

BECOMING A BIBLICAL ELDER



A WORKBOOK FOR ELDER PREPARATION



XL MINISTRIES
EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP

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CELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP

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Elder Orientation sections:

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Introduction

BECOMING A BIBLICAL ELDER: A WORKBOOK FOR ELDER PREPARATION

First Timothy 3:1 says, “It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do.” To serve as an overseer or elder in a local church is a noble ambition. It is also a sobering responsibility. Every group of local church elders and each potential elder should feel this weight as they consider serving in or appointing a man to this position of leadership, for we must not “lay hands on anyone too hastily” (1 Timothy 5:22). At the same time, we must be actively seeking to identify, equip, and appoint elders to continue the work of ministry (Titus 1:5; 2 Timothy 2:2).

This resource, *Becoming a Biblical Elder*, is intended to assist in the process of preparing a man to become an elder in the local church. It does this by providing a clear and directed plan for elder mentorship that includes Bible knowledge, theology, and elder orientation. It is a companion resource to *Becoming a Biblical Leader*, a more general introduction to leadership in the church. That resource is a helpful first step in equipping potential elders and other church leaders.

Before beginning *Becoming a Biblical Elder*, an elder candidate should have already been preliminarily evaluated regarding their:

- **Desire to serve** (1 Timothy 3:1)
- **Character** (1 Timothy 3:2-7)
- **Giftedness – ability to teach and lead** (Titus 1:9, 1 Timothy 3:4-5)

Once a man has been identified as an elder candidate, *Becoming a Biblical Elder* provides more specific preparation and orientation for serving as an elder by facilitating individual study and interaction with a mentor. Ideally, that mentor would currently be serving as an elder.

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE AND THEOLOGICAL PREPARATION

Becoming a Biblical Elder prepares an elder candidate by sharpening his biblical knowledge and by deepening his understanding of systematic theology, counseling and apologetics. The first two sections of each chapter focus on these areas as follows:

- 1. BIBLE KNOWLEDGE** – This section contains an overview of several books of the Bible and key information about each book (theme, key chapters, verses, people, and dates).¹

¹ Key information about each book has been adapted from The Master’s Seminary and XL Ministries ordination preparation resources.

- **Individual Preparation:** Review the provided material. Memorize content as desired or required for your church elder process.
- **Mentor Discussion:** Discuss the content and any questions about those books of the Bible. Practice reciting the content as appropriate for your church elder process.

2. SYSTEMATIC AND PRACTICAL THEOLOGY – This section contains an overview of one area of theology and resources to answer critical questions from that area.

- **Individual Preparation:** Read and consider the key texts, provided theological writings,² and other additional resources as desired. Write out an answer or outline for the designated questions.
- **Mentor Discussion:** Discuss the designated questions and practice answering those questions as appropriate for your church elder process.

Sufficient biblical knowledge and theological understanding are necessary if an elder is going to be “able to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict” (Titus 1:9). The elders of each local church must determine what adequate preparation and evaluation for an elder candidate look like in their context. To this end, a church may require a candidate to:

1. Simply work through the biblical and theological content in this workbook with a mentor.
2. Memorize some or all of the biblical knowledge (i.e., book themes and key chapters) to be reviewed with their mentor, and work through and discuss the theological content with their mentor.
3. Participate in a formal oral examination, likely with the elders, as part of the evaluation process to become an elder. Such an examination would involve some or all of the biblical knowledge and theological content. In this case, the candidate should memorize the required Bible knowledge and practice answering the theology questions from memory accordingly.

A church must also decide and communicate the expectations for a candidate who is required to memorize some or all of the Bible knowledge content. It is recommended that book themes be memorized word for word. With the key chapter summaries, memorizing every word exactly may not be necessary to understand and recall the information. For example, saying Deuteronomy 5 is “the decalogue reiterated” would be word perfect. But saying Deuteronomy 5 is “when the Ten Commandments are given again” would also display sufficient understanding and retention of the content.

2 Provided theological writings are from conservative, evangelical scholars or historically recognized statements of orthodoxy. Inclusion of an author does not indicate affirmation of everything they have written, but does indicate they are helpful for understanding sound doctrine in the area quoted.

ELDER ORIENTATION

Becoming a Biblical Elder is also intended to prepare an elder candidate by helping them think carefully about what the Scripture teaches about functioning as an elder and by providing a context for understanding specific elder practices in your church. To that end, each chapter contains a third section as follows:

3. ELDER ORIENTATION – This section contains three parts: 1) Leading with a Plurality of Elders, 2) Fulfilling the Role of an Elder, and 3) Demonstrating the Character of an Elder.

- **Individual Preparation:** Read the provided material, including Scripture referenced and your church documents as directed. Answer the provided questions.
- **Mentor Discussion:** Discuss the provided questions and your specific church policies and practices.

To complete the Elder Orientation section, a candidate will need access to the following resources or documents specific to their church:

- **Chapter 1**
 - The sections of the church constitution and/or by-laws pertaining to elders and elder meetings.
- **Chapter 2**
 - Church website or a document that lists the church ministries.
- **Chapter 6**
 - Church budget
- **Chapter 7**
 - Benevolence policy
- **Chapter 9**
 - The last 6-12 months of elder minutes
 - Elder or church policies (wedding, facility, etc.)
- **Chapter 10**
 - Church constitution, by-laws, and doctrinal statement
- **Chapter 11**
 - Child Protection Policy

MEETING WITH YOUR MENTOR

A key component of *Becoming a Biblical Elder* is regular meetings with a mentor. Before each session, the candidate should have completed the individual preparation for that chapter. The candidate and mentor should plan for about an hour and a half to discuss each chapter as follows:

- **Bible Knowledge Review** ~10–20 minutes
- **Theology Discussion** ~20–30 minutes
- **Elder Orientation** ~45–60 minutes

One elder could work through the entirety of *Becoming a Biblical Elder* with the candidate, or multiple elders could rotate through mentoring the candidate to allow broader interaction.

2 Timothy 2:2

The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

CHAPTER 1

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

- **Genesis:** Beginnings
- **Exodus:** Redemption
- **Leviticus:** Holiness
- **Numbers:** Wilderness Wanderings

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY: THEOLOGY PROPER

- How can God be known?
- Defend Trinitarianism.
- How would you respond to someone who says, "If God is love, then why do bad things happen to good people?"

ELDER ORIENTATION

- PART #1: LEADING WITH A PLURALITY OF ELDERS
Why a Plurality of Qualified Elders?
- PART #2: FULFILLING THE ROLE OF AN ELDER
Regularly Participating in Elder Meetings
- PART #3: DISPLAYING THE CHARACTER OF AN ELDER
Not a New Convert; Aspires to the Work

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Review the overview and key information of each book. Memorize key information as desired or required for your church elder process.

GENESIS

Genesis is the book of beginnings; it provides a dramatic account of the origins of mankind and his universe, the intrusion of sin into the world, the catastrophic effects of its curse on the race, and the beginnings of God's plan to bless the nations through His seed.³

THEME: Beginnings

OUTLINE:

- I. Primeval History – Four Events (1–11)
 - A. Creation (1–2)
 - B. Fall (3–5)
 - C. Flood (6–9)
 - D. Nations (10–11)

- II. Patriarchal History – Four People (12–50)
 - A. Abraham (12–24)
 - B. Isaac (25–26)
 - C. Jacob (27–36)
 - D. Joseph (37–50)

KEY CHAPTERS:

- | | |
|-------|--|
| 1 | Creation (broad perspective), God as Creator |
| 2 | Creation (focus on man; Adamic covenant) |
| 3 | Temptation; fall; curses |
| 4 | Cain and Abel; Cain's line – civilization |
| 6–8 | Flood: deliverance in the ark |
| 9 | Everlasting covenant; curse of Canaan |
| 11 | Babel: dispersion of nations |
| 18–19 | Sodom and Gomorrah |
| 37 | Joseph is sold by his brothers |

³ J. F. Walvoord, R. B. Zuck, and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1982–c1985), 1:15.

KEY PASSAGES:

1:31	Creation is declared “very good”
3:15	The promised seed
12:1–3	Abrahamic covenant
35:9–12	Jacob becomes “Israel”
50:20	“God meant it for good”

KEY PEOPLE:

Adam and Eve	The first humans
Cain	Adam’s first son; the murderer of his brother Abel; a wanderer
Abel	Murdered; second son of Adam
Enoch	Father of Methuselah; walked w/God; never died but was taken
Noah	Walked with God; built ark; father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth; cursed Canaan
Abraham	Father of the nations of Israel
Lot	Abram’s nephew; dweller in Sodom
Sarah	Abraham’s wife; Isaac’s mother
Melchizedek	Priest; king of Salem
Isaac	Son of Abraham and Sarah; father of Jacob
Esau	Isaac’s first-born; sold birthright
Rebekah	Isaac’s wife; favored Jacob
Jacob (Israel)	Father of 12 tribes
Leah	Jacob’s less-loved first wife
Rachel	Jacob’s beloved wife; mother of Joseph; dies bearing Benjamin
Joseph	Son of Jacob; sold as a slave; exalted in Egypt

KEY DATES:

Written	By Moses in the years following the Exodus in 1445 BC
Abraham	2166 BC–1992 BC
Joseph	1915 BC–1805 BC

EXODUS

Exodus narrates the liberation of Israel from Egyptian captivity and the migration of God's new nation to the wilderness of Sinai.... Chapters 1–18 relate Israel's exodus from bondage in Egypt, while chapters 19–40 record the instructions given by God on Mount Sinai to direct the life and worship of the nation.⁴

THEME: Redemption

OUTLINE:

- | | | |
|------|--------------------------|---------|
| I. | Israel in Egypt | (1–13) |
| II. | Israel in the Wilderness | (14–18) |
| III. | Israel at Sinai | (19–40) |

KEY CHAPTERS:

- | | |
|------|---------------|
| 3–4 | Call of Moses |
| 7–11 | Ten plagues |
| 12 | Passover |
| 32 | Golden calf |

KEY PASSAGES:

- | | |
|----------|---|
| 3:13–15 | “I AM WHO I AM” |
| 4:11 | “Who has made man's mouth?...or dumb or deaf, or seeing or blind?
Is it not I the LORD?” |
| 20:1–17 | The ten commandments |
| 21:22–24 | Life in the womb; “eye for an eye” – the Lex Taliones |

KEY PEOPLE:

- | | |
|----------|--|
| Aaron | Moses' brother and spokesman; consecrated first high priest |
| Miriam | Moses' sister; a prophetess; led women in worship |
| Moses | Prophet of the highest order; lawgiver; deliverer of Israel; author of the Pentateuch; prominent from Exodus through Deuteronomy |
| Zipporah | Moses' wife |

KEY DATES: The Exodus occurred ca. 1446 – 1445 BC

⁴ Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1983), 12.

LEVITICUS

In Leviticus we learn that sin must be dealt with and that God demands holy living.... Leviticus tells how sinful people could approach a holy God and how they could live holy lives.⁵

THEME: Holiness

OUTLINE:

- I. The Way to God – Sacrifice (1-17)
- II. The Walk with God – Sanctification (18-27)

KEY CHAPTERS:

- | | |
|----|------------------|
| 10 | Nadab and Abihu |
| 16 | Day of atonement |

KEY PASSAGES:

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 17:11 | “It is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.” |
| 19:2 | “You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.” |

KEY PEOPLE:

Nadab and Abihu Two eldest sons of Aaron; consecrated as priests; slain by *YHWH* for offering “strange fire”

5 Herbert Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1991), 160.

NUMBERS

Numbers is so called because it records the numbering of the children of Israel and their organization and tasks by tribes. Carrying on from Exodus, it relates the Israelites' wanderings in the desert after they fail to enter the promised land through unbelief.⁶

THEME: Wilderness Wanderings

OUTLINE:

- | | | |
|------|----------------|---------|
| I. | Sinai | (1-10) |
| II. | Wilderness | (11-25) |
| III. | Plains of Moab | (26-36) |

KEY CHAPTERS:

- | | |
|-------|--|
| 13 | The journey and return of the 12 spies into Canaan |
| 22-24 | Balaam, Balak, and the talking donkey |

KEY PASSAGES:

- | | |
|----------|---|
| 21:4-9 | God's judgment through deadly fiery serpents; Moses sets up the bronze serpent as God's means for healing (a foreshadowing of Christ on the cross; cf. John 3:14, 15) |
| 23:19-20 | God's faithfulness; God does not lie |

KEY PEOPLE:

- | | |
|--------|--|
| Balaam | Heathen prophet who, when consulted by Balak, king of Moab, became conceited and greedy; was halted in his tracks by an angel and commanded to speak only on behalf of God |
| Joshua | Moses' servant and successor; great military leader who led the people into the promised land |

⁶ Gerard Chrispin, *The Bible Panorama* (Canada: Day One, 2005), 78.

