people, here’s the good news. God isn’t like you and I! He’s Patient! And out of patience He not only forgives us of our sin but He puts up with our sin again and again and again! Every single day! And to think the whole time, He doesn’t have to! Especially after all He’s done. Now that’s what I call love, how about you?

Oh, but that’s not all. The third way the Bible reveals the Patience of God is that He Puts Up With Our Continual Harlotry.

Deuteronomy 31:16-17 “And the LORD said to Moses: You are going to rest with your fathers, and these people will soon prostitute themselves to the foreign gods of the land they are entering. They will forsake me and break the covenant I made with them. On that day I will become angry with them and forsake them; I will hide my face from them, and they will be destroyed.” (NIV)

Now folks, according to our text, it’s pretty clear. When it comes to the issue of harlotry, or in other words, selling yourselves out to the world, it’s obviously something God doesn’t like, right? What did the text say? Prostituting yourself before the world, makes Him what? It makes Him angry, right? Why? Because stop and think about it. It’s basically slapping God in the face after all He’s done for us.

And the point is this. You would think that someone who has freely been saved from eternal destruction in hell would naturally want to stop committing harlotry against the person responsible, for doing that, right? But folks what do we see? Not just the Israelites, but even we Christians sell out to the world system, right? Let’s be honest! What does the majority of the American Church do? We spend all our time, treasure, talents, and tongues lusting after the glamour and glitz of this world, right? Of course, people! Why, it’s the American dream!
And people the point is this. From God’s perspective, do you have any idea how horrible this behavior must be? Well, in case you can’t, let’s take a look at what happened to one person who prostituted themselves before this world system.

“All he ever really wanted in life was more. He wanted more money, so he turned some inherited wealth into a billion-dollar pile of assets. He wanted more fame, so he broke into the Hollywood scene and soon became a filmmaker and a star.

He wanted more sensual pleasures, so he paid handsome sums to indulge his every sexual urge. He wanted more thrills, so he designed, built, and piloted the fastest aircraft in the world.

He wanted more power, so he dealt political favors so skillfully that two U.S. presidents became his pawns. All he ever wanted was more. He was absolutely convinced that more of this world system would bring him true satisfaction. Unfortunately, history shows otherwise.

This same man ended his life emaciated and colorless. His chest was sunken in and his fingernails were grotesque inches-long corkscrews. His body was rotting full of tumors, his teeth were black and his arms were full of needle marks from his drug addiction.

He died a billionaire junkie, insane by all reasonable standards. His name of course, was Howard Hughes. A man who died believing the myth of more.”

People of God, I don’t know about you, but I don’t want to end up like Howard Hughes, you know what I mean? But I have a question to ask. If we don’t want to end up like Howard Hughes, then why are so many Christians still living for this world system? Why are so many giving all their time, treasure, talents and tongue to everything else in this world but God? Do we really think He doesn’t see this?

People, the facts are, whether you realize it or not, when we sell out to this world system again and again even after we’ve been saved, we are in essence choosing an emaciated colorless life over God. We’re choosing
insanity over Christianity! Can you believe that? And people, let’s put it in context. How would you feel if somebody did that to you? Let’s be honest people! If somebody treated us like that, what would we do? We’d nuke ‘em on the spot, right?

But people, here’s the good news. God isn’t like you and I! He’s Patient! And out of patience He not only forgives us of our sin but He puts up with our sin again and again and again! Every single day! And to think the whole time, He doesn’t have to! Especially after all He’s done. Now that’s what I call love, how about you?

And people, that’s why if we can’t seem to appreciate that out of patience God not only saves us from our sins but He continually puts up with our sins even after being saved then something is terribly wrong with us! Why? Because if we ever got a taste of the depths of God’s Love and His patience towards us, our lives can never be the same.

And people this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people really can have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe before it’s too late!” But people, I’m telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we’ve got to stop acting like practical atheists. We’ve got to start demonstrating by our lips as well as our lives that God is Love!
Chapter Thirty-Three

God’s Love is Faithful

Well, in light of the constant need for romance in a marriage to keep that “spark” going, I thought I’d start off this chapter with some simple advice on how to maintain a loving relationship. In fact, this advice is so simple that it actually comes from kids. Let’s take a look.

1. **What would you do on a first date that was turning sour?**
   (Craig, age 9) I’d run home and play dead. The next day I would call all the newspapers and make sure they wrote about me in all the dead columns.

2. **What is the proper age to get married?**
   (Tom, age 10) Once I’m done with kindergarten, I’m going to find me a wife.

3. **How do you decide whom to marry?**
   (Alan, age 10) You got to find somebody who likes the same stuff. Like, if you like sports, she should like it that you like sports, and she should keep the chips and dip coming.

4. **How can a stranger tell if two people are married?**
   (Derrick, age 8) You might have to guess, based on whether they seem to be yelling at the same kids.
5. **When is it okay to kiss someone?**  
(Jim, age 10) You should never kiss a girl unless you have enough bucks to buy her a big ring and her own VCR, cause she’ll want to have videos of the wedding.

6. **Why does love happen between two particular people?**  
(Jan, age 9) No one is sure why it happens, but I heard it has something to do with how you smell. That’s why perfume and deodorant are so popular.

7. **Why do lovers often hold hands?**  
(Dave, age 8) They want to make sure their rings don’t fall off because they paid good money for them.

8. **What are most people thinking when they say I love you?**  
(Michelle, age 9) The person is thinking, “Yah I really do love him, but I hope he showers at least once a day.”

9. **How do you make love endure?**  
(Randy, age 8) Be a good kisser. It might make your wife forget that you never take out the trash.

10. **How would you make a marriage work?**  
(Ricky, age 10) Tell your wife that she looks pretty even if she looks like a truck.¹

Yes, there’s all kinds of simple advice out there for maintaining a loving relationship, isn’t there? But folks, did you know there’s also some equally simple advice for maintaining a loving relationship with God? Yup, there really is and it goes like this. Stop acting like a practical atheist!

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our lips and by our lives, we act like He’s not there. And this not only keeps us from growing in our own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christians living like practical atheists by not knowing Who
God Is, we’re going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, “Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?”

We’ve already seen that the very **first thing** we need to know about God is that **God Is Real**. The **second thing** we need to know is that **God Is Personal**. The **third thing** we need to know is that **God Is Wise**. The **fourth thing** we need to know is that **God Is Powerful**. The **fifth thing** we need to know is that **God is Holy**. And in the last five chapters we saw that the **sixth thing** we need to know about God is that **God Is Love**. And there we saw how the Bible reveals that God Is Love by God **Giving us Mercy, Compassion, Kindness, Graciousness**, and in the last chapter by **Giving Us Patience**. And there we saw that **out of patience** God not only puts up with our sins until we get saved, but He puts up with our sins **even after were saved**! And I’d say that’s an awesome kind of love!

But folks, believe it or not, did you know that’s not the only way the Bible reveals that **God Is Love**? The **sixth way** the Bible reveals that **God Is Love** is that **God Gives Us Faithfulness**. But hey, don’t take my word for it. Let’s listen to God’s.