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~10–20 MINUTES):

1. Briefly discuss any questions you have about the books covered in this section of Bible Knowledge.
2. Review the information in this section of Bible Knowledge by asking questions such as:
 - What is the theme of Genesis?
 - What is found in Genesis 3?
 - Where do you find the account of the flood?
 - What is recorded in Genesis 1:31?
 - Who was Enoch?
 - When did Abraham live?

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Read and consider the key texts, terms, provided theological writings, and other additional resources as desired. Write out an answer or outline for each question.

THEOLOGY PROPER

Theology proper is the study of God.

- **Some key issues and themes addressed in theology proper include:**
 - The existence of God
 - The nature of God
 - The names of God
 - The attributes of God
 - The decree or will of God

1. HOW CAN GOD BE KNOWN?

- **Key passages to consider:**
 - Psalm 19
 - Romans 1:19–20
 - Hebrews 1:1–3
- **Key terms to include:**
 - General/Natural Revelation
 - Special Revelation

- **What theologians say:**

Paul Enns in *The Moody Handbook of Theology*

The word *revelation* is derived from the Greek word *apokalupsis*, which means “disclosure” or “unveiling.” Hence, revelation signifies God unveiling Himself to mankind. The fact that revelation has occurred renders theology possible; had God not revealed Himself there could be no accurate or propositional statements about God. Romans 16:25 and Luke 2:32 indicate that God has unveiled Himself in the person of Jesus Christ. That is the epitome of God’s revelation.

In the broader use of the term, *revelation* signifies “God’s disclosure of Himself through creation, history, the conscience of man and Scripture. It is given in both event and word.” Revelation thus is both “general”—God revealing Himself in

history and nature, and “special”—God revealing Himself in the Scriptures and in His Son.⁷

John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue in *Biblical Doctrine*

God initiated the disclosure and revelation of himself to mankind (Heb. 1:1). The vehicles varied; sometimes it was through the created order and at other times through visions/dreams or speaking prophets (Heb. 1:1–3). However, the most thorough and understandable self-disclosures were through the written propositions of Scripture (1 Cor. 2:6–16). The written Word of God is unique in that it is the only revelation of God that clearly declares man’s sinfulness and God’s provision of the Savior.⁸

Carl F. Henry in *God, Revelation, and Authority*

All merely human affirmations about God curl into a question mark. We cannot spy out the secrets of God by obtrusive curiosity. Not even theologians of a technological era, not even Americans with their skill in probing the surface of the moon, have any special radar for penetrating the mysteries of God’s being and ways. Apart from God’s initiative, God’s act, God’s revelation, no confident basis exists for God-talk. “The things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God” (1 Cor. 2:11b). If we are authorized to say anything at all about the living God, it is only because of God’s initiative and revelation. God’s disclosure alone can transform our wavering questions concerning ultimate reality into confident exclamations!⁹

- Write a summary or detailed outline of your answer to the question, “How can God be known?”

- For further related discussion or study:
 - Can the existence of God be proven?
 - What is the value of the philosophical proofs for the existence of God? (i.e., the ontological, teleological, or cosmological proof).

7 Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, rev. ed. (Chicago, IL: Moody, 2014), 159–60.

8 John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 70–71.

9 C. F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 2, *God Who Speaks and Shows: Fifteen Theses Part 1* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1999), 8.

2. DEFEND TRINITARIANISM

○ Key passages to consider:

- Deuteronomy 6:4
- Isaiah 44:6; 46:9–10
- Matthew 3:16–17
- Matthew 28:19
- 2 Corinthians 13:14

○ Key terms to include:

- Trinity
- One God
- Essence
- Persons/Subsistences
- Father
- Son
- Holy Spirit

○ What theologians say:

J.I. Packer in *Concise Theology*

The basic assertion of this doctrine is that the unity of the one God is complex. The three personal “subsistences” (as they are called) are coequal and coeternal centers of self-awareness, each being “I” in relation to two who are “you” and each partaking of the full divine essence (the “stuff” of deity, if we may dare to call it that) along with the other two. They are not three roles played by one person (that is *modalism*), nor are they three gods in a cluster (that is *tritheism*); the one God (“he”) is also, and equally, “they,” and “they” are always together and always cooperating, with the Father initiating, the Son complying, and the Spirit executing the will of both, which is his will also. This is the truth about God that was revealed through the words and works of Jesus, and that undergirds the reality of salvation as the New Testament sets it forth.¹⁰

Charles Hodge in *Systematic Theology*

The form in which this doctrine lies in the Bible, and in which it enters into the faith of the Church universal, includes substantially the following particulars.

1. There is one only living and true God, or divine Being. The religion of the Bible stands opposed not only to Atheism, but to all forms of polytheism....

10 J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1993), 42.

2. In the Bible all divine titles and attributes are ascribed equally to the Father, Son, and Spirit.... It is not more evident that the Father is God, than that the Son is God; nor is the deity of the Father and Son more clearly revealed than that of the Spirit.
3. The terms Father, Son, and Spirit do not express different relations of God to his creatures. They are not analogous to the terms Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor, which do express such relations.... The one divine Being subsists in three persons, Father, Son, and Spirit. This proposition adds nothing to the facts themselves; for the facts are, (1.) That there is one divine Being. (2.) The Father, Son, and Spirit are divine. (3.) The Father, Son, and Spirit are, in the sense just stated, distinct persons. (4.) Attributes being inseparable from substance, the Scriptures, in saying that the Father, Son, and Spirit possess the same attributes, say they are the same in substance; and, if the same in substance, they are equal in power and glory.
4. Notwithstanding that the Father, Son, and Spirit are the same in substance, and equal in power and glory, it is no less true, according to the Scriptures, (a.) That the Father is first, the Son second, and the Spirit third. (b.) The Son is of the Father (ἐκ θεοῦ, the λόγος, εἰκὼν, ἀπαύγασμα, τοῦ θεοῦ); and the Spirit is of the Father and of the Son. (c.) The Father sends the Son, and the Father and Son send the Spirit. (d.) The Father operates through the Son, and the Father and Son operate through the Spirit.... The facts contained in this paragraph are summed up in the proposition: In the Holy Trinity there is a subordination of the Persons as to the mode of subsistence and operation....¹¹

The Nicene Creed – Coming from the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D.

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made....

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets....¹²

The Athanasian Creed

That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; Neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance. For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Spirit.¹³

11 Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology, vol. 1, Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 443–45.

12 Rick Brannan, *Historic Creeds and Confessions* (electronic ed.) (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 1997).

13 Ibid.

The Westminster Confession

There is but one only living and true God.... In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.¹⁴

- Write a summary or detailed outline of your answer defending Trinitarianism.

- For further related discussion or study:
 - What are the following heretical misunderstandings of the Trinity?
 - Tritheism
 - Modalism
 - Arianism
 - Why are they contrary to the biblical teaching about the Trinity?

14 The Westminster Confession of Faith (Glasgow, Scotland: Free Presbyterian, 1995), 24–27.

3. HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND TO SOMEONE WHO SAYS, “IF GOD IS LOVE, THEN WHY DO BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE?”

○ **Key passages to consider:**

- John 3:16
- 1 John 4:7–10
- Romans 3:10–18, 23
- Romans 8:28–29
- Exodus 4:11
- Deuteronomy 32:39

○ **Key terms to include:**

- Suffering
- Sin
- Sovereignty

○ **What theologians say:**

John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue in *Biblical Doctrine*

The reality of evil and suffering is used by some as a reason for rejecting God. Allegedly, if God were all-good and all-powerful, then evil and suffering would not exist. But contrary to disproving God, the existence of evil and suffering can be adequately explained only from a Christian worldview rooted in the biblical perspective of creation and the fall....

One must remember that God is the sovereign King of the universe who does as he wills without needing to answer to man (Rom. 9:20). God is not on trial, and any apparent contradictions between God’s existence and the reality of evil are simply that—apparent, not real. With this reality understood, several points can help one understand evil and suffering.

First, God created the world and called everything in it “very good” (Gen. 1:31). No sin or death existed during creation week. These were introduced later by Adam (Genesis 3; Rom. 5:12). God told Adam that eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil would bring death (Gen. 2:15–17), but Adam nevertheless willfully disobeyed his Creator, to whom he was accountable. The responsibility for sin lies at the feet of sinful man. God is not the chargeable cause of evil (cf. Rom. 3:5–6; 9:14).

Second, when Adam disobeyed God, Adam introduced both moral and natural evil into the world. By sinning against God, man brought hostility into human relationships and moral evil into creation.... But why doesn’t God simply fix the world or intervene to stop tragedies and acts of evil? Part of the answer is that mankind is experiencing the consequences for sin. He is facing the mess he created. God made man his vice-regent, and man possessed everything he needed to rule the

earth successfully. Yet when he sinned, God was not bound to shield man from the consequences of his rebellion.

Third, God has not left man alone to wallow and suffer without hope. He introduced a promise to restore creation and defeat the evil power behind the serpent (Gen. 3:15), a plan that ultimately culminates in Jesus Christ and will be fulfilled by his first and second comings. Also, God brings undeserved common goodness to mankind (Matt. 5:45). He restrains evil (2 Thess. 2:7), and he instituted the conscience to restrict sinner's freedom (Rom. 2:14–15) and human government to punish evildoers (Rom. 13:1–7)... No one can rightly say that God is a detached observer to evil and suffering. Jesus left heaven and suffered as no person has ever suffered in order to deliver sinners from eternal suffering.

Finally, a judgment day is coming when God will make all things right. He will reward what is right and punish what is wrong...¹⁵

Robert L. Reymond in *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*

The ultimate end which God decreed he regarded as a great enough and glorious enough that it justified to himself both the diving plan itself and the ordained incidental evil arising along the foreordained path to his plan's great and glorious end. But is there, indeed, can there be, such an end? Yes, indeed there is such an end. Paul can declare: "I consider that our present sufferings [which are ordained of God; the reader is referred to 2 Cor. 11:23–33 and 12:7–10 for a sampling of Paul's sufferings] are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us"; and again: "our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all" (Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:17; 1 Cor. 2:7). But our conformity to Christ's likeness is not the "be all and end all" of God's eternal purpose. We have not penetrated God's purpose sufficiently if we conclude that we are the center of God's purpose or that his purpose terminates finally upon us by accomplishing *our* glorification. Rather, our glorification is only the means to a higher, indeed, the highest end conceivable – "that God's Son [N.B.; *not* Adam] might be the Firstborn [that is, might occupy the place of highest honor] among many brothers" (Rom. 8:29), and all to the praise of God's glorious grace (Eph. 1:6, 10, 12, 12; 2:7).¹⁶

¹⁵ MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 474–75.

¹⁶ Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of Christian Faith*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 377.

- Write a summary or detailed outline of your answer to the question, “How would you respond to someone who says, ‘If God is love, then why do bad things happen to good people?’”

- For further related discussion or study:
 - What is “the problem of evil”?
 - What is a biblical response, or theodicy, to the problem of evil?

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~20–30 MINUTES):

1. Briefly discuss any questions you have about theology proper and the specific questions you answered in this chapter.

2. Practice answering the following questions using only a Bible for reference:
 - How can God be known?
 - Defend Trinitarianism.
 - How would you respond to someone who says, “If God is love, then why do bad things happen to good people?”

ELDER ORIENTATION

PART #1: LEADING WITH A PLURALITY OF ELDERS WHY A PLURALITY OF QUALIFIED ELDERS?

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

The New Testament uses various terms to describe an elder, including elder, pastor or shepherd, and overseer. All three expressions are seen in close connection in 1 Peter 5 and Acts 20 (*emphases added*):

1 Peter 5:1–2

Therefore, I exhort the **elders** among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, **shepherd** the flock of God among you, **exercising oversight** not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness.

Acts 20:17, 28

From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the **elders** of the church... “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers**, to **shepherd** the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

Each of these terms helps paint the picture of what should characterize such a man:

- An **elder** is a man of maturity, with character that is above reproach.
 - A **pastor/shepherd** is a man who cares well for others entrusted to him by Christ, the Chief Shepherd.
 - An **overseer** is a man who provides effective leadership and oversight.
- How does each of these terms help you think more clearly about what is involved in serving as an elder?
- Elder
 - Pastor/Shepherd
 - Overseer

THE BIBLICAL DEFENSE OF A PLURALITY OF QUALIFIED ELDERS

One of the striking features of the New Testament instruction regarding the role of an elder is that elders are almost always referred to in the plural, clearly implying that the normative practice of the church is leadership by a plurality of elders.

- What evidence do you see for a plurality of elders in the following verses?
 - Acts 14:23

 - Acts 15:1–6

 - Acts 20:17, 28

 - Philippians 1:1

 - Titus 1:5

 - James 5:14

Elders must meet the qualifications outlined in Scripture. The desire to have multiple elders should not undermine the commitment to having qualified elders. One of the qualifications outlined in Scripture is that elders are to be men. While men and women are spiritually equal before God, He has given different, complementary roles to men and women in the home and the church. These role distinctions must be embraced if we are to be faithful to Christ and His word.

- What evidence do you see for male elders in the following verses?
 - 1 Timothy 3:1–7

 - Titus 1:5–9

 - 1 Timothy 2:9–15

As will be seen, only qualified elders can function well together and fulfill the role God has given for leadership in the church.

- Why is having biblically qualified leadership so important in the church?

One reason elders must be biblically qualified is that they are to serve as an example. The pattern of an elder's life is to be such that if others follow him, they will also be imitating Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1; 2 Timothy 3:10–11). This does not mean elders must be perfect. It does mean that they are to be spiritually mature such that others can imitate them in every aspect of life, including how they respond to their sin.

THE BENEFITS OF A PLURALITY OF ELDERS

As with all God's commands and instructions for life, the pattern of plural, qualified leadership in the church is good and wise. God did not call the church to be led by a plurality simply to see if we would obey. But in His wisdom, this design is best for the church. Leadership by a plurality is not always easy or free from challenges, but it does come with clear benefits for the church.

1. UNITY WITH DIVERSITY

A stringed instrument such as a guitar or violin can make beautiful music, not because every string is the same and makes the same sound, but because each is diverse and yet functions together with unity. Such is to be the case among elders. Each elder is unique, with different backgrounds, gifts, and experiences. Yet, they are to function in harmony together, providing immense benefits to their congregation as they lead in unity with diversity.

- What are some ways a group of elders in the same church, with very similar doctrinal beliefs, might nonetheless be different from one another?

- How should these differences help a group of elders lead better together than any one of them would lead by themselves?

- How might these differences lead to conflict if not for godly character? How can appreciating one another's differences help avoid conflict among elders?

- Considering how various elders display the biblical qualifications differently given their unique strengths, gifts, and personalities, why is it helpful for the church to see multiple examples of godly character instead of just one?

2. COLLECTIVE WISDOM

Because each elder brings different perspectives to discussions and decisions, the group's collective wisdom should exceed that of any individual.

- Read Proverbs 11:14, Proverbs 15:22, and Proverbs 24:6.
Why are “many counselors” helpful when making plans and decisions?

- How does this apply to a plurality of elders?

In addition to greater wisdom, plurality helps protect from poor decisions that an individual might make on their own. As Erroll Hulse writes, “...there is far more by way of inbuilt precaution against things going wrong in an eldership than in a one-man oversight.... Within an eldership, extreme ideas are tempered, harsh judgments moderated, and doctrinal imbalances are corrected.”¹⁷

- How can a plurality of elders be a safeguard for the church?

17 Erroll Hulse, “The Authority of Elders,” *Reformation Today* '78: http://www.reformation-today.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/RT_044.pdf.

3. MULTIPLIED MINISTRY

A church with only one pastor or elder will likely find that man quickly burning out due to the volume of work and weight of responsibility falling on his shoulders. As Jethro wisely reminded his son-in-law, Moses, in Exodus 18:17–18, “The thing that you are doing is not good. You will surely wear out, both yourself and these people who are with you, for the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone.” But where there is a plurality of leadership, elders can share that load and fulfill the needed ministry with their diversity of giftedness. Just as the church is a body made healthy by the faithful functioning of the variety of necessary members (1 Corinthians 12; 1 Peter 4:10), the church leadership is made healthy by the faithful functioning of the diverse plural leadership.

- What are some ways a group of elders can minister more effectively in their church than an individual elder or pastor?

- What are some good reasons for a church to not yet have a plurality of elders? What are some wrong reasons?

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~15–20 MINUTES):

Discuss any questions you have from this part as well as the following:

1. How has this study helped you appreciate God’s plan for a plurality of elders to lead the church?

2. How have you seen, or might you see, the benefits of a plurality of elders during discussions at an elder meeting?

3. How have you seen the benefits of a plurality of elders in the functioning of your church and its various ministries?

4. What are some good reasons for a church to not yet have a plurality of elders or to have a particularly small group of elders? What are some wrong reasons for a church to not yet have a plurality of elders or to have a particularly small group of elders?

ELDER ORIENTATION

PART #2: FULFILLING THE ROLE OF AN ELDER

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

The primary functions of an elder are summarized in the other biblical terms for that office – pastor and overseer. As overseers, elders are responsible to manage and lead the church. While being an elder is much more than attending meetings, it certainly is not less than that, as giving oversight together requires meeting for discussion and decision making.

REGULARLY PARTICIPATING IN ELDER MEETINGS

- Read through the portion of your church constitution and by-laws about elders and their meetings. What stipulations are in place for elder meetings?

- Why is it essential for elders to attend meetings regularly? What will happen if some elders routinely miss meetings?

- Does your schedule allow for you to prioritize participating in elders' meetings? What, if anything, will you have to change to do this?

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~10–15 MINUTES):

Discuss any questions you have from the Individual Preparation.

1. If you have recently attended an elder meeting(s):
 - Discuss what you observed at the meeting and any questions you have regarding:
 - The agenda
 - The facilitation of discussion and decisions
 - What is typically discussed in the portion of the meeting you may not have been able to observe (if there is a “closed” or “elders-only” portion)
 - Elder minutes

2. If you have not recently attended an elder meeting:
 - Ask your mentor to describe a typical elder meeting, including:
 - When and where do the elders meet?
 - What items are regularly on the agenda?
 - How is the agenda established?
 - Who leads the meeting?
 - How are discussions facilitated and concluded?
 - How are decisions made?
 - Who takes minutes for the meeting? How are they approved and distributed?
3. Discuss an upcoming opportunity for you to observe part or all of an elder meeting(s).
4. Briefly discuss any questions you have about elders' meetings or the stipulations for meetings found in your church's policies or governing documents.
5. Discuss other times the elders gather formally (retreats, prayer times) and informally (Christmas parties, etc.).

ELDER ORIENTATION

PART #3: DISPLAYING THE CHARACTER OF AN ELDER

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Consider the following biblical qualifications of an elder:

- **Not a new convert**
 - 1 Timothy 3:6** ...and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil.
 - Define this qualification in your own words.
 - Why is this quality necessary for leadership?
 - Do you believe you currently meet this qualification? Why or why not?

Chapter 2

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

- **Deuteronomy:** Second Law / Renewed Covenant
- **Joshua:** Conquer and Divide
- **Judges:** Disobedience and Defeat
- **Ruth:** Kinsman Redeemer
- **1 Samuel:** Transition from the Judges to the Monarchy
- **2 Samuel:** David's Reign as King

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY: CHRISTOLOGY

- How can you prove the deity of Jesus Christ?
- Describe the incarnation and its significance.
- What does the resurrection of Christ signify for the believer?

ELDER ORIENTATION

- PART #1: LEADING WITH A PLURALITY OF ELDERS
What is a Plurality of Leadership?
- PART #2: FULFILLING THE ROLE OF AN ELDER
Providing Ministry Oversight
- PART #3: DISPLAYING THE CHARACTER OF AN ELDER
Above Reproach; Having a Good Reputation with Outsiders

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Review the overview and key information of each book. Memorize key information as desired or required for your church elder process.

DEUTERONOMY

Deuteronomy... consists of a series of farewell messages by Israel's 120-year-old leader [Moses]. It is addressed to the new generation destined to possess the Land of Promise—those who survived the forty years of wilderness wandering. Deuteronomy, like Leviticus, contains a vast amount of legal detail, but its emphasis is on the layman rather than the priests and sacrifice. Moses reminds the new generation of the importance of obedience if they are to learn from the sad example of their predecessors.¹⁸

THEME: Second Law/Renewed Covenant

OUTLINE:

- I. Looking Back (1–11)
- II. Looking Ahead (12–32)
- III. Looking Up (33–34)

KEY CHAPTERS:

- 5 Decalogue reiterated
- 28 Blessings and curses
- 32 Song of Moses
- 34 Death of Moses

KEY PASSAGES:

- 4:2 Don't add to or subtract from the Word
- 6:4–9 The Shema: Jesus' great commandment, one God
- 24:1–4 Regulation of divorce/remarriage issue
- 32:39 God governs life and death; sovereignty; "I kill/make alive; wound/heal"

¹⁸ Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 36.

JOSHUA

Joshua records God's faithfulness to His promises in bringing His people into the Promised Land.... The book of Joshua shows that Israel must trust and obey God to be victorious in warfare, and underlines the crucial value of God's Word.¹⁹

THEME: Conquer and Divide

OUTLINE:

- I. Conquering the Land (1–12)
- II. Dividing the Land (13–24)

KEY CHAPTERS:

- 2 Rahab and the spies
- 6 Fall of Jericho
- 7 The sin of Achan

KEY PASSAGES:

- 1:7–9 “Be strong and courageous”; know and keep the law
- 24:14–15 “Choose for yourselves today whom you will serve...As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

KEY PEOPLE:

- Rahab Ex-harlot in Jericho
- Achan Cause of defeat at Ai; took spoil that was under the ban; when confronted with his sin, he confessed, yet he and his family were stoned and burned

¹⁹ Chrispin, *The Bible Panorama*, 106.

JUDGES

The book of Judges stands in stark contrast to the book of Joshua. There, an obedient people conquered the land through trust in the power of God. But in Judges, a disobedient and idolatrous people are frequently defeated because of their rebellion against God. In seven distinct cycles of sin, Judges show how the nation has set aside God's law and in its place 'everyone did what was right in his own eyes.' (21:25)²⁰

THEME: Disobedience and Defeat

OUTLINE:

- I. Disobedience in Judges (1-2)
- II. History of the Judges (3-16)
- III. Apostasy in Judges (17-21)

KEY CHAPTERS:

- 6-8 Gideon's judgeship
13-16 Samson's judgeship

KEY PASSAGES:

- 17:6; 21:25 "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes"

KEY PEOPLE:

- Gideon Unique victor over the Midianites
Samson Twelfth judge of Israel; fought the Philistines; very strong, with strong weaknesses

²⁰ Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 58.

RUTH

Ruth records a love-story during Israel's seesaw time of the judges... It is not only an historical account of how God honours those who honour Him, to reverse the sad circumstances of Naomi and Ruth, but also is an enacted picture of the blessed role of a redeemer (Boaz).²¹

THEME: Kinsman Redeemer

OUTLINE:

- I. Return of Ruth (1)
- II. Reaping of Ruth (2)
- III. Request of Ruth (3)
- IV. Redemption of Ruth (4)

KEY CHAPTERS:

- 4 Boaz redeems Ruth and marries her

KEY PASSAGES:

- 4:18–22 The genealogy from Perez to David

KEY PEOPLE:

- Boaz Grandson of Rahab; married Ruth
- Ruth Moabite who married into the Messianic line; an important representative of Gentile inclusion
- Naomi Elimelech's wife; Ruth's mother-in-law

²¹ Chrispin, *The Bible Panorama*, 123.

1 SAMUEL

The First Book of Samuel describes the transition of leadership in Israel from judges to kings. Three characters are prominent in the book: Samuel, the last judge and first prophet; Saul, the first king of Israel; and David, the king-elect, anointed but not yet recognized as Saul's successor.²²

THEME: Transition from the Judges to the Monarchy

OUTLINE:

- I. Preparation for the Monarch – Samuel (1–9)
- II. Period of the Monarch – Saul (10–31)

KEY CHAPTERS:

- 8–10 Israel chooses a king
- 15 Saul spares Amalekites
- 16 David anointed

KEY PASSAGES:

- 15:20–23 “To obey is better than sacrifice”
- 16:7 God looks on the heart

KEY PEOPLE:

- Samuel Son of Elkanah and Hannah; a Nazarite; a priest; a judge; a king MAKER
- Saul First king of Israel; son of Kish; a Benjamite; first of many bad kings Israel would suffer through
- Eli High priest and judge of Israel; wicked sons – Hophni and Phinehas
- Jonathan Eldest son of Saul and close friend of David; father of Mephibosheth
- David Son of Jesse; anointed by Samuel as king of Israel; first of a few good kings; man after God's own heart

²² Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 70.

2 SAMUEL

The Second Book of Samuel records the highlights of David's reign, first over the territory of Judah, and finally over the entire nation of Israel. It traces the ascension of David to the throne, his climactic sins of adultery and murder, and the shattering consequences of those sins upon his family and the nation.²³

THEME: David's Reign as King

OUTLINE:

- I. The Triumphs of David (1–10)
- II. The Transgressions of David (11–12)
- III. The Troubles of David (13–24)

KEY CHAPTERS:

- 5 David as king over all Israel
- 11 Bathsheba

KEY PASSAGES:

- 7:8–16 Davidic covenant

KEY PEOPLE:

- Absalom Third son of David, who revolted; avenged his sister Tamar by killing his brother Amnon; was killed by Joab
- Bathsheba Wife of Uriah; David committed adultery with her; mother of Solomon

²³ Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 78.