1 John 1:5-10 “This is the message we have heard from Him and declare to you: God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with Him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.” (NIV)

Now folks, once again, according to our text, we’ve got some good news and we’ve got some **bad news**. And the bad news is if you say you’re a Christian and keep walking in sin like it’s no big deal, what did the text say? It says **you’re**
a liar and you might very well be a phony baloney believer, right? But not only that, it also said if you go to the other extreme and say that you have no sin, then what? You’re not only a liar, but you’re calling God a liar! And I don’t know about you but I’d say that’s probably not a good thing to do. But praise God there’s some good news as well. What did the text say? If we would just confess our sins, God is what? He’s faithful. And faithful to do what? Beat us over the head with a two-by-four or smack us around? No! He’s faithful to forgive us of our sins, right? Is that incredible or what?

But folks, once again that’s only half of the story. What you’ve got to understand is that God not only provides for our spiritual needs, in forgiving us of our sins. Get this. He also provides for our practical needs in spite of our sins. Have you ever stopped to think about that? Now I’d say that’s being pretty loving and pretty faithful, how about you?

Therefore, in order to better appreciate the love of God, I think we’d better take a closer look at the faithfulness of God, how about you? And folks, it’s pretty simple. The first way the Bible reveals the faithfulness of God is that He Keeps Handing Out His Provision.

Matthew 6:25,26,28,30 “So I tell you, don’t worry about everyday life – whether you have enough food, drink, and clothes. Look at the birds. They don’t need to plant or harvest or put food in barns because your heavenly Father feeds them. And why worry about your clothes? Look at the lilies and how they grow. They don’t work or make their clothing. And if God cares so wonderfully for flowers that are here today and gone tomorrow, won’t he more surely care for you? You have so little faith!” (NLT)

Now folks, according to our text, it’s pretty clear. When it comes to the issue of daily provision, Jesus not only promised to provide it for us, but He also said don’t you dare worry about it, right? Isn’t that incredible? What did the
text say? If we just have faith in God’s faithfulness then we can just say goodbye to worry once and for all. What a promise, huh? I mean, that’s incredible.

But folks, we’ve got a problem. You see, you’d think that since we naturally trust in God for our eternal salvation, that trusting Him for our daily provision would be a piece of cake, right? But what do we see? Even though God’s told us not to worry about our provisions, what do we do? We keep on worrying even more! Can you believe that? And if that wasn’t bad enough, then we have the audacity to start whining! We whine because we don’t have a new car. We whine because we don’t have a new house. We whine because we don’t have a new job. And on and on it goes! And it’s not just a slap in the face to God, it’s absolutely ludicrous! Why? Because God has provided for us! So much so, that we are filthy rich in comparison to the rest of the world. And for those of you who may not believe me, let’s take a test. Let’s see just how rich we really are.

1. Take out all the furniture in your home except for one table and a couple of chairs. Use blanket and pads for beds.
2. Take away all of your clothing except for your oldest dress or suit, shirt or blouse. Leave only one pair of shoes.
3. Empty the pantry and the refrigerator except for a small bag of flour, some sugar and salt, a few potatoes, some onions, and a dish of dried beans.
4. Dismantle the bathroom, shut off the running water, and remove all the electrical wiring in your house.
5. Take away the house itself and move the family into the tool shed.
6. Place your “house” in a shantytown.
7. Cancel all subscriptions to newspapers, magazines, and book clubs. This is no great loss because now none of you can read anyway.
8. Leave only one radio for the whole shantytown.

9. Move the nearest hospital or clinic ten miles away and put a midwife in charge instead of a doctor.

10. Throw away your bankbooks, stock certificates, pension plans, and insurance policies. Leave the family a cash hoard of ten dollars.

11. Give the head of the family a few acres to cultivate on which he can raise a few hundred dollars of cash crops, of which one third will go to the landlord and one-tenth to the money lenders.

12. Lop off twenty-five or more years in life expectancy.

13. And if you can do all this, you will see how daily life is for one billion people in the world.²

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say God’s doing a pretty good job of providing for us, you know what I’m saying? I mean, the fact that we have ever even considered going on a diet should tell us something, right? People, the facts are we’ve all got a place to sleep, clothes on our back, and food in our bellies. And yeah, it might get lean sometimes, but I’m assuming you’re not naked or starving as you read this, are you? Therefore, where do we get off worrying, whining, and complaining about our lives to God? Who do we think we are?

And from God’s perspective do you have any idea how horrible this is? I mean, let’s put it in context. How would you feel if you busted your back to take care of your family and nothing you ever did was good enough? How would you like it if you worked your fingers to the bone and all people ever did was whine and complain about everything? Let’s be honest people! If somebody treated us like that, what would we do? We’d tell them to, “Get away from me
you ungrateful wretch! Get out here and provide for yourself if you don’t like it,” right? Then people, how much more should God say that to you and I?

But people, here’s the good news. God isn’t like you and I! **He’s Faithful!** And **out of faithfulness** He not only **forgives our sins** but He **keeps on handing out His provision** in spite of our sins! Can you believe that? **Now that’s what I call love,** how about you?

Oh, but that’s not all. The **second way** the Bible reveals the **Faithfulness of God** is that **He Keeps Handing Out His Protection.**

**1 Corinthians 10:13** “But remember that the temptations that come into your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can’t stand up against it. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you will not give in to it.” (NLT)

Now folks, according to our text, it’s pretty clear. When it comes to the issue of **daily protection** from temptation, God’s promised to **provide a way out for us,** every single time, right? But that’s right, we’ve got a problem. You see, you’d think someone who’s freely been saved from eternal destruction in hell would **naturally take God up on His offer to not give into temptation,** right? But what do we see? Even though we know God’s provided a way out to every single temptation, what do we do? We **keep giving into temptation** even more! Can you believe that? I mean, from God’s perspective, do you have any idea how horrible that is? Well, just in case you can’t, maybe this story will help you out.

“Several years ago one evening a woman was driving home when she noticed a huge truck behind her that was driving uncomfortably close. So she stepped on the gas to gain some distance from the truck, but when she sped up, the truck did too.

In fact, the faster she drove, the faster the truck did too. So now the lady starts getting scared so she exited the freeway. But the truck stayed with her. Then the woman then turned up a main street, hoping to lose her pursuer in traffic.
But the truck ran a red light and continued the chase. So now she’s reaching the point of panic, so the woman whipped her car into a service station and bolted out of her car screaming for help.

And as she did this the driver of the truck sprang from his truck and ran toward her car. When he got there he yanked the back door open and pulled out a man hidden in her back seat.

As it turned out, the woman was running from the wrong person. From his high vantage point, the truck driver had spotted a would-be rapist in the woman’s car. And thus his chase wasn’t to harm her but to save her even at the cost of his own safety.”

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I bet when all was said and done, that lady was just a little bit glad that man chased her down, right? But now let’s change the story a little bit. Now imagine that lady knew the rapist was in the back seat the whole time. But not only that, imagine she wanted the rapist there in her back seat. But not only that, imagine she refused to be rescued from the rapist. But not only that, imagine she did this day after day after day after day? I mean, let’s be honest. If she did that we’d call her a “little crazy,” right? Then people how much more crazy is it when we do that to God? How? By giving into temptation again and again when we don’t have to! People the fact is, God has rescued us! He’s provided a way out! Yet, what do we do? We keep running into danger on purpose! Can you believe that?

And from God’s perspective, can you imagine how horrible that is? I mean, let’s put it into its context. What if you went out of your way to rescue somebody day after day after day from certain danger and they kept refusing your help? What would you do? I mean, at some point wouldn’t you say something like, “Well, fine! Have it your way! If you don’t want my help, so be it. Get out of my face man! All I was doing was trying to help you out!” Right,
isn’t that what we would say? Then people, how much more should God say that to you and I? But people, here’s the good news. God isn’t like you and I! **He’s Faithful!** And out of faithfulness He not only **forgives our sins** but He **keeps on handing out His protection** in spite of our sins! Can you believe that? **Now that’s what I call love,** how about you?

Oh, but that’s not all. The **third way** the Bible reveals the **Faithfulness of God** is that **He Keeps Hearing Our Prayers.**

**Romans 12:11-12** “Never be lazy in your work, but serve the Lord enthusiastically. Be glad for all God is planning for you. Be patient in trouble, and always be prayerful.” (NLT)

Now folks, according to our text, it’s pretty clear. When it comes to the issue of **daily prayers,** the Bible not only says it’s something good to do, but it something that we should **always do,** right? What did the text say? It didn’t say always think about prayer. It didn’t say always read books on prayer. What did it say? It said to always be full of prayer, right? **Why?** Because stop and think about it. God didn’t go through all this trouble of sending His One and Only Son to die a gruesome death on the cross and receive the punishment for all our sins just to have a **one-sided relationship.** Are you kidding! People, the Bible says Jesus endured the pain of the cross for the joy set before Him. And in case you don’t know, that joy was the reality of having a **two-sided** relationship with you and I.

And the point is this. You would think that someone who has freely been saved from eternal destruction in hell would **naturally want to talk to God in prayer,** right? But what do we see? Even though we know God wants us to talk to Him just like any other healthy relationship, what do we do? We **talk to Him less than anyone else!** Can you believe that? Well, in case you can’t, I was able
to find some proof. Let’s take a look at what the average person does with their time if they live to the age of seventy-five.⁴

**If we live 75 years, this is how we would spend it…**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage of your time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23 years sleeping</td>
<td>31%</td>
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<tr>
<td>19 years working</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 years watching TV or other amusements</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.5 years in dressing and personal care</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 years eating</td>
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<td>6 years traveling</td>
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<td>.5 year worshipping and praying</td>
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Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say God’s getting the short end of the short end of the stick here, you know what I mean. And the point is this. From God’s perspective, do you have any idea how horrible this is? Well, just in case you don’t, let’s put it into its context. That’s right its time for Weiner dog lesson #45.

One day I was doing some work in my bedroom on the computer and I closed the door so I could get some privacy. And I no sooner got started when I heard some scratching at the door. And I realized it was one of my wiener dogs wanting me to open the door so she could simply hang out with me. But I didn’t want to get up and open the door and I figured she’d stop shortly anyway. But obviously I was wrong. She kept scratching and scratching and scratching until after about five minutes of non-stop scratching I gave in got up and let her in. And sure enough, she jumped up by my side, just content to lay right next to me. And as I continued to work, the thought went through my mind. “Is that our attitude in spending time with God? Are we that persistent? Do we long to be
with God much that we scratch and scratch until the door opens? And then it dawned on me. We don’t even show the same level of affection to God as a wiener dog does to man. No! Instead, what do we do? We make excuses like, “I don’t know how to pray,” or “I don’t have time to pray,” or “I’ll pray to God tomorrow,” and on and on it goes.

And people, from God’s perspective, do you have any idea how horrible this is? I mean, let’s put it in context. Imagine if you saved somebody from certain death at the expense of your only child, and then the person you saved refused to talk to you. But not only that, every time you tried to spur on a conversation with them they shrugged you off with excuses like, “I don’t know how to talk to you,” or “I don’t have time to talk to you,” or “I’ll talk to you tomorrow.” People, let’s be honest. If somebody treated us like that, what would we do? We’d tell them to, “Get away from me you ungrateful wretch! I just wasted the life of my child on you. I wouldn’t speak to you if you were the last person on earth,” right? Then people, how much more should God say that to you and I?

But people, here’s the good news. God isn’t like you and I! He’s Faithful! And out of faithfulness He not only forgives our sins but He keeps on hearing our prayers in spite of our sins! Can you believe that?

And people that’s why if we can’t seem to appreciate that out of faithfulness God not only saves us from our sins but He keeps on providing, protecting, and hearing our prayers in spite of our sins, then something is terribly wrong with us! Why? Because if we ever got a taste of the depths of God’s Love and His faithfulness towards us, our lives can never be the same.

And people this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people really can have an intimate
personal relationship with the Creator of the universe before it’s too late!” But people, I’m telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we’ve got to stop acting like practical atheists. We’ve got to start demonstrating by our lips as well as our lives that God is Love!
Chapter Thirty-Four

God’s Love is Good

Now maybe it’s me or maybe it’s the chicken I was forced to eat one time, but has anybody noticed how the older you get in life the more things just don’t make sense? Have you noticed that? Well, that’s right, for those of you who didn’t raise your hands I’m here to help you out. I’ve been keeping a list of some things in life that I’ve encountered that just don’t make sense.

1. Why do you get a pizza to your house faster than an ambulance?

2. Why do drugstores make the sick walk all the way to the back of the store to get their prescriptions while healthy people can buy cigarettes at the front?

3. Why do banks leave both doors open and then chain the pens to the counters?

4. Why do we use answering machines to screen calls and then have call waiting so we won’t miss a call from someone we didn’t want to talk to in the first place?

5. Why do we buy hot dogs in packages of ten and buns in packages of eight?
6. Why is it that when you blow in a dog’s face he gets mad at you, but when you take him in a car he sticks his head out the window?

7. Why is it that anyone driving slower than you is an idiot, but anyone going faster is a maniac?

8. Why is it that they show you how detergents take out bloodstains? If you’ve got a T-shirt with bloodstains all over it, then maybe your laundry isn’t your biggest problem.

9. Why is it when you ask people why they have deer heads on their walls they tell you it’s because they’re such beautiful animals. I think my wife is beautiful, but I only have photographs of her on the wall.

Yes, there are many things in life out there that just don’t make sense, aren’t there? But folks, believe it or not, as strange as those things might be, I’ve encountered one other thing that’s got to be the strangest of all. And can anyone guess what that might be? Hey, that’s right! It’s when Christians act like practical atheists! It doesn’t make sense!

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our lips and by our lives, we act like He’s not there. And this not only keeps us from growing in our own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christians living like practical atheists by not knowing Who God Is, we’re going to conclude our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, “Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?”

We’ve already seen that the very first thing we need to know about God is that God Is Real. The second thing we need to know is that God Is Personal. The third thing we need to know is that God Is Wise. The fourth thing we need to know is that God Is Powerful. The fifth thing we need to know is that God Is Holy. And in the last six chapters we saw that the sixth thing we need to know about God is that God Is Love. And there we saw how the Bible reveals that God
Is Love by God giving us mercy, compassion, kindness, graciousness, patience, and in the last chapter by giving us faithfulness. And there we saw that out of faithfulness God not only saves us from our sins but He keeps on providing, protecting, and hearing our prayers in spite of our sins! Isn’t that incredible?

But folks, believe it or not, did you know that’s not the only way the Bible reveals that God is love? The seventh way the Bible reveals that God is love is that God gives us goodness. But hey, don’t take my word for it. Let’s listen to God’s.

Psalm 69:13-18 “But I pray to you, O LORD, in the time of your favor; in your great love, O God, answer me with your sure salvation. Rescue me from the mire, do not let me sink; deliver me from those who hate me, from the deep waters. Do not let the floodwaters engulf me or the depths swallow me up or the pit close its mouth over me.