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~10–20 MINUTES):

1. Briefly discuss any questions you have about the books covered in this section of Bible Knowledge.

2. Review the information in this section of Bible Knowledge by asking questions such as:
 - Where in Deuteronomy is the song of Moses?
 - What is the theme of Judges?
 - Who was Boaz?

3. Review any required memorized content from Genesis to Numbers.

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Read and consider the key texts, terms, provided theological writings, and other additional resources as desired. Write out an answer or outline for each question.

CHRISTOLOGY

Christology is the study of Jesus Christ.

- **Some key issues and themes addressed in Christology include:**
 - The Person of Christ
 - The Deity of Christ
 - The Humanity of Christ
 - The Work of Christ

1. HOW CAN YOU PROVE THE DEITY OF JESUS CHRIST?

- **Key passages to consider:**
 - John 1:1–3, 14
 - John 8:58
 - John 10:30
 - Philippians 2:6–11
 - Colossians 1:15–20, 2:9
 - Hebrews 1:1–3

- **What theologians say:**

Wayne Grudem in *Systematic Theology*

The New Testament, in hundreds of explicit verses that call Jesus “God” and “Lord” and use a number of other titles of deity to refer to him, and in many passages that attribute actions or words to him that could only be true of God himself, affirms again and again the full, absolute deity of Jesus Christ. “In him *all the fulness of God* was pleased to dwell” (Col. 1:19), and “in him the whole fulness of deity dwells bodily” (Col. 2:9)... His name is rightly called “Emmanuel,” that is, “God with us” (Matt. 1:23).²⁴

24 Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 552.

Louis Berkhof in *Systematic Theology*

This denial [of the deity of the Son] is possible only for those who disregard the teachings of Scripture, for the Bible contains an abundance of evidence for the deity of Christ. We find that Scripture (1) *explicitly asserts the deity of the Son* in such passages as John 1:1; 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Phil. 2:6; Tit. 2:13; 1 John 5:20; (2) *applies divine names to Him*, Isa. 9:6; 40:3; Jer. 23:5, 6; Joel 2:32 (comp. Acts 2:21); 1 Tim. 3:16; (3) *ascribes to Him divine attributes*, such as eternal existence, Isa. 9:6; John 1:1, 2; Rev. 1:8; 22:13, omnipresence, Matt. 18:20; 28:20; John 3:13, omniscience, John 2:24, 25; 21:17; Rev. 2:23, omnipotence. Isa. 9:6; Phil. 3:21; Rev. 1:8, immutability, Heb. 1:10–12; 13:8, and in general every attribute belonging to the Father, Col. 2:9; (4) *speaks of Him as doing divine works*, as creation, John 1:3, 10; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2, 10, providence, Luke 10:22; John 3:35; 17:2; Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3, the forgiveness of sins, Matt. 9:2–7; Mark 2:7–10; Col. 3:13, resurrection and judgment, Matt. 25:31, 32; John 5:19–29; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Phil. 3:21; 2 Tim. 4:1, the final dissolution and renewal of all things, Heb. 1:10–12; Phil. 3:21; Rev. 21:5, and (5) *accords Him divine honour*, John 5:22, 23; 14:1; 1 Cor. 15:19; 2 Cor. 13:13; Heb. 1:6; Matt. 28:19.²⁵

- Write a summary or outline of your answer to the question, “How can you prove the deity of Jesus Christ?”

2. DESCRIBE THE INCARNATION AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE.

- **Key passages to consider:**
 - Luke 1:30–35
 - John 1:14
 - Romans 5:18–19
 - 1 Timothy 2:5
 - Hebrews 2:17–18
 - Hebrews 4:15–16

²⁵ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1938), 94–95.

○ **Key terms to include:**

- Humanity
- Divinity
- Virgin Birth
- Hypostatic Union

○ **What theologians say:**

John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue in *Biblical Doctrine*

The incarnation refers to the whole concept of God manifesting himself in human flesh. The virgin birth constituted the means by which the incarnation was accomplished. As Charles Feinberg once explained, “The hypostatic union is that which was effected and brought into being by the incarnation.” The hypostatic union differs from theophanies in that there were multiple, temporary theophanies, while the existence of two natures in Christ since his incarnation is eternal. He is now and forever the God–man....

While the human nature that the Son of God received in his incarnation allows him to experience humanity, he does not exist as two persons. He is but one person with two natures—the divine and the human.... Each nature possesses its own will. In John 17:24, Christ’s divine will appears in his Trinitarian relationship to the Father before the foundation of the world. But in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus conforms his human will to the Father’s will (Matt. 26:39).

The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews has most succinctly and beautifully written of the necessity for Christ’s humanity and the great blessing accruing to mankind from his humanity: “Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted” (Heb. 2:17–18). He is “Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God” (Acts 2:22). He is the “one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). Yes, “Behold, the man!” (John 19:5).²⁶

Wayne Grudem in *Systematic Theology*

As we look through the New Testament, we see several reasons why Jesus had to be fully man if he was going to be the Messiah and earn our salvation. We can list seven of those reasons here.

a. For Representative Obedience: ...Jesus was our representative and obeyed for us where Adam had failed and disobeyed....

26 MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 264–65.

- b. To Be a Substitute Sacrifice:* If Jesus had not been a man, he could not have died in our place and paid the penalty that was due to us.
- c. To Be the One Mediator Between God and Men:* Because we were alienated from God by sin, we needed someone to come between God and ourselves and bring us back to him. We needed a mediator who could represent us to God and who could represent God to us. There is only one person who has ever fulfilled that requirement: “There is one God, and *there is one mediator* between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5)....
- d. To Fulfill God’s Original Purpose for Man to Rule Over Creation:* ...God put mankind on the earth to subdue it and rule over it as God’s representatives. But man did not fulfill that purpose, for he instead fell into sin. ... when Jesus came as a man, he was able to obey God and thereby have the right to rule over creation *as a man* thus fulfilling God’s original purpose in putting man on the earth.
- e. To Be Our Example and Pattern in Life:* ...Our goal should be to be like Christ all our days, up to the point of death, and to die with unfailing obedience to God, with strong trust in him, and with love and forgiveness to others. Jesus had to become a man like us in order to live as our example and pattern in life.
- f. To Be the Pattern for Our Redeemed Bodies:* ... Jesus had to be raised as a man in order to be the “first-born from the dead” (Col. 1:18), the pattern for the bodies that we would later have.
- g. To Sympathize as High Priest:* ...If Jesus had not been a man, he would not have been able to know *by experience* what we go through in our temptations and struggles in this life. But because he has lived as a man, he is able to sympathize more fully with us in our experiences.²⁷

- Write a summary or outline of your answer describing the incarnation and its significance:

3. WHAT DOES THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST SIGNIFY FOR THE BELIEVER?

○ **Key passages to consider:**

- Acts 2:22–24
- Romans 4:25
- 1 Corinthians 15
- 1 Peter 1:3

○ **What theologians say:**

Louis Berkhof in *Systematic Theology*

We cannot deny the physical resurrection of Christ without impugning the veracity of the writers of Scripture, since they certainly represent it as a fact. This means that it affects our belief in the trustworthiness of Scripture. Moreover the resurrection of Christ is represented as having evidential value. It was the culminating proof that Christ was a teacher sent from God (the sign of Jonah), and that He was the very Son of God, Rom. 1:4. It was also the supreme attestation of the fact of immortality. What is still more important, the resurrection enters as a constitutive element into the very essence of the work of redemption, and therefore of the gospel. It is one of the great foundation stones of the Church of God. The atoning work of Christ, if it was to be effective at all, had to terminate, not in death, but in life. Furthermore, it was the Father's seal on the completed work of Christ, the public declaration of its acceptance. In it Christ passed from under the law. Finally, it was His entrance on a new life as the risen and *exalted Head of the Church* and the *universal Lord*. This enabled Him to apply the fruits of His redemptive work.²⁸

Wayne Grudem in *Systematic Theology*

Doctrinal Significance of the Resurrection.

a. *Christ's Resurrection Insures Our Regeneration:* Peter says that “we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3). Here he explicitly connects Jesus' resurrection with our regeneration or new birth. When Jesus rose from the dead he had a new quality of life, a “resurrection life” in a human body and human spirit that were perfectly suited for fellowship and obedience to God forever. In his resurrection, Jesus earned for us a new life just like his. We do not receive all of that new “resurrection life” when we become Christians, for our bodies remain as they were, still subject to weakness, aging, and death. But in our spirits we are made alive with new resurrection power. Thus it is through his resurrection that Christ earned for us the new kind of life we receive when we are “born again.” This is why Paul can say

28 Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 349.

that God “made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and *raised us up with him*” (Eph. 2:5–6; cf. Col. 3:1)... Paul connects the resurrection of Christ with the spiritual power at work within us when he tells the Ephesians that he is praying that they would know “what is the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe, according to the working of his great might which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places” (Eph. 1:19–20). Here Paul says that the power by which God raised Christ from the dead is the same power at work within us....

b. *Christ’s Resurrection Insures Our Justification:* ...Paul says that Jesus “was put to death for our trespasses and *raised for our justification*” (Rom. 4:25). When Christ was raised from the dead, it was God’s declaration of approval of Christ’s work of redemption.... By raising Christ from the dead, God the Father was in effect saying that he approved of Christ’s work of suffering and dying for our sins, that his work was completed, and that Christ no longer had any need to remain dead. There was no penalty left to pay for sin, no more wrath of God to bear, no more guilt or liability to punishment—all had been completely paid for, and no guilt remained. In the resurrection, God was saying to Christ, “I approve of what you have done, and you find favor in my sight.”

c. *Christ’s Resurrection Insures That We Will Receive Perfect Resurrection Bodies As Well:* The New Testament several times connects Jesus’ resurrection with our final bodily resurrection. “And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power” (1 Cor. 6:14). Similarly, “he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence” (2 Cor. 4:14). But the most extensive discussion of the connection between Christ’s resurrection and our own is found in 1 Corinthians 15:12–58. There Paul says that Christ is the “first fruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor. 15:20)...²⁹.

- Write a summary or outline of your answer to the question, “What does the resurrection of Christ signify for the believer?”

²⁹ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 614-15.

- For further discussion or study in Christology:
 - What does *the Kenosis* mean?
 - Name and describe the three-fold work of Christ.
 - What is a Christological theophany?

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~20–30 MINUTES):

1. Briefly discuss any questions you have about Christology and the specific questions you answered in this chapter.
2. Practice answering the following questions using only a Bible for reference:
 - How can you prove the deity of Jesus Christ?
 - Describe the incarnation and its significance.
 - What does the resurrection of Christ signify for the believer?
3. Briefly review the following theology questions:
 - How can God be known?
 - Defend Trinitarianism.
 - How would you respond to someone who says, “If God is love, then why do bad things happen to good people?”

THE BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE OF PLURALITY

The New Testament primarily speaks of elders as a unified group of individuals with equal authority leading together. As Alexander Strauch writes, “By definition, the elder structure of government is a collective form of leadership in which each elder shares equally the position, authority, and responsibility of the office.”³⁰

At the same time, the New Testament acknowledges elders will have varied giftedness, experience, life situations, strengths, and weaknesses. The result is that while every elder has the same authority, it is appropriate that elders have differing levels of influence and responsibility for different decisions and ministries.

TOO MANY COOKS

Imagine a group of elders in a local church seeking to function based on the belief that every elder must have the same voice in every decision about church since they each share the same overall authority and responsibility. What might that look like?

- Time to pick new carpet...call all the elders.
- We need a date for the church picnic...better email all the elders.
- What songs should we sing this Sunday... let's poll the elders or rotate which elder picks each week.

Not only would this stifle and drag out the process of decision-making, but it would also require significantly more time from all the elders than likely available, given the other priorities of life and ministry.

God intends for the plurality of elders in a local church to be a blessing to that church through their collective wisdom and multiplied ministry. He does not intend for it to burden the elders or to needlessly complicate or bog down every decision. A plurality of elders leading in the local church does not mean that every elder must actively manage every aspect of church life.

- What would it look like for a church to try to have the entire group of elders weigh in on every decision? Why is this practically impossible and ultimately unwise?

30 Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership* (Littleton, CO: Lewis and Roth, 1995), 39.

SHARED AND DELEGATED LEADERSHIP

The New Testament does not define which decisions must be made by the elders collectively and which may be made by an individual elder. It seems wise that significant discussions and decisions regarding doctrine, ministry direction, and shepherding would involve the elders collectively. But the elders will likely need to delegate decisions about details to individual elders or pastors who provide oversight to specific ministries. Such delegated leaders should be quick to seek the collective wisdom of the elders as needed or when unsure of the elders' perspective. And they must be careful never to speak with the authority of "the elders" when they are not clearly communicating a decision made by the plurality.