Answer me, O LORD, out of the goodness of your love; in your great mercy turn to me. Do not hide your face from your servant; answer me quickly, for I am in trouble. Come near and rescue me; redeem me because of my foes.” (NIV)

Now folks, according to our text, it’s pretty obvious. When you and I are in times of trouble and we call out to God, what is the Psalmist confident that God will do? He will not only hear us, but what? He’ll come near and rescue us, right? And why is the Psalmist so confident that God will do this? Is it because we’re so wonderful and we’re so faithful to obey God? Is it because we just have rotten things happening to us for no reason at all? Are you kidding! Half the problems in our life are caused by who? They’re caused by ourselves!

Therefore, the Psalmist pleads for help not on the basis of our behavior but on the basis of God’s behavior or in other words, out of the goodness of His love. And isn’t it a great thing to know that God will help us in spite of ourselves? You ain’t a joking!
Therefore, in order to better appreciate the love of God, I think we’d better take a closer look at the goodness of God, how about you? And folks, it’s pretty simple. The first way the Bible reveals the Goodness of God is that He Keeps On Using Us.

2 Corinthians 4:5,7 “We don’t go around preaching about ourselves; we preach Christ Jesus, the Lord. All we say about ourselves is that we are your servants because of what Jesus has done for us. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.” (NLT/NIV)

Now folks, according to our text, it’s pretty clear. When it comes to the issue of being used by God, the power to live for God comes from whom? It comes from God, right? What did the text say? It says He stores His powerful treasure in jars of clay, or in other words, crackpots! And the reason why I say crackpots is because even though we’re empowered by God to live for God, what do we do? We still sin don’t we? Therefore, our pots are cracked! People, face it! You and I as Christians are nothing but a bunch of crackpots! Next time you’re in a Church service, turn to your neighbor and say, “Hey man, you’re a crackpot!” See if they appreciate this truth as much as you.

And the point is this. Talk about the goodness of God. Instead of chucking us out in the back forty to rot and waste away, what’s God do? He still uses our sinful crackpot lives for His glory. Isn’t that amazing? But it’s not only amazing, it’s been His plan from the beginning. And to show you what I mean, let’s take a look at the kind of people God used in the past.

1. Moses stuttered.
2. David’s armor didn’t fit.
3. John Mark was rejected by Paul.
4. Hosea’s wife was a prostitute.
5. Amos’ only training was in fig-tree pruning.
6. Jacob was a liar.
7. David had an affair.
8. Timothy had ulcers.
9. Peter was afraid of death.
10. Lazarus was dead.
11. John was self-righteous.
12. Naomi was a widow.
13. Paul was a murderer. So was Moses.
14. Jonah ran from God.
15. Miriam was a gossip.
16. Gideon and Thomas both doubted.
17. Jeremiah was depressed and suicidal.
18. Elijah was burned out.
19. John the Baptist was a loudmouth.
20. Martha was a worrywart.
21. Mary was lazy.
22. Samson had long hair.
23. Noah got drunk.

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say that those people were just as big of crackpots as you and I are today? And people, the point is this. It’s obvious that God doesn’t use us because of our behavior, but in spite of our behavior, right? And isn’t that good news? Well, it should be, but that’s right, we’ve got a problem.

You see, even though we know we’re never going to be perfect, even as Christians, for some reason we still think God’s only going to use us if we live perfect lives. And so when we do blow it, and we will, we get tricked into thinking that God can’t use us anymore! We’ve committed the unpardonable sin. We might as well stop serving God and go crawl in a hole and die! But people stop and think about it. If God were to wait for us to become perfect before He uses us, then what would happen? He’d still be waiting, right? And please don’t misunderstand me. I am not saying we shouldn’t be concerned about being obedient to God and try to refrain from life of sin. Hello! The Bible says if we want to continue in sin then you might want to make sure you really got saved in
the first place. **But people, the point still remains.** If the standard of behavior for God to use anyone was perfection, He never would’ve used David because he had an affair. He never would’ve used Noah because he got drunk, and He never would have used Moses or Paul because they were murderers!

And this is what’s so amazing about the **goodness** of God. Every single one of us as Christians is going to blow it. But what does God do? Does He reject us? Does He refuse to use us ever again for His glory? Does He cast us away saying, “Get out of here! I never want to see your face again you worthless piece of trash! I’m sick of your disobedience.” Is that what He does? No people! He’s not like you and I. God is **Good**! And **out of goodness** He not only saves us from our sins but He keeps on using us spite of our sins! Can you believe that? **Now that’s what I call love,** how about you?

Oh, but that’s not all. The **second way** the Bible reveals the **Goodness of God** is that He Keeps On Blessing Us.

**Romans 8:28** “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” (NIV)

Now folks, according to our text, it’s pretty clear. When it comes to the issue of **being blessed by God** or working all things together for good, **who does God do it for?** He does it for those who love Him. For His children, right? But notice what the text did not say. It didn’t say He’d work out some things in your life for good. It didn’t say He’d work out most things for good. What did it say? It said He’d work out all things for good! But that’s still not all. Neither did the text say God would only work out all things for good who lived perfect lives, did it? No! Therefore, that means God doesn’t bless us because of our behavior, but in spite of our behavior, right? And isn’t that good news? Well, it should be, but that’s right, we’ve got a problem.
You see, even though God demonstrates this truth again and again in our lives, we still don’t believe Him! And because of this we needlessly get all worked up in fear and worry when the whole time we don’t have to! Why? Because there’s ample evidence of the goodness of God all around us.

For instance, in my own life. Remember the story of when Brandie and I were $4,000 in the hole overnight? We had no idea what we were going to do. But when all was said and done it all worked together for good because God put it on the heart of a non-Christian to give us a gift of $5,000, which meant we just made $1,000 bucks. Now granted, that was a rough way to make a $1,000 bucks but hey, I’m glad it worked out the way it did.

Or remember when I got ditched by co-workers in Chicago and had to make a mad dash to the airport? But when all was said and done it all worked together for good because I ended up changing seats and sitting next to Dr. Desmond Ford who proceeded for the next couple of hours to convince me to go back to school and do my graduate studies. Soon after that I resigned from a current Pastorate and took a sabbatical to go to Seminary, which led me to take on another Pastorate where unbeknownst to me God birthed a media ministry. That led to a full-time global teaching ministry, which led to getting a phone call one day from a lady named Mary Bugay saying their Church wanted to talk to me. Maybe you’ve heard of it. It’s called Niagara Frontier Bible Church. This led me to take that position where now the Gospel is going out to 100’s of countries worldwide! I don’t know about you, but personally I’m glad that those people ditched me in Chicago, you know what I’m saying?

Gee whiz folks, I’d say God really is working all things together for good, how about you? And people, the problem is not in the goodness of God, it’s our lack of trust in the goodness of God. And therefore, we don’t need to get
all worked up in fear and worry, no matter how bad the circumstances might be, like the people of Wedgwood Baptist Church learned. How many of you remembered a few years back about the tragedy at Wedgwood Baptist Church? You know, where that gunman entered the sanctuary and killed seven people and injured seven others before killing himself? Well, could God really work **even that** horrible instance together for good? Well, let’s find out. Let’s take a look at the rest of the story.

1. Before the shooting, the Pastor prayed that God would do whatever it took to expand the ministry of Wedgwood Baptist Church.