This balance of shared and delegated leadership may mean:

- An individual elder oversees the Children's Ministry but brings major decisions, such as changing curriculums, to the whole group of elders.
 - An individual elder oversees the Worship Service, working with gifted music leadership to plan each week's order of service, but seeks the plurality's perspective regarding significant changes or additions to the service and overarching plans such as the frequency of celebrating communion, etc.
-
- Why is it wise for the elders to delegate decisions instead of seeking to make every decision collectively?

 - What types of decisions could rightly be delegated? What kinds of decisions should be made by the collective group?

 - What are some pitfalls that must be avoided by those tasked with making such delegated decisions?

DIFFERENT VOICES

Shared leadership by a plurality of elders does not mean that every elder's voice carries the same weight in every discussion. It does mean that each one's perspective should be carefully considered.

Elders demonstrate wisdom and humility when they rightly show deference to one another based on giftedness and experience. For example, an elder who served as a missionary would rightly have a needed perspective when discussing missions, or an elder who worked in construction or real estate would rightly have a needed perspective when talking about a building purchase. But their view should not be the only one considered, nor should they insist on their way. It is also appropriate that the perspective of the primary teaching elder would be weighted more heavily. But no one elder, even the lead or senior pastor, should assume their view is best without genuinely embracing the group's collective wisdom. A biblical plurality is never a pastor and a bunch of "yes" men.

DIFFERENT INFLUENCE IN THE CHURCH

First Timothy 5:17 makes it clear that various elders within the same church will have differing levels of giftedness and, as such, will have different opportunities. Paul writes, "*The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.*" All elders are to be able to teach and involved in teaching, but some who are exceptionally gifted are rightly distinguished in Paul's mind and therefore given additional responsibility.

An elder who has served faithfully for years would understandably have more influence than a man who has only begun to serve. Yet, the elders and congregation should also welcome the input and perspective of the newer elder.

So, a plurality of elders leading in the church does not mean that every elder has the same opportunities and influence nor that each needs to speak into every decision in the church. But it does mean there is indeed a shared leadership – men with equal authority but different gifts, experiences, and opportunities – appreciating one another and functioning together and providing leadership to the church with a collective wisdom they would not have alone.

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~15–20 MINUTES):

Discuss any questions you have from this section as well as the following:

1. How has this study helped clarify the proper functioning of a plurality of elders in your mind?
2. How does your church seek to balance the shared leadership of the elders with delegating authority to staff, individual elders, and other ministry leaders?
3. What types of decisions come before the entire group of elders at your church?

ELDER ORIENTATION

PART #3: DISPLAYING THE CHARACTER OF AN ELDER

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Consider the following biblical qualifications of an elder:

- **Above reproach**

1 Timothy 3:2 An overseer, then, must be above reproach....

Titus 1:5–6 ...appoint elders in every city as I directed you, namely, if any man is above reproach....

- Define this qualification in your own words.

- Why is this quality necessary for leadership?

- Do you believe you currently meet this qualification? Why or why not?

- **Having a good reputation with outsiders**

1 Timothy 3:7 And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

- Define this qualification in your own words.

- Why is this quality necessary for leadership?

- Do you believe you currently meet this qualification? Why or why not?

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~15–20 MINUTES):

1. Discuss the questions from the Individual Preparation.
2. How can an elder strive to be above reproach and have a good reputation but still maintain a mindset of living to please the Lord, not other people?
3. According to 1 Timothy 5:19–20, how should the church handle accusations against and clear ongoing sin by an elder?

Chapter 3

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

- **1 Kings:** United and Divided Kingdom
- **2 Kings:** Fall of Israel and Judah
- **1 Chronicles:** God's View of David
- **2 Chronicles:** God's View of Judah's Kings
- **Ezra:** Rebuilding of the Temple and People
- **Nehemiah:** Rebuilding of the Walls
- **Esther:** Preservation through Providence

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY: PNEUMATOLOGY

- What Scriptures would you use to demonstrate the deity of the Holy Spirit?
- What is the role of the Holy Spirit in conversion?
- What does it mean to be baptized by the Holy Spirit?
- What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit?
- How would you respond to someone who argues that the charismatic/miraculous gifts are still active today?

ELDER ORIENTATION

- PART #1: LEADING WITH A PLURALITY OF ELDERS
Plurality in Practice: Personal Relationships among Elders
- PART #2: FULFILLING THE ROLE OF AN ELDER
Teaching God's Word
- PART #3: DISPLAYING THE CHARACTER OF AN ELDER
Husband of One Wife

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Review the overview and key information of each book. Memorize key information as desired or required for your church elder process.

1 KINGS

The first half of First Kings traces the life of Solomon. Under his leadership Israel rises to the peak of her size and glory.... However, Solomon's zeal for God diminishes in his later years, as pagan wives turn his heart away from worship in the temple of God. As a result, the king with the divided heart leaves behind a divided kingdom. For the next century, the Book of First Kings traces the twin histories of two sets of kings and two nations of disobedient people [Israel and Judah]...³¹

THEME: United and Divided Kingdom

OUTLINE:

- I. Kingdom United/Solomon (1–11)
- II. Kingdom Divided/Many Kings (12–22)

KEY CHAPTERS:

- | | |
|----|--|
| 1 | Solomon is appointed king |
| 3 | Solomon chooses wisdom and judges wisely |
| 8 | Solomon's temple dedicated |
| 17 | Elijah predicts drought and raises the dead |
| 18 | Elijah on Mount Carmel |
| 19 | Elijah's flight to Horeb/appointment of Elisha |

KEY PEOPLE:

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| Solomon: | Son of King David through Bathsheba; vast empire; wisest man who ever lived (except our Lord); intermarriage led to disobedience and judgment |
| Jeroboam: | First king of divided Israel |
| Rehoboam | First king of Judah; son of Solomon |
| Elijah | The prophet of God from Tishbeh; defeated the prophets of Baal on Carmel |
| Jezebel | Evil wife of King Ahab; worshipper of Baal; eventually eaten by dogs as prophesied |

KEY DATE: Kingdom divided 931 BC

³¹ Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 84.

2 KINGS

The Book of Second Kings continues the drama begun in First Kings – the tragic history of two nations on a collision course with captivity. The author systematically traces the reigning monarchs of Israel and Judah.... Nineteen consecutive evil kings rule in Israel, leading to the captivity by Assyria. The picture is somewhat brighter in Judah, where godly kings occasionally emerge to reform the evils of their predecessors. In the end, however, sin outweighs righteousness and Judah is marched off to Babylonia.³²

THEME: Fall of Israel and Judah

OUTLINE:

- I. Kingdom Divided/Israel Falls (1-17)
- II. Kingdom which Survives/Judah Falls (18-25)

KEY CHAPTERS:

- 17 Israel's fall / Assyrian captivity
- 24-25 The fall of Judah to Babylon

KEY PEOPLE:

- Elisha Successor to Elijah; miracle worker
- Naaman Captain of enemy army; great warrior; a leper who was healed by bathing in the Jordan River seven times at Elisha's instructions

KEY DATES:

- Assyrian captivity; Israel falls 722 BC
- Babylonian captivity 605 BC – Phase 1 (Daniel)
- 597 BC – Phase 2 (Ezekiel)
- 586 BC – Phase 3 (Jeremiah / Judah falls)

32 Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 92.

1 CHRONICLES

The books of First and Second Chronicles cover the same period of Jewish history described in Second Samuel through Second Kings, but the perspective in Chronicles is different. These books are no mere repetition of the same material, but rather are a divine editorial on the history of God's people. While Second Samuel and Kings give political history of Israel and Judah, Chronicles gives a religious history of the Davidic dynasty of Judah.³³

THEME: God's View of David

OUTLINE:

- I. Royal Line of David (1-9)
- II. Righteous Reign of David (10-29)

KEY PASSAGE:

17:11-14 Davidic covenant — "his throne shall be established forever"

2 CHRONICLES

The Book of Second Chronicles parallels First and Second Kings but virtually ignores the northern kingdom of Israel.... Chronicles focuses on those kings who pattern their life and reign after that of godly king David. It gives extended treatment to such zealous reformers as Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Hezekiah, and Josiah.... The book begins with Solomon's glorious temple, and concludes with Cyrus' edict to rebuild the temple more than four hundred years later!³⁴

THEME: God's View of Judah's Kings

OUTLINE:

- I. Reign of Solomon (1-9)
- II. Reigns of Judah's Kings (10-36)

³³ Ibid., 99.

³⁴ Ibid., 108.

EZRA

Ezra continues the Old Testament narrative of Second Chronicles by showing how God fulfilled His promise to return His people to the Land of Promise after seventy years of exile. Israel's 'second exodus,' this one from Babylonia, is less impressive than the Egyptian bondage because only a remnant choose to leave. Ezra relates the story of two returns from Babylonia, the first led by Zerubbabel to rebuild the temple (chs. 1–6) and the second under the leadership of Ezra to rebuild the spiritual condition of the people (chs. 7–10).³⁵

THEME: Rebuilding of the Temple and People

OUTLINE:

- I. The Return and Reconstruction under Zerubbabel (1–6)
- II. The Return and Reform under Ezra (7–10)

KEY CHAPTERS:

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 1 | Decree of Cyrus allowing the return; many Israelites respond |
| 3 | Foundation of the temple completed with much ceremony |
| 7–9 | Return under Ezra, including his prayer (9) |

KEY PASSAGES:

- | | |
|------|-----------------------------|
| 7:10 | Ezra's approach to ministry |
|------|-----------------------------|

KEY PEOPLE:

- | | |
|-------|--|
| Cyrus | Persian king who allowed the Jews to return and rebuild the temple |
| Ezra | Priest, scribe, great reformer and expert in the law;
under his spiritual leadership, Israel put away their foreign wives |

NEHEMIAH

Nehemiah, contemporary of Ezra and cupbearer to the king in the Persian palace, leads the third and last return to Jerusalem after the Babylonian exile.... Granted permission to return to his homeland, Nehemiah challenges his countrymen to arise and rebuild the shattered wall of Jerusalem. In spite of opposition from without and abuse from within, the task is completed in only fifty-two days.... By contrast, the task of reviving and reforming the people of God within those rebuilt walls demands years of Nehemiah's godly life and leadership.³⁶

THEME: Rebuilding of the Walls

OUTLINE:

- | | | |
|------|--|---------|
| I. | Rebuilding the Walls of Jerusalem under Nehemiah | (1-7) |
| II. | Revival of the People under Ezra | (8-10) |
| III. | Reinforcement of the Work under Nehemiah | (11-13) |

KEY CHAPTERS:

3-7 Work on and completion of the walls; opposition; census

KEY PASSAGE:

8:4-8 Presentation of the law by Ezra to the people

KEY PEOPLE:

Artaxerxes	Persian king who was the son of Xerxes I and stepson of Esther; allowed the Jews to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem under the leadership of Nehemiah
Nehemiah	Artaxerxes' cupbearer; governor of Judea; supervisor of construction
Sanballat	Influential Samaritan; sought to end construction on the walls; sought to assassinate Nehemiah

ESTHER

The story of Esther's life fits between chapters 6 and 7 of Ezra, between the first return led by Zerubbabel and the second return led by Ezra.... God's hand of providence and protection on behalf of His people is evident throughout the book, though His name does not appear once. Haman's plot brings grave danger to the Jews and is countered by the courage of beautiful Esther and the counsel of her wise cousin Mordecai, resulting in a great deliverance. The Feast of Purim becomes an annual reminder of God's faithfulness on behalf of His people.³⁷

THEME: Preservation through Providence

OUTLINE:

- I. The Threat to the Jews (1–4)
- II. The Triumph of the Jews (5–10)

KEY PASSAGE:

4:14 God has sovereignly placed Esther in her position of influence

KEY PEOPLE:

Esther	Jewish maiden of great beauty who became the queen of Persia; her courage paved the way for the preservation of the Jews within the Persian Empire
Mordecai	Esther's older cousin and palace official; used by God to deliver the Jews
Haman	An Amalekite; captain of the princes; plotted destruction of the Jews
Ahasuerus	The Persian king Xerxes I

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~10–20 MINUTES):

1. Briefly discuss any questions you have about the books covered in this section of Bible Knowledge.
2. Review the information in this section of Bible Knowledge by asking questions such as:
 - What is in 1 Kings 18?
 - What is the theme of 1 Chronicles?
 - Who was Haman?
3. Review any required memorized content from Genesis to 2 Samuel.

³⁷ Ibid., 131.

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Read and consider the key texts, terms, provided theological writings, and other additional resources as desired. Write out an answer or outline for each question.

PNEUMATOLOGY

Pneumatology is the study of the Holy Spirit.