2. To enter the Church sanctuary, the gunman walked past the children’s playground, which should have been full of kids, but for some reason every single children’s and preschool class was running late so no one had made it to the playground yet.

3. The gunman fired over 100 bullets into a crowd of over 400, but only 14 people were hit and he did not shoot the over 60 bullets he still had with him.

4. The bottom fell off of the pipe bomb he threw, and the bomb landed without ever exploding.

5. One of the youth that was wounded (she was shielding a disabled friend with her body) had scoliosis. Therefore the curve in her spine directed the bullet away from major organs, saving her from serious injury.

6. One of the people in the sanctuary at the time was a paramedic, and he was able to stop bleeding and stabilize injured people before the emergency crews arrived.

7. None of the adults who died had children.

8. All 7 victims were not just Christians, but bold Christians who were passionate about their faith.
9. Many members at Wedgwood Baptist are healing broken relationships within the body and experiencing spiritual renewal.

10. The Pastor presented the gospel beautifully on Larry King Live when prompted by a question asked by Vice President Al Gore.

11. CNN broadcasted the memorial service live. Amazingly, because one of the victim’s families lives and works in Saudi Arabia, that country allowed the service to be broadcast there as well. In Saudi Arabia it is illegal to say the name of Jesus on the street. Because of that same CNN broadcast, 35 people in Japan gave their lives to Christ.

12. At several schools, students met around their flagpoles the next day. At one school 25 students accepted Christ, and 110 at another. A teacher led 22 students to Christ in her classroom.

13. They immediately received over 70,000 hits on their web page, which displays the plan of salvation in multiple languages.

14. Because of the live news coverage and interviews, over 200 million people have heard the gospel because of this tragedy.

15. Every time the gunman fired a bullet, he intended to take a life. But God turned that around and saved several lives for each bullet fired. The faith of those who died has been multiplied many times over.³

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say God really can work all things together for good, you know what I’m saying? And the point is this. Remember the context in which God does this. Most of these problems that God keeps turning around for good are caused by who? They’re not caused by a gunmen bent on destruction. They’re caused by our own destruction. Our own sinful behavior! Therefore, what does God do? Does He reject us? Does He refuse to ever bless us again? Does He cast us a way saying, “I’m so sick and tired of fixing all your problems that you keep creating yourself. Get out of here!” Is that what he does? No people! He’s not like you and I. God is Good!
And out of goodness He not only saves us from our sins but He keeps on blessing us in spite of our sins! Can you believe that? Now that’s what I call love, how about you?

Oh, but that’s not all. The third way the Bible reveals the Goodness of God is that He Keeps On Loving Us.

Hebrews 13:5 “Because God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; Never will I forsake you.” (NIV)

Now folks, according to our text, it’s pretty clear. When it comes to the issue of being loved by God, what did the text say? Did it say God would stay with you as long as you remain that perfect person? Did it say He’s going to leave and forsake you the very first time you blow it? No! What did it say? It said He’d never leave you nor forsake you, right? In fact, in the original Greek, it’s much more emphatic. Let’s look at it.

Hebrews 13:5 “For He himself has said, and the statement is on record, I will not, I will not cease to sustain and uphold you. I will not, I will not, I will not let you down.” (WUEST)

And folks, basically this passage is kind of like God’s way of saying, “Listen up! If you belong to me, you’ve got to get this through your heads. You belong to Me forever! I’m not going to leave you! And what makes this so amazing is the context in which God makes this promise.

Keep in mind, this is the same God who has shown us mercy by giving us a Palace in Heaven instead of a Pit in Hell, a Body of Perfection instead of a Body of Pain and a Heavenly Greeting instead of a Hellish Goodbye. And then if that wasn’t enough He shows us compassion by dying for those who wanted Him dead and continually forgiving our continual sins. And then if that wasn’t enough He shows us kindness by accepting sinners just as we are, He turns us into saints and then He turns us into sons. And then if that wasn’t enough He
shows us **graciousness** by giving us the grace to **obey**, **serve**, and **love Him even after were saved**! And then if that wasn’t enough He shows us **patience** by not only putting up with our sins until we get saved, but He puts up with our sins **even after were saved**! And then if that wasn’t enough He shows us **faithfulness** by **providing**, **protecting**, and **hearing our prayers** in spite of our sins!

And the point is this. Even after all this love God’s given to us, what do we do? We still sin against Him don’t we? Therefore what’s He do? Does He reject us? Does He refuse to love us ever again? Does He cast us away saying, “I have had it up to here with you! After all I’ve done for you, you still keep sticking the knife in my back! Get out of here you wretch!” Is that what He does? No people! He’s not like you and I. God is **Good**! And **out of goodness** He not only **saves us from our sins** but He **keeps on loving us** spite of our sins! Can you believe that?

And people that’s why if we can’t seem to appreciate that **out of goodness** God not only saves us from our sins but He **keeps on using us**, **blessing us**, and **loving us** in spite of our sins, then **something is terribly wrong with us! Why**? Because if we ever got a taste of the depths of God’s Love and His goodness towards us, our lives **can never be the same**.

And this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people **really can** have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe **before it’s too late**!” But people, I’m telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we’ve got to stop acting like practical atheists. We’ve got to start demonstrating by our **lips** as well as our **lives** that **God is Love**!
“One day this guy named Joe shows up late for work late. And it was already his third time that week. So his boss asked him sarcastically, ‘Okay Joe, what's the story today? It better be a good excuse this time.’

So Joe sighs and says, ‘Oh, it is boss. I’m telling you, everything went wrong today. You see, my wife decided at the last minute that she wanted the car so she got ready in ten minutes in order to drive me to the station.

But on the way to the station, the drawbridge went up and then got stuck. So I didn’t want to let you down so I jumped in and swam across the river…see, my suit is still damp.

Well, I got to shore and I managed to catch a cab out to the airport where I was able to charter a helicopter from Donald Trump. But the only place it could land was on top of Radio City Music Hall.

And after I told my story of being late for work, a couple of the Rockettes felt sorry for me, so they carried me the rest of the way to work on piggyback.’

And at this Joe’s boss frowns and says, “Come on Joe! You really expect me to believe that? You and I both know there’s not a woman on the planet that can get ready 10 minutes!”}
Now how many of you’d say Joe’s excuse there was just a little bit out there, you know what I’m saying? I mean come on, if you’re going to come up with one, at least make it halfway believable, right? But folks, did you know Joe’s not the only one coming up with some lame excuses for their behavior? That’s right! Believe it or not, so are many Christians. Why? Because they’re going around saying they’re the people of God but in reality they’re living like...practical atheists! Now that’s unbelievable!

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our lips and by our lives, we act like He’s not there. And this not only keeps us from growing in our own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christian’s living like a practical atheists by not knowing Who God Is, we’re going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, “Will the REAL God Please Stand Up?”

We’ve already seen that the very first thing we need to know about God is that God Is Real. The second thing we need to know is that God Is Personal. The third thing we need to know is that God Is Wise. The fourth thing we need to know is that God Is Powerful. The fifth thing we need to know is that God is Holy. And in the last seven chapters we saw that the sixth thing we need to know about God is that God Is Love. And there we saw the Bible reveals that God Is Love by God Giving us Mercy, Compassion, Kindness, Graciousness, Patience, Faithfulness and in the last chapter by Giving Us Goodness. And there we saw that out of goodness God not only saves us from our sins but He keeps on using us, blessing us, and loving us in spite of our sins! Isn’t that incredible?