- **Some key issues and themes addressed in pneumatology include:**
 - The Person of the Holy Spirit
 - The Deity of the Holy Spirit
 - The Work/Ministry of the Holy Spirit
 - In the Old Testament
 - In the New Testament
 - During the Life of Christ

1. WHAT SCRIPTURES WOULD YOU USE TO DEMONSTRATE THE DEITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

- **Key passages to consider:**
 - Psalm 139:7
 - Acts 5:3–5
 - 1 Corinthians 2:10–11
 - 2 Peter 1:20–21

- **What theologians say:**

Louis Berkhof in *Systematic Theology*

The deity of the Holy Spirit may be established from Scripture by a line of proof quite similar to that employed in connection with the Son: (1) *Divine names are given to Him*, Ex. 17:7 (comp. Heb. 3:7–9); Acts 5:3, 4; 1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Tim. 3:16 (comp. 2 Pet. 1:21). (2) *Divine perfections are ascribed to Him*, such as omnipresence, Ps. 139:7–10, omniscience, Isa. 40:13, 14 (comp. Rom. 11:34); 1 Cor. 2:10, 11, omnipotence, 1 Cor. 12:11; Rom. 15:19, and eternity, Heb. 9:14 (?). (3) *Divine works are performed by Him*, such as creation, Gen. 1:2; Job. 26:13; 33:4, providential renovation, Ps. 104:30, regeneration, John 3:5, 6; Tit. 3:5, and the resurrection of the dead, Rom. 8:11. (4) *Divine honour is also paid to Him*, Matt. 28:19; Rom. 9:1; 2 Cor. 13:13.³⁸

38 Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 97–98.

William G.T. Shedd in *Dogmatic Theology*

That the Holy Spirit is a divine person is clear ...

1. Because the divine name is given to him: In Isa. 6:9 Jehovah speaks, and in Acts 28:25 the Holy Spirit is said to speak the same words. In 2 Sam. 23:2–3 “the Spirit of the Lord spoke; and he is called the God of Israel.” The lie of Ananias against the Holy Spirit was a lie against God (Acts 5:3). The believer’s body is the temple of God because the Holy Spirit dwells in it (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19). The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the indwelling of God: “We know that we dwell in God and God dwells in us, because he has given us of his Spirit” (1 John 4:13).

2. Because divine attributes are ascribed to him: (a) eternity (Gen. 1:2); (b) omnipresence: “Whither shall I flee from your Spirit?” (Ps. 139:7–8); “the Holy Spirit dwells in you” (1 Cor. 3:16); (c) omniscience: “The Spirit searches the deep things of God” (1 Cor. 2:10); “he shall guide you unto all truth and show you things to come” (John 16:13); “holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21); (d) omnipotence: “The power of the Highest” is the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35); “he shall quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit which dwells in you” (Rom. 8:11).

3. Because divine works are attributed to him: (a) creation (Gen. 1:2; Ps. 33:6), (b) preservation and government (Ps. 104:30), (c) miracles (Matt. 12:28; 1 Cor. 12:4; Luke 1:35), (d) the unction and mission of the Messiah (Isa. 61:1), (e) remission of sin and regeneration (1 Cor. 6:11; John 3:5), (f) government of the church (Acts 13:2; 15:28; 20:28), (g) prediction of future events (John 16:13; Acts 11:28), (h) *charismata* (1 Cor. 12:7–11), (i) illumination (Eph. 1:17–18), (j) sanctification (2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2), and (k) resurrection of the dead (Rom. 8:11).

4. Because divine worship is rendered to him: in the baptismal formula (Matt. 28:19) and in the apostolic benediction (2 Cor. 13:14; Rev. 1:4). In this last passage, the “seven spirits” are the Holy Spirit, who is so called because of the variety of his gifts, because it is the perfect number in the Jewish idea, and because of an allusion to the seven churches addressed. “Glorify God in your body, which is God’s” (1 Cor. 6:20), but it is the Holy Spirit who dwells in the body as his temple (v. 19).³⁹

39 William. G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2003), 269.

- Write a summary or outline of your answer to the question, “What Scriptures would you use to demonstrate the deity of the Holy Spirit?”

2. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN CONVERSION?

- **Key passages to consider:**

- John 3:5
- John 16:8
- Romans 8:9–11
- Ephesian 1:13–14
- Titus 3:5

- **Key terms to include:**

- Conviction
- Regeneration
- Indwelling
- Sealing

- **What theologians say:**

Louis Berkhof in *Systematic Theology*

...the Holy Spirit is the efficient cause of regeneration. This means that the Holy Spirit works directly on the heart of man and changes its spiritual condition. There is no co-operation of the sinner in this work whatsoever. It is the work of the Holy Spirit directly and exclusively, Ezek. 11:19; John 1:13; Acts 16:14; Rom. 9:16; Phil. 2:13. Regeneration, then, is to be conceived monergistically. God alone works, and the sinner has no part in it whatsoever. This, of course, does not mean, that man does not co-operate in later stages of the work of redemption. It is quite evident from Scripture that he does.⁴⁰

40 Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 473.

Millard J. Erickson in *Christian Theology*

In Jesus' teaching we find an especially strong emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in initiating persons into the Christian life. Jesus taught that the Spirit's activity is essential in both conversion, which from the human perspective is the beginning of the Christian life, and regeneration, which from God's perspective is its beginning.

Conversion is the human's turning to God. It consists of a negative and a positive element: repentance, that is, abandonment of sin; and faith, that is, acceptance of the promises and the work of Christ. Jesus spoke especially of repentance, and specifically of conviction of sin, which is the prerequisite of repentance. He said, "When he [the Counselor] comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned" (John 16:8–11). Without this work of the Holy Spirit, there can be no conversion.

Regeneration is the miraculous transformation of the individual and implantation of spiritual energy. Jesus made very clear to Nicodemus that regeneration is essential to acceptance by the Father: "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again...no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit" (John 3:3, 5–6). Clearly, regeneration is a supernatural occurrence, and the Holy Spirit is the agent who produces it. The flesh (i.e., human effort) is not capable of effecting this transformation. Nor can this transformation even be comprehended by the human intellect. Jesus in fact likened this work of the Spirit to the blowing of the wind: "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit" (v. 8).⁴¹

- Write a summary or outline of your answer to the question, "What is the role of the Holy Spirit in conversion?"

41 Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 888.

3. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE BAPTIZED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT?

○ **Key passages to consider:**

- Acts 11:16
- Romans 6:3–6
- 1 Corinthians 12:12–13

○ **What theologians say:**

John Frame in *Systematic Theology*

...regeneration is sometimes called in Scripture the “baptism in the Holy Spirit.” Paul describes it this way in 1 Corinthians 12:13: “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.” Cf. Matt. 3:11; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16. You see that the baptism of the Spirit includes *all* believers. In fact, the baptism of the Spirit is what makes us one body. Without that baptism, we are not part of the body of Christ. So everyone in the body has been baptized in the Spirit.⁴²

John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue in *Biblical Doctrine*

Holy Spirit baptism is a positional act, taking place in the life of every Christian concurrently with regeneration. The texts in Acts that refer to a post-conversion baptism of the Spirit are associated with the transitional nature of the period described in Acts. First Corinthians 12:13 records the normative doctrine of Spirit baptism, stating that it results in a new position in the body of Christ for all Christians at the moment of faith in Christ.... The church, the spiritual body of Christ, is formed as believers are immersed by Christ in the Spirit and united with all other Christians beginning with Pentecost. Holy Spirit baptism is not an experience to seek but rather a salvation reality for which to thank God.⁴³

- Write a summary or outline of your answer to the question, “What does it mean to be baptized by the Holy Spirit?”:

⁴² John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2013), 926.

⁴³ MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 357–58.

4. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT?

○ **Key passages to consider:**

- Ephesians 5:15–21 (Compare 5:18–19 with Colossians 3:16)
- Galatians 5:22–24

○ **What theologians say:**

Paul Enns in *The Moody Handbook of Theology*

The filling of the Holy Spirit is distinct from the other ministries of the Spirit inasmuch as it is conditional. Whereas ministries such as the indwelling, baptism, regenerating, and sealing are non-experiential and occur but once at the moment of conversion, the filling of the Spirit is experiential and also repeated.

... The basis for the filling of the Spirit is Ephesians 5:18, “be filled with the Spirit.” The command to be filled with the Spirit is given in contrast to the warning “do not get drunk with wine.” Drunkenness exhibits the inability of the person to control himself. The nature of the Christian’s life is to be in contrast to the nature of the uncontrolled drunkard. The meaning of “filled” (Gk. *plerousthe*) is “control.” “The indwelling Spirit of God is the One who should continually control and dominate the life of the believer.” ...

... Although there no doubt are numerous consequences of being filled with the Spirit, probably most of them would be bound up in the statement of Galatians 5:22–24. The result of being filled with the Spirit will be to produce the fruit of the Spirit....⁴⁴

John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue in *Biblical Doctrine*

Paul wrote, “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit” (5:18). Since the apostle began by explaining what being filled is *not*, it would be good to begin this discussion in like manner.

First, being filled with the Holy Spirit is not a dramatic, esoteric experience of suddenly being energized and spiritualized into a permanent state of advanced godliness by a second act of blessing subsequent to salvation. Nor is it some temporary effect that results in ecstatic speech or visions.

Second, being filled with the Spirit is not a notion at the other extreme—stoically trying to do what God wants us to do, with the Holy Spirit’s blessing, in our own power. It is not merely a human act that has God’s approval.

Third, being filled is not the same as possessing or being indwelt by the Holy Spirit, because he indwells every believer at the moment of salvation. Paul states in Romans 8:9, “Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.” Unlike believers before Pentecost, on whom the Holy Spirit would come temporarily

44 Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, 278–80.

(Judg. 13:25; 16:20; 1 Sam. 16:14; Ps. 51:11), all Christians are indwelt permanently by the Spirit.

Fourth, being filled with the Spirit does not describe a process of receiving him progressively by degrees. Every Christian not only possesses the Holy Spirit but also possesses him in his fullness. God does not parcel out the Spirit, as if he could somehow be divided into various parts.

Fifth, it is also clear from 1 Corinthians 12:13 that the filling with the Spirit is not the same as the baptism of the Spirit because every believer has been baptized with and has received the Spirit. Although its results are experienced and enjoyed, baptism by and reception of the Spirit are not realities one can feel and are certainly not experiences reserved only for specially blessed believers. Spirit baptism is a spiritual reality that occurs in every believer the moment one becomes a Christian and is placed by Christ into his body by the Holy Spirit, who then takes up residence in that life. Filling can be interrupted by personal sin.

Paul did not accuse the Corinthians of being immature and sinful because they did not yet have the Holy Spirit or had not yet been baptized into the church, and then exhort them to seek the Spirit in order to remedy the situation (1 Cor. 1:1–8). Rather, he reminded them that each one of them already possessed the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:7, 11). They were sinning not because of the Holy Spirit's absence but in spite of the Holy Spirit's presence. Even when a Christian sins, one is still indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and it is that very fact that makes one's sin even worse. When a Christian grieves the Spirit (Eph. 4:30) or quenches the Spirit (1 Thess. 5:19), one grieves or quenches the Spirit who resides within.

Finally, being filled with the Spirit is not the same as being sealed or secured by him. That is an accomplished fact (Eph. 1:13). Nowhere are believers commanded or exhorted to be indwelt, baptized, or sealed by the Holy Spirit. The *only* command is to be filled...

Command. Unlike all previous mentions of Spirit "filling," in Ephesians 5:18 Paul commands believers to *continue* being filled or controlled by the Holy Spirit. He employs an imperative to insist that they continuously submit to the Holy Spirit's control because it is God's will (Eph. 5:17).

Humans have two choices—be filled by the flesh in unbelief (Rom. 1:29–32; see Acts 13:10, 45; 19:28–29) or be filled by the Holy Spirit in salvation and sanctification (Eph. 5:18). Being filled authenticates one's genuine salvation by allowing God's will to prevail in obedience to Scripture's teaching and the Holy Spirit's direction.⁴⁵

- Write a summary or outline of your answer to the question, “What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit?”

5. HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND TO SOMEONE WHO ARGUES THAT THE CHARISMATIC/MIRACULOUS GIFTS ARE STILL ACTIVE TODAY?

- **Key passages to consider:**

- Acts 14:2–3
- 2 Corinthians 12:12
- Hebrews 2:2–4
- 2 Peter 1:16–21

- **Key terms to include:**

- Apostle
- Authentication/Validation
- Cessationism

- **What theologians say:**

B.B. Warfield in *Counterfeit Miracles*

These gifts were not the possession of the primitive Christian as such; nor for that matter of the Apostolic Church or the Apostolic age for themselves; they were distinctly the authentication of the Apostles. They were part of the credentials of the Apostles as the authoritative agents of God in founding the church. Their function thus confined them to distinctively the apostolic church and they necessarily passed away with it. The miraculous working which is but the sign of God’s revealing power cannot be expected to continue and in point of fact, does not continue after the revelation of which it is the accompaniment had been completed.⁴⁶

46 B. B. Warfield, *Counterfeit Miracles* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1918), 6.

John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue in *Biblical Doctrine*

Cessationism is the view that the sign gifts (e.g., the performing of miracles, gifts of healing, speaking in tongues) and the revelatory gifts (i.e., the reception and proclamation of new revelation from God) passed away when the foundation stage of the church ended. Those kinds of miraculous phenomena did not continue beyond the apostolic era and thus have not been given to believers since. Miraculous gifts will not return until the tribulation period, after the church has been raptured and during the ministry of the two witnesses (cf. Rev. 11:3–11). In contrast to cessationism, the *charismatic* or *continuationist* position asserts that the miraculous and revelatory gifts are still in operation today.

One approach to defending the cessationist position begins with recognizing that there are no apostles in the church today—a fact ubiquitously affirmed throughout church history and acknowledged by many modern noncessationists. ...no one today can meet the qualifications necessary for apostleship (which include seeing the risen Christ with one's own physical eyes; cf. Acts 1:22; 9:1–9)....

That there have been no apostles since the first century is significant for at least three reasons: (1) it demonstrates that God did not intend everything that characterized the early church to be normative for the rest of church history; (2) it shows that at least one significant ministry function listed in 1 Corinthians 12:28–30 has ceased; and (3) it verifies that the canon of Scripture is in fact closed, since an apostle must authorize a book for it to be recognized as canonical....

God's completed revelation in his written Word is so powerful and glorious that it no longer needs miraculous confirmation. As Peter explains, the prophetic word is even *more sure* than the most extraordinary of eyewitness experiences (2 Pet. 1:16–21). In the all-sufficient Scriptures, God's truth is self-attesting and self-evident, as the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit confirms (Heb. 4:12). Consequently, the signs and wonders of the apostolic age are no longer necessary. The Bible is all that is needed to validate the message of those who claim to be God's spokesmen.

The cessationist position is further confirmed by comparing modern "charismatic gifts" with the realities described in the New Testament. Scripture provides a clear picture of the miraculous sign and revelatory gifts, but when modern charismatic phenomena are measured against that biblical standard, they fall far short. Though charismatics use biblical terminology to describe their experiences, nothing about modern "miraculous gifts" matches the biblical reality....

The fact is that modern charismatic experiences do not match what the Bible describes as the miraculous and revelatory gifts of the New Testament period. There is nothing extraordinary about fallible prophecy, irrational tongues, or the counterfeit miracles performed by modern faith healers. What a contrast they are to the genuine gifts recorded on the pages of Scripture, which produced wonder, awe, and worship in the hearts of those who witnessed them (cf. Mark 1:27; 2:12; Luke

4:36; 8:56; Acts 2:7, 12; 8:13; 10:45). Cessationism, then, is motivated by a concern to honor the Holy Spirit by safeguarding a true understanding of his miraculous work as portrayed in Scripture.⁴⁷

Write a summary or outline of your answer to the question, “How would you respond to someone who argues that the charismatic/miraculous gifts are still active today?”

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~20–30 MINUTES):

1. Briefly discuss any questions you have about pneumatology and the specific questions you answered in this chapter.
2. Practice answering the following questions using only a Bible for reference:
 - What Scriptures would you use to demonstrate the deity of the Holy Spirit?
 - What is the role of the Holy Spirit in conversion?
 - What does it mean to be baptized by the Holy Spirit?
 - What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit?
 - How would you respond to someone who argues that the charismatic/miraculous gifts are still active today?
3. Briefly review the following theology questions:
 - How can God be known?
 - Defend Trinitarianism.
 - How would you respond to someone who says, “If God is love, then why do bad things happen to good people?”
 - How can you prove the deity of Jesus Christ?
 - Describe the incarnation and its significance.
 - What does the resurrection of Christ signify for the believer?

⁴⁷ MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 804–06.

ELDER ORIENTATION

PART #1: LEADING WITH A PLURALITY OF ELDERS

PLURALITY IN PRACTICE: PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AMONG ELDERS

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

For a group of men to rightly function together as a plurality, they must understand the biblical principles about elder leadership. But that leadership does not take place in a vacuum. It occurs in the context of relationships. Consider the depth of relationship that characterized Paul and the Ephesian elders with whom he had served.

Acts 20:17–24

From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church. And when they had come to him, he said to them, “You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, bound by the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.”

Acts 20:36–38

When he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. And they began to weep aloud and embraced Paul, and repeatedly kissed him, grieving especially over the word which he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they were accompanying him to the ship.

- Describe Paul’s relationship with the Ephesian elders with whom he had served.

What do the following Proverbs teach about friendship? How does each apply to the interaction between elders?

- Proverbs 3:28–29

- Proverbs 17:9

- Proverbs 17:17

- Proverbs 22:11

- Proverbs 27:6

- Proverbs 27:9–10

- Proverbs 27:17

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~15–20 MINUTES):

Discuss any questions you have from this section, as well as the following:

1. Which, if any, of the elders at your church do you not know personally? How might you get to know them?

2. When do your church elders spend time together? How do your elders seek to build relationships with one another?
 - Through elder meetings
 - Outside of elder meetings

3. How can you be a good friend to the other elders?

ELDER ORIENTATION

PART #2: FULFILLING THE ROLE OF AN ELDER

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

The primary functions of an elder are contained in the other biblical terms for that office – pastor and overseer. As pastors, elders are responsible for feeding and protecting the flock of God. For this reason, elders must be able to teach. Every elder will not be equally gifted, and so all will not have the same teaching opportunities. Still, each elder must be “holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict” (Titus 1:9).

TEACHING GOD’S WORD

- Why is it necessary for elders to be able to teach? What happens to a church when elders are not able to teach or not regularly involved in teaching?

- Why is it essential to both teach the truth and refute error? How should these be balanced in the teaching of a church?

- How has your giftedness to teach been evaluated and affirmed? If it has not been, how could you pursue that?

- What are some ways you would like to continue to grow and develop as a teacher?

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~10–15 MINUTES):

1. Discuss any questions you have from the Individual Preparation.

2. What is your typical process for preparing to teach? What resources do you use as you study the Scriptures?

3. Where are you currently teaching? How often do you teach?

ELDER ORIENTATION

PART #3: DISPLAYING THE CHARACTER OF AN ELDER

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Consider the following biblical qualifications of an elder:

○ **Husband of one wife**

1 Timothy 3:2 An overseer, then, must be...the husband of one wife....

Titus 1:6 namely, if any man is...the husband of one wife....

- Define this qualification in your own words.

- Do you believe this qualification requires an elder to be married?
Why or why not?

- Why is this quality necessary for leadership?

- Do you believe you currently meet this qualification? Why or why not?

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~15–20 MINUTES):

1. Discuss the questions from the Individual Preparation.

2. How can an elder maintain a priority focus on loving his wife amid the demands of ministry leadership?

3. How are you guarding your purity to ensure that you are a one-woman man?

4. Does your wife affirm your desire to become an elder, both in regard to you assuming that additional responsibility and in regard to you meeting the biblical qualifications?

Chapter 4

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

- **Job:** Suffering and Sovereignty
- **Psalms:** Pattern of Personal Worship
- **Proverbs:** Wisdom for the Details of Life
- **Ecclesiastes:** Vanity of Life in a Fallen World
- **Song of Solomon:** The Joy of Married Love

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY: BIBLIOLOGY

- On what basis do you believe the Bible to be a supernatural document?
- Why do you believe the Bible to be closed, in that nothing should be added to the current sixty-six books?
- Define the sufficiency of Scripture. What are the implications of this doctrine for everyday life?

ELDER ORIENTATION

- PART #1: LEADING WITH A PLURALITY OF ELDERS
Plurality in Practice: Unanimous Decisions
- PART #2: FULFILLING THE ROLE OF AN ELDER
Praying for the Church
- PART #3: DISPLAYING THE CHARACTER OF AN ELDER
He Manages His Household Well; Having Children Who Believe

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Review the overview and key information of each book. Memorize key information as desired or required for your church elder process.

JOB

The book of Job tells the story of a man who loses everything – his wealth, his family, his health – and wrestles with the question, *Why?* The book begins with a heavenly debate between God and Satan, moves through three cycles of earthly debates between Job and his friends, and concludes with a dramatic “divine diagnosis” of Job’s problem. In the end, Job acknowledges the sovereignty of God in his life and receives back more than he had before his trials.⁴⁸

THEME: Suffering and Sovereignty

OUTLINE:

- I. The Disasters of Job (1–2)
- II. The Dialogues of Job (3–37)
- III. The Deliverance of Job (38–42)

KEY CHAPTERS:

- 1–2 Satan’s accusation and Job’s affliction
- 38–41 God’s speech and Job’s silence
- 42 Job’s repentance and restoration

KEY PASSAGES:

- 19:25–26 I know that my Redeemer lives

⁴⁸ Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 144.

PSALMS

This collection of ancient hymns represents a wide spectrum of life experiences.... Wherever an individual finds himself on the journey of faith, the Psalms provide a place of rest and a time of repose and reflection, as well as a stimulus to send him on his way.⁴⁹

THEME: Pattern of Personal Worship

OUTLINE:

BOOK	PSALMS	AUTHORS
1	1–41	David
2	42–72	David & Sons of Korah
3	73–89	Mainly Asaph
4	90–106	Mainly Anonymous
5	107–150	David & Anonymous

KEY CHAPTERS:

2	Messiah's reign
19	The works and word of God
22	Messiah's sufferings
23	The Great Shepherd
32	Blessing of forgiveness
51	Confession of sin
73	Apparent prosperity of the wicked
90	Man's transitoriness
119	God's word exalted
139	God and Holy Spirit are omniscient and omnipresent

⁴⁹ C. Hassell Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Poetic Books* (Chicago: Moody, 1988), 111.

PROVERBS

Proverbs is perhaps the most practical book in the Old Testament because it teaches wisdom (lit., “skillful living”) in the multiple aspects of everyday life. In short pithy statements, maxims, and stories, Solomon and other contributors set forth about nine hundred proverbs—inspired precepts dealing with wisdom and folly, pride and humility, justice and vengeance, laziness and work, poverty and wealth, friends and neighbors, love and lust, anger and strife, masters and servants, life and death. These maxims are not theoretical but practical; they are easily memorized, timeless truths that touch on every facet of human relationships.⁵⁰

THEME: Wisdom for the Details of Life

OUTLINE:

- | | | |
|------|---------------------|--------|
| I. | Proverbs of Solomon | (1–29) |
| II. | Proverbs of Agur | (30) |
| III. | Proverbs of Lemuel | (31) |

KEY CHAPTERS:

- | | |
|----|------------------------------------|
| 3 | The pursuit and precepts of wisdom |
| 31 | The godly woman |

KEY PASSAGES:

- | | |
|----------|---|
| 3:5–6 | Trust in the Lord and not in yourself |
| 6:16–19 | Seven things the Lord hates |
| 10:18–20 | Warnings on speech, “lying lips, slander, many words” |
| 16:18–19 | Pride before destruction: haughty vs. humble spirit |
| 22:6 | Training a child in his “way” |
| 27:17 | “Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another” |

⁵⁰ Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 161.

ECCLESIASTES

Ecclesiastes is a profound book recording an intense search by the Preacher (traditionally understood to be Solomon) for meaning and satisfaction in life – in spite of the inequities, inconsistencies, and seeming absurdities of life on earth. The key word in Ecclesiastes is vanity, the futile emptiness of trying to make sense out of life apart from God. Looked at ‘under the sun’ (8:17), life’s pursuits lead only to frustration. Power, prestige, pleasure – nothing can fill the God-shaped void in man’s life – except God Himself.⁵¹

THEME: Vanity of Life in a Fallen World

OUTLINE:

- I. The Problem that “All is Vanity” (1:1–11)
- II. The Proof that “All is Vanity” (1:12–6)
- III. The Prescription for Living with Vanity (7–12)

KEY PASSAGES:

- 12:11–14 “The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments...”; the vanities of life can only be comprehended through a proper relationship with God

51 Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 168.

SONG OF SOLOMON

In contrast to the two distorted extremes of ascetic abstinence and lustful perversion outside of marriage, Solomon's ancient love song exalts the purity of marital affection and romance. It parallels and enhances other portions of Scripture which portray God's plan for marriage, including the beauty and sanctity of sexual intimacy between husband and wife.⁵²

THEME: The Joy of Married Love

OUTLINE:

- I. Courtship (1-3)
- II. Consummation (4-5)
- III. Celebration (5-8)

KEY PASSAGE:

8:6-7 On love (1 Corinthians 13 of OT)

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~10-20 MINUTES):

1. Briefly discuss any questions you have about the books covered in this section of Bible Knowledge.
2. Review the information in this section of Bible Knowledge by asking questions such as:
 - What is the theme of Job?
 - What is found in Proverbs 3:5-6?
 - What is the theme of Ecclesiastes?
3. Review any required memorized content from Genesis to Esther.