But folks, believe it or not, did you know that’s not the only way the Bible reveals that God Is Love? The eighth way the Bible reveals that God Is
Love is that God Gives Us Eternal Love. But hey, don’t take my word for it. Let’s listen to God’s.

Psalm 136:1-9 “Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good. His love endures forever. Give thanks to the God of gods. His love endures forever. Give thanks to the Lord of lords. His love endures forever. To him who alone does great wonders, His love endures forever. Who by His understanding made the heavens, His love endures forever. Who spread out the earth upon the waters, His love endures forever. Who made the great lights – His love endures forever. The sun to govern the day, His love endures forever. The moon and stars to govern the night; His love endures forever.” (NIV)

Now folks, I know this might be a hard question, especially in light of our text, but when it comes to the issue of God’s love, how long does it last? His love endures forever, right? And folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say especially in light of our imperfect behavior, that’s some really good news, don’t you think? Well, it should be, but that’s right, we’ve got a problem. You see, there’s actually folks out there who think God’s love doesn’t endure forever. And believe it or not, they would tell us we can start out being a child of God but somehow end up being a child of the devil again! Can you believe that? Therefore, the question is, “Why in the world would people say God’s love isn’t eternal especially when the Bible clearly says it is?” Well hey, great question. I’m glad you asked. It’s pretty simple folks.

The first reason why some people say God’s love is not eternal is because They’ve Forgotten about the Context. You see, it’s bad enough this belief that God’s love isn’t eternal contradicts the Bible, but get this. These same people will turn around and say they derive their belief from the Bible. Can you believe that? And what they don’t realize is that although certain passages may seem to say our salvation isn’t secure, they’ve simply forgotten the context in which they occur. Let me show you what I mean.
The first passage taken out of context is Revelation 3.

Revelation 3:15-16 “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm – neither hot nor cold – I am about to spit you out of my mouth.” (NIV)

Uh, oh! Here we have it, folks. A Christian can be spit out of the mouth of God. They could lose their salvation, right? Wrong! On the surface it may seem to say that, but let’s look at the context. First of all, if you look at the context, when John writes these letters to the 7 Churches, he draws a distinction between 2 groups of people. Christian and non-Christian. Hey, do non-Christians ever go to Church services? And John draws this distinction by using terms like “you” and “they.” And the reason we know these people were non-Christians is because Jesus said you will know a false teacher by their fruit. And how much fruit did these people have? None! They were neither cold nor hot. They were making Jesus want to puke because they were posing to be Christians when in reality they were imposters! Hey, do people do that today? Uh huh. Therefore, this passage isn’t talking about a Christians losing their salvation. It’s talking about people who never had salvation in the first place! Read the context!

Oh but that’s not all. The second passage taken out of context is Hebrews 6 & 10.

Hebrews 6:4-6 “It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance.” (NIV)

Hebrews 10:26-27 “If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.” (NIV)
Uh, oh! Here we have it, folks. A Christian can **fall away** and lose their salvation, right? **Wrong**! On the surface it may seem to say that, but let’s look at the **context**. First of all, **according to the context**, we know these people aren’t **Christians either** because they only “shared in” or literally in the Greek, “partnered with” the Holy Spirit. And people, the Bible is clear. A true Christian isn’t just an **external partner** with the Holy Spirit, they are an **internal possessor** of the Spirit. And the point he’s trying to make here is that even though these people have been “enlightened” to “taste” the goodness of the gospel **externally**, they still weren’t going to **receive it internally**. The **context** of both passages are dealing with **apostates**. And they’ll never repent because even though they know it’s the truth, they still refuse to act on it! No amount of information is going to be good enough for them! Hey, do people do that today? And in case you still don’t see **two groups** of people here, saved and unsaved, the context clearly says over and over again “those who” “those who” “those who” speaking of the behavior of the apostate, **but then** clarifies at the end in verse 9, “Even though we speak like this dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case – things that accompany salvation.” **Not apostasy**! Therefore, these passages aren’t talking about a Christians losing their salvation. It’s talking about people who never had salvation in the first place! **Read the context!**

Oh, but that’s not all. The **third passage** taken out of context **1 Corinthians 9**.

**1 Corinthians 9:26-27** “Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.” (NIV)

Uh, oh! Here we have it, folks. A Christian can be **disqualified** and lose their salvation, right? **Wrong**! On the surface it may seem to say that, but let’s
look at the context. First of all, according to the context, nowhere in this passage does it even talk about salvation let alone mention it. It’s talking about prizes or rewards. And Paul’s beating his body into submission not out of fear he’s going to be disqualified for his salvation, but because he doesn’t want to be disqualified for his reward in heaven! He doesn’t want to waste his life on stupidity of this world instead of investing it for the glory of God. Hey, do people do that today? Therefore, this passage isn’t talking about a Christians losing out on heaven. It’s talking about Christians losing out on a reward in heaven! Read the context!

Oh but that’s not all. The fourth passage taken out of context is Galatians 5.

Galatians 5:3-4 “Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.” (NIV)

Uh, oh! Here we have it, folks. A Christian can fall away from grace and lose their salvation, right? Wrong! On the surface it may seem to say that, but let’s look at the context. According to the context, some of the Galatians believers were being enticed by false teachers to make a fatal error. And that error was to go back to the Old Testament system of rules and regulations as a means of living the Christian life. And Paul was desperately trying to get them to see that if they start obeying God out of legalism instead of love, it will cut you off from the grace of God. Or in other words, short-circuit their power to live for God. Hey, do people do that today? Therefore, this passage isn’t talking about a Christians losing their salvation from God. It’s talking about Christians losing their power to live for God! And people, the point is this. Based on the context of Scripture, I’d say there really is no reason to assume a person can be a child of God and somehow end up being a child of the devil again. Are you kidding?
People, the Bible is clear! God’s love for His children **endures forever**. And if you don’t think so, then maybe it’s a sign you’ve **forgotten the context**.

Oh but that’s not all. The **second reason** why some people say God’s love is not eternal is because **They’ve Forgotten about the Counterfeits**. You see, even though you can share the **proper context** with those who say God’s love’s not eternal, that doesn’t mean it ends there. Usually what happens is they cite some supposed occurrence of some supposed Christian but supposedly walked away from their supposed faith. And so somehow this is supposedly proof that God’s love is not eternal. And that may sound nice but what they don’t realize is that just because people **say they’re Christians**, guess what? That doesn’t mean they really are! In fact, they might be a **counterfeit** just like Judas of Iscariot. Remember him? In fact, the Bible says in **John 6** Jesus knew Judas was a phony believer all along. He wasn’t seeking God for God. He was only **seeking God for the money**. Hey, do people do that today? Slightly!

So what are some other **signs to indicate** a person’s a **counterfeit** like Judas seeking God for money, morals, or some other **false motive**? Great question. I’m glad you asked. It’s pretty simple. The **first sign** to indicate a person might be a counterfeit like Judas is when they **Seek God with Their Head**.

**James 2:14-17,19** “What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed, but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that – and shudder.” (NIV)

Now folks, according to our text, the Bible is clear. Not all faith is a **saving faith**, is it? Nope! What did the text say? If a person’s so-called faith is not accompanied with action, then it’s not only fake, its what? **It’s dead**, right?
And you can believe in a God in heaven all you want. But that doesn’t mean you’re going to exist with God in heaven. **Why?** Because even the demons believe in God but are they saved? I don’t think so! Therefore, if all you got is a **head knowledge** of God instead of a heart knowledge, it might be a sign you’re a **counterfeit**, just like Judas was!

Oh but that’s not all. The **second sign** to indicate a person might be a counterfeit like Judas is when they **Seek God with Their Lips**.

**Titus 1:15-16** “Everything is pure to those whose hearts are pure. But nothing is pure to those who are corrupt and unbelieving, because their minds and consciences are defiled. Such people claim they know God, but they deny him by the way they live. They are despicable and disobedient, worthless for doing anything good.” (NLT)

Now folks, according to our text, the Bible is clear. Not everyone who **claims to know God** really belongs to God, do they? No! What did the text say?

If all you do is give God lip service instead of **life service** then your so-called faith is not only **not worthwhile**, it’s what? It’s worthless! Therefore, you can **claim to be a Christian** all you want, but if you refuse to **live like one**, it might be a sign you’re a **counterfeit**, just like Judas was!

Oh but that’s not all. The **third sign** to indicate a person might be a counterfeit believer is when they **Seek God with Their Thoughts**.

**1 John 2:18-19** “Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.” (NIV)

And folks, it’s this passage that single handedly stops dead in the tracks the hypothetical scenario of those who say you can lose your salvation where they cite some supposed occurrence of some supposed Christian but supposedly
walked away from their supposed faith. And so somehow this is supposedly proof that God’s love is not eternal. But what did our text say? Not everyone who goes to a Church service really belongs to the Church, do they? No! Why? Because if you walk away from the truths in the Bible and start following a lie that contradicts the Bible, then it shows you probably weren’t even saved in the first place, right? People of God, the Bible is clear. If a person who professes to know Christ walks away from Christ, then they never really knew Christ. They didn’t lose their salvation. Are you kidding! They never had it in the first place. Why? Because a true Christian remains in the faith. The people who leave the faith show they never really belonged to the faith! Therefore, you can think you belong to the Savior all you want, but if your thoughts don’t line up with the Savior, it might be a sign you’re a counterfeit, just like Judas was!

Oh but that’s not all. The fourth sign to indicate a person might be a counterfeit like Judas if when they Seek God with Their Religion.

Matthew 7:21-23 “Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles? Then I will tell them plainly, I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!” (NIV)

Now folks, according to our text, the Bible is clear. Not everyone who says, Lord, Lord really belongs to the Lord, do they? No! What did the text say? If your faith is based on pious religious deeds instead of a personal relationship, then you not only don’t belong to Christ, but what? Christ never knew you in the first place! And notice He didn’t say, “I knew you once but you blew it so I don’t know you anymore.” What did he say? He said, “I never knew you!” Therefore, you can be as religious for Jesus all you want, but if you don’t have a relationship with Jesus, you’re a counterfeit, just like Judas was!
And people, the point is this. Based on the counterfeits in Scripture, I’d say there’s no reason to assume a person can be a child of God and somehow end up being a child of the devil again. Are you kidding? People, the Bible is clear! God’s love for His children endures forever. Therefore, the issue isn’t in losing your salvation but in making sure you got saved in the first place.

And people, the point is this. Knowing that God’s love is eternal should be one of the biggest comforts to our souls. Why? Because stop and think about it. If our salvation was ever based upon our performance, what would happen? Not only would none of us ever get saved but none of us could ever stay saved, right? Stop and think about it! If it were the other way around, it would be bad news, right? But people we’ve got the gospel, the good news and that is this. We’re not saved on the basis of our performance. Are you kidding? We’re saved by the performance of Jesus Christ. And therefore God not only save us from our sins, but He save us from our sins forever. Why? Because have you not read? God’s love endures how long? Forever! You’ve got it!

The third reason why some people say God’s love is not eternal is because They’ve Forgotten the Corruption of Man. But hey, don’t take my word for it. Let’s listen to God’s.

Romans 3:9-18 “What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written: There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.

Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know. There is no fear of God before their eyes.” (NIV)
Now folks, in light of our text, I know this might be a tough question, but how many people are righteous like God? And how many understand the things of God? How many seek God? And how many are as good as God? Therefore, gee whiz folks, I’d say mankind’s just a little bit corrupt, how about you? And people, the point is this. Unless we understand the corruption of man, we’re never going to understand the salvation of man, let alone realize how secure it really is.

For instance, the first thing we learn about the corruption of man is that salvation is offered as a gift.

Romans 3:23;6:23 “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (NIV)

Now folks, according to our text, the Bible is clear. There’s no way in the world we could ever earn our salvation, right? What did the text say? Because of the corruption of man, we’ve earned what? We’ve earned death! We deserve to die and go to hell, right? Therefore, in light of our condition, salvation’s offered as a what? A gift, right? It has to be! And so the question is this. If salvation’s offered as a gift regardless of our behavior, then how could there be a behavior to cause us to lose it? Stop and think about it. If there was, it would no longer be a gift, would it? Absolutely not! Therefore, I’d say since salvation’s offered as a gift from God, it must also be secure in God, how about you?

Oh, but that’s not all. The second thing we learn from the corruption of man that salvation is obtained by faith.

Ephesians 2:8-9 “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith— and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.” (NIV)
Now folks, according to our text, the Bible is clear. Once again, there’s no way in the world we could earn our salvation, right? What did the text say? We are saved by the grace of God through faith in God, right? Why? Because of the same reason. The corruption of man. We have nothing to boast about in our behavior before God, do we? No! Are you kidding! Therefore, in light of our condition, salvation’s obtained by what? By faith, right? It has to be! And so the question is this. If salvation’s obtained by faith regardless of our behavior, then how could there be a behavior to cause us to lose it? Stop and think about it. If there was, it would no longer be by faith, would it? Absolutely not! But not only that, if you could work yourself out of your salvation, then how is that any different than working for your salvation? Isn’t that just the flip side of the coin? Of course it is! Therefore, I’d say since salvation’s obtained by faith in God, it must also be secure in God, how about you?

And people, the point is this. Based on the Corruption of Man, there’s no reason to assume a person can be a child of God and somehow end up being a child of the devil again. Are you kidding? People, the Bible is clear! God’s love for His children endures forever. And if a person doesn’t think so, then maybe it’s a sign they’ve forgotten the Corruption of Man.

Oh but that’s not all. The fourth reason why some people say God’s love is not eternal is because They’ve Forgotten the Atonement of Christ. John 19:28,30 “Jesus knew that everything was now finished, and to fulfill the Scriptures He said, I am thirsty. When Jesus had tasted it, He said, It is finished! Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.” (NLT)

Now folks, in light of our text, I know this might be a tough question, but when Jesus said His atoning work on the cross for our sins was finished, how many of you think He meant finished? Hey, good answer! Therefore, that means His work is over, isn’t it? It’s a done deal, right? Well, you’d think so but here’s
the problem. You see, when a person says you can lose your salvation they are in essence saying that Christ’s atonement is not finished because they’re assuming there’s certain sins we can still commit and lose our salvation. And one of the sins they bring up is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. And they say if a Christian does this, they will lose their salvation. Let’s take a look at the text.

Matthew 12:30-31 “He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters. And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.” (NIV)

And people, what’s creepy is that passage does say plain as day that’s one sin that’s not forgiven. But the point is this. Notice to whom this passage is addressed to. It’s to people who were claiming that the works of Jesus were being done by the devil. Therefore, of course it’s not forgiven because these people aren’t Christians in the first place! A Christian wouldn’t do that! That’s what’s called a straw man argument. But even more importantly is the timing of this sin. No one today can commit the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit even if they wanted to. Why? Because it was when Jesus was here during his earthly ministry that people accused Him of doing things under the devil’s power instead of the Spirit’s power, hence the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. But since Jesus is no longer here in His earthly ministry but is seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven, how can somebody commit this sin? Answer, they can’t! It could only be committed during His earthly ministry, not today! People, the Bible is clear. Once you accept Christ’s atonement for your sins, He will take away all your sins, once for all, forever. Why? Because it is finished! And that’s exactly what the writer of Hebrews says.

Hebrews 10:14 “For by a single offering He has forever completely cleansed and perfected those who are consecrated and made holy.” (AMP)
Now folks, I don’t know about you but I’d say if Jesus forever cleansed us from our sins even to the point of being considered “perfect” in the eyes of God, then there’s no way in the world we can do something else to make us “imperfect” again, right! It is finished! Therefore, I’d say since salvation’s based on the atonement of Christ, it must also be secure in Christ, how about you?

And people, the point is this. Based on the Atonement of Christ, there’re no reason to assume a person can be a child of God and somehow end up being a child of the devil again. Are you kidding? People, the Bible is clear! God’s love for His children endures forever. And if a person doesn’t think so, then maybe it’s a sign they’ve forgotten the Atonement of Christ.

The fifth reason why some people say God’s love is not eternal is because They’ve Forgotten about Common Sense.

**John 3:3** “In reply Jesus declared, I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.” (NIV)

Now folks, in light of our text, I know this might be a tough question, but what does a person have to do in order to see the kingdom of God? They got to be what? Born again, right? Hey, good answer! Anybody with common sense could figure that one out, right? Well, you’d think so but here’s the problem. You see, those who say you can lose your salvation, in essence, are not applying common sense to what they’re saying. Let me give you some examples.

The first place they don’t apply common sense is right here in our text. Once again, what did it say? If you’re going to be saved you have to be what? Born again, right? And this is precisely the problem. If you say to can lose your salvation, then aren’t you implying you can unborn yourself? Precisely! But what does common sense tells? Once something’s born, it can’t be unborn, right? In fact, one guy put it his way.
“When one is born of the Spirit, it is something that can never be undone. Some things can never be reversed once they are done. You cannot unscramble eggs. Neither can you unhatch a chicken.

You could not get your leg back if you had it amputated. Even so you cannot be unborn after you are born. Jesus did not say you had to be born again and again. No! Just once is enough if you let God do it.”²

Now gee whiz folks, I’d say that guy’s applying some common sense, how about you? Therefore, the point is this. If something born and cannot be unborn, then how in the world can we lose our salvation? Isn’t that what common sense tells us? Exactly!

Oh, but that’s not all. The second place where common sense is not applied is in this text. Let’s take a look.

1 John 5:13 “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.” (NIV)

Now folks, in light of our text, I know this might be a tough question, but Christians can know beyond a shadow of doubt that we have what? Eternal life, right? Hey, good answer! Anybody with common sense could figure that one out, right? Well, you’d think so but here’s the problem. If you say you can lose your salvation, then aren’t you implying eternal life is not eternal after all? Precisely! But what does common sense tells us? That which is eternal can never become uneternal, right? Therefore, the point is this. If we receive eternal life that lasts forever, then how in the world could we ever lose our salvation? Isn’t that what common sense tells us? Exactly!

Oh, but that’s not all. The third place where common sense is not applied in this next text. Let’s take a look.

2 Corinthians 5:16-17 “So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.
Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (NIV)

Now folks, in light of our text, I know this might be a tough question, but when we get saved, we become a new what? A new creation, right? Hey, good answer! Anybody with common sense could figure that one out, right? Well, you’d think so but here’s the problem. You see, even after sharing all this information we’ve gone through for two studies on the security of our salvation, there’ll still be those who say something like this. “Well, maybe one day a Christian will no longer want be a Christian. Maybe one day they’ll decide not to follow God anymore and lose their salvation.” But people, what did we read in our text? When you become a Christian you no longer act or think like you used to, right? Everything is changed. Why? Because you’ve been transformed into a new and different person, a new creation, right? Therefore, doesn’t common sense tell us a true follower of Christ would never even think of forsaking Christ? Of course! For instance, how many of you guys want to go straight to hell right now, forever?” Exactly! That’s my point! Doesn’t common sense tells us no true Christian would even think of giving up their salvation even if they could! Exactly!

Therefore, the point is this. Based on usage of common sense, there’s no reason to assume a person can be a child of God and somehow end up being a child of the devil again. Are you kidding? People, the Bible is clear! God’s love for His children endures forever. And if a person doesn’t think so, then maybe it’s a sign they’ve forgotten to use some common sense.

The sixth reason why some people say God’s love is not eternal is because They’ve Forgotten the Clear Passages. Now folks, believe it or not, I have yet to even address the clear passages in the Bible that declare it’s utterly
impossible to lose our salvation. Therefore, to put the nail in the coffin, so to speak, let’s see what God has to say about the security of our salvation.

- **John 5:24** “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.” (NIV)

- **John 6:37** “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.” (NIV)

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

- **Romans 8:35,38-39** “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (NIV)

- **1 Corinthians 1:8** “He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (NIV)

- **2 Corinthians 1:21-22** “Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.” (NIV)

- **Ephesians 1:14** “The Spirit is God’s guarantee that he will give us everything he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. This is just one more reason for us to praise our glorious God.” (NLT)

- **Philippians 1:6** “Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” (NIV)

- **2 Timothy 4:18** “The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom.” (NIV)

- **Hebrews 7:25** “Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.” (NIV)
• Hebrews 9:12 “He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.” (NIV)

• Hebrews 9:15 “For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance.” (NIV)

• 1 Peter 1:3-4 “He has given us new birth into a living hope and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you.” (NIV)

• 1 John 5:13 “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.” (NIV)

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say it doesn’t take a rocket scientist to figure out that when we get saved, we get saved forevermore, how about you? Therefore, the point is this. Based on the context, the counterfeits, the corruption of man, the atonement of Christ, the use of common sense and especially the clear passages in Scripture, I’d say there’s no reason to assume a person can be a child of God and somehow end up being a child of the devil again. Are you kidding? People, the Bible is clear! God’s love for His children endures how long? Forever! You’ve got it!

And people, one last time, this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people really can have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe before it’s too late!” But people, I’m telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we’ve got to stop acting like practical atheists. We’ve got to start demonstrating by our lips as well as our lives that God’s not just Real and Personal, He’s not just Wise and Powerful, and it’s not just that He is Holy, but praise God, God is Love!
How to Receive Jesus Christ:

1. Admit your need (I am a sinner).

2. Be willing to turn from your sins (repent).

3. Believe that Jesus Christ died for you on the Cross and rose from the grave.

4. Through prayer, invite Jesus Christ to come in and control your life through the Holy Spirit. (Receive Him as Lord and Savior.)

What to pray:

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died for my sins. I want to turn from my sins. I now invite You to come into my heart and life. I want to trust and follow You as Lord and Savior.

In Jesus’ name. Amen.
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