⁵² John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: Word, 1997), 940-41.

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Read and consider the key texts, terms, provided theological writings, and other additional resources as desired. Write out an answer or outline for each question.

BIBLIOLOGY

Bibliology is the study of the God's Word.

- **Some key issues and themes addressed in bibliology include:**
 - Revelation
 - The Characteristics of Scripture
 - Inspiration
 - Inerrancy
 - Sufficiency
 - The Canon of Scripture

1. ON WHAT BASIS DO YOU BELIEVE THE BIBLE TO BE A SUPERNATURAL DOCUMENT?

- **Key passages to consider:**
 - Deuteronomy 18:18
 - Psalm 19:7-11
 - 1 Corinthians 2:12-16
 - 2 Timothy 3:16-17
 - 2 Peter 1:20-21
- **Key terms to include:**
 - Fulfilled prophecy
 - Internal testimony
 - Christ's authentication
 - Testimony of the Spirit

- **What theologians say:**

The Westminster Confession of Faith

We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to a high and reverend esteem of the holy scripture, and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole, (which is to give all glory to God,) the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's

salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the word of God; yet, notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts.⁵³

Robert Reymond in *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*

Because the Holy Scriptures, although written by men, are more fundamentally God's Spirit-inspired, imperishable, coherent Word, they are intrinsically authoritative and man's only infallible rule for faith and life. Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, whom his Father raised from the dead on the third day after death, regarded the Scriptures precisely this way and declared them to be such. Among other things he said about the Old Testament, he declared: "The Scripture cannot be broken..." (John 10:35)....

Again and again Jesus referred to "the Law and the Prophets" (Matt. 5:17; 7:12; 11:13; 22:40), often citing them to settle an issue (Matt. 12:5; 15:3-6; 21:13, 42), and implying as he did so that the Old Testament was for him a fixed canon of authority. He regarded its history as unimpeachable, often choosing for his illustrations the very Old Testament events that prove least acceptable as factual history to the contemporary critical scholar, such as the creation of man in the beginning by a direct act of God (Matt. 19:4-5), the murder of Abel (Matt. 23:35), Noah's flood (Matt. 24:37), the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Matt. 10:15; 11:23-24), the tragic end of Lot's wife (Luke 17:32), and the fish's swallowing of Jonah (Matt. 12:40)....

Not only did Jesus endorse the Old Testament's divine origin, inspiration, and authority, but he also "preauthenticated" the New. To his disciples he declared: "The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, ... will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:26), and "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you" (John 16:12-14). Accordingly, the apostles not only shared Christ's view of the Old Testament but also, with his authentication of them as his authoritative messengers and of their message as his word to both church and world, they presented themselves to their auditors as his ambassadors and their message as God's word (see 1 Thess. 2:13), proclaimed "not in words taught ... by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit" (1 Cor. 2:13).⁵⁴

⁵³ *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, 21-22.

⁵⁴ Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 44-47.

John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue in *Biblical Doctrine*

The doctrine of Scripture is absolutely fundamental and essential because it identifies the only true source for all Christian truth. Scripture repeatedly claims to be the Word of God. The prophets appealed to it as the foundation for God's promises and judgments. Christ and his apostles based the whole of Christian doctrine on the Scriptures. Over 2,500 times in the Old Testament alone the Bible asserts that God spoke what is written within its pages (Isa. 1:2). From the beginning (Gen. 1:3) to the end (Mal. 4:3) and continually throughout, this is what the Old Testament claims.

The phrase "the word of God" occurs over forty times in the New Testament. It is equated with the Old Testament (Mark 7:13). It was what Jesus preached (Luke 5:1). It was the message the apostles taught (Acts 4:31; 6:2). It was the word the Samaritans received (Acts 8:14) as given by the apostles (Acts 8:25). It was the message the Gentiles received as preached by Peter (Acts 11:1). It was the word Paul preached....⁵⁵

- Write a summary or outline of your answer to the question, "On what basis do you believe the Bible to be a supernatural document?"

2. WHY DO YOU BELIEVE THE BIBLE TO BE CLOSED, IN THAT NOTHING SHOULD BE ADDED TO THE CURRENT SIXTY-SIX BOOKS?

- **Key passages to consider:**
 - Hebrews 1:1-2
 - 2 Peter 1:19-21
 - Revelation 22:18-19
- **Key terms to include:**
 - Canon
 - Prophets
 - Apostles

55 MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 69-70.

○ **What theologians say:**

John Frame in *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief*

Is the canon “closed,” or should we expect God to add more books to the canon in our time and in the future? In one sense, the canon is always closed. God forbids people to add to or subtract from it (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; cf. Prov. 30:6; Rev. 22:18–19). Jesus upbraided the Pharisees for putting their traditions on a par with Scripture and therefore making “void the word of God” (Matt. 15:6). We are to be satisfied with what God has given us, and not long for more. In every age, God has given his people all the written words we need to live faithfully before him.

Nevertheless, God himself has added to the canon, as we have seen. Moses added the Deuteronomic revelation to the original Decalogue. God accepted that revelation as worthy to be placed beside the Decalogue in the Most Holy Place. Joshua added his words to those of Moses. God added the Prophets and Writings to the Law, and the NT to the OT. Of course, God has the freedom to do this, though he forbids it to any mere man.

God adds revelation as needs for it arise in history. The revelation made to Adam would not have been sufficient for Noah, since he had to prepare for the flood. The revelation made to Noah would not have been sufficient for Abraham, to define God’s covenant with him. And the OT, though sufficient to meet the challenges of the NT church after Paul’s demise (2 Tim. 3:17), was not sufficient to tell the whole story of Jesus.

The NT teaches, however, that with the coming of Christ, with his atonement, resurrection, and ascension, and the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, redemptive history has reached a watershed. The work of Christ is final, in a way that the work of Abraham and Moses are not. In Christ, God has spoken (past tense, Heb. 1:2) a final word to us, attested (also past tense, Heb. 2:2) by Jesus’ original hearers. As the redemptive work of Christ is once for all, so the word of Christ and the apostles is once for all. For God to add more books to the canon would be like his adding something to the work of Christ—something that Scripture teaches cannot be done.

So the canon is closed today, not only in the sense that human beings dare not add to it, but also in the sense that God himself will not add to it. The closing of the canon does not, however, put an end to revelation in general. God still communicates with us in general revelation, in the Spirit’s work of writing the Word on our heart, and of course in Scripture itself. The writing of Scripture is once for all, but God continues to speak to us *through* Scripture day by day.⁵⁶

56 Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 589–90.

John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue in *Biblical Doctrine*

How does the church today know that God will not amend the current Bible with a sixty-seventh inspired book? In other words, is the canon closed?

Scripture texts warn that no one should delete from or add to Scripture (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:6). Realizing that additional canonical books actually came after these words of warning, one can only conclude that while these admonitions permitted no deletions whatsoever, they did, in fact, allow for authorized, inspired writings to be added in order to complete the canon protected by these passages.

Several significant observations, when taken together, have convinced the church over the centuries that the canon of Scripture is actually closed, never to be reopened. First, the book of Revelation is unique to the Scripture in that it describes with unparalleled detail the end-time events that precede eternity future. As Genesis began Scripture by bridging the gap from eternity past to this present space-time existence with the only detailed creation account (Genesis 1–2), so Revelation transitions out of space and time into eternity future (Revelation 20–22). Genesis and Revelation, by their contents, are the perfectly matched bookends of Scripture.

Second, just as there was prophetic silence after Malachi completed the Old Testament canon, so there has been a parallel silence since John delivered the book of Revelation. This leads to the conclusion that the New Testament canon was closed then as well.

Third, since there have not been, nor are there now, any authorized prophets or apostles in either the Old Testament or New Testament sense, there are not any potential authors of more inspired, canonical writings. God's Word, "once for all delivered to the saints," is never to be added to but is to be earnestly contended for (Jude 3).

Fourth, of the four biblical exhortations not to tamper with Scripture, only the one in Revelation 22:18–19 contains warnings of severe divine judgment for disobedience. Further, Revelation is the only book of the New Testament to end with this kind of admonition and was the last New Testament book to be written. Therefore, these facts strongly suggest that Revelation was the last book of the canon and that the Bible is complete; to either add or delete would bring God's severe displeasure.

Finally, the early church, those closest in time to the apostles, believed that Revelation concluded God's inspired writings, the Scriptures. So based on solid biblical reasoning, we can conclude that the canon is and will remain closed. There will be no sixty-seventh book of the Bible.⁵⁷

57 MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 125–26.

- Write a summary or outline of your answer to the question, “Why do you believe the Bible to be closed, in that nothing should be added to the current sixty-six books?”

3. DEFINE THE SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE. WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS DOCTRINE FOR EVERYDAY LIFE?

- **Key passages to consider:**

- Psalm 19:7–11
- 2 Timothy 3:16–17
- 2 Peter 1:3–4

- **What theologians say:**

The Westminster Confession of Faith

The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the word; and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the word, which are always to be observed.⁵⁸

Wayne Grudem in *Systematic Theology*

We can define the sufficiency of Scripture as follows: *The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains everything we need God to tell us for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly.*

⁵⁸ The Westminster Confession of Faith, 22–23.

This definition emphasizes that it is in Scripture alone that we are to search for God's words to us. It also reminds us that God considers what he has told us in the Bible to be enough for us, and that we should rejoice in the great revelation that he has given us and be content with it.

Significant scriptural support and explanation of this doctrine is found in Paul's words to Timothy, "from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are *able to instruct you for salvation* through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15). The context shows that "sacred writings" here means the written words of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16). This is an indication that the words of God which we have in Scripture are all the words of God we need in order to be saved: these words are able to make us wise "for salvation." This is confirmed by other passages that talk about the words of Scripture as the means God uses to bring us to salvation (James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23).

Other passages indicate that the Bible is sufficient to equip us for living the Christian life. Once again Paul writes to Timothy, "All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, *that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work*" (2 Tim. 3:16–17).

Here Paul indicates that one purpose for which God caused Scripture to be written is to train us that we might be "equipped for every good work." If there is any "good work" that God wants a Christian to do, this passage indicates that God has made provision in his Word for training the Christian in it. Thus, there is no "good work" that God wants us to do other than those that are taught somewhere in Scripture: it can equip us for *every good work*.⁵⁹

- Write a summary or outline of your answer to the question, "Define the sufficiency of Scripture. What are the implications of this doctrine for everyday life?"

- For further discussion or study in Bibliology:
 - Define and distinguish inerrancy and infallibility.
 - Define and discuss the doctrine of illumination.
 - Explain and defend the historical/grammatical method of hermeneutics.

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~30 MINUTES):

1. Briefly discuss any questions you have about bibliology and the specific questions you answered in this chapter.

2. Practice answering the following questions using only a Bible for reference.
 - On what basis do you believe the Bible to be a supernatural document?
 - Why do you believe the Bible to be closed, in that nothing should be added to the current sixty-six books?
 - Define the sufficiency of Scripture. What are the implications of this doctrine for everyday life?

2. Briefly review any of the following theology questions that would be helpful:
 - How can God be known?
 - Defend Trinitarianism.
 - How would you respond to someone who says, “If God is love, then why do bad things happen to good people?”
 - How can you prove the deity of Jesus Christ?
 - Describe the incarnation and its significance.
 - What does the resurrection of Christ signify for the believer?
 - What Scriptures would you use to demonstrate the deity of the Holy Spirit?
 - What is the role of the Holy Spirit in conversion?
 - What does it mean to be baptized by the Holy Spirit?
 - What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit?
 - How would you respond to someone who argues that the charismatic/miraculous gifts are still active today?

ELDER ORIENTATION

PART #1: LEADING WITH A PLURALITY OF ELDERS ***PLURALITY IN PRACTICE: UNANIMOUS DECISIONS***

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

The Scriptures often speak of “the elders” of a local church as one body, with one collective voice. While individual elders may say things somewhat differently given their diversity, they should be careful to speak in unity with one voice.

Given that the group of elders in the local church should be united in decisions made, it is reasonable to think of elders functioning with unanimity. However, this can easily be misunderstood or misapplied such that one elder or group of elders exercises undue authority. If any decision requires the affirmation of all elders, one elder can bring things to a screeching halt. How can elders work together to make unanimous decisions even when there may be disagreements and different perspectives?

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING TO EACH VOICE

The best way to reach unanimous decisions as elders is for each elder to contribute to the discussion such that the final decision reflects the best ideas and input from each elder. In such cases, the final decision or direction will rarely be what any single elder proposed on their own. An elder board that is properly functioning will not simply take the three or four ideas different elders have related to the issue at hand and vote on which one to implement. Rather, they will listen to each idea and work to come to a consensus that includes the best of each one. Each elder can support the final decision knowing it incorporated or at least considered their perspective and humbly recognize the benefit of the final decision that also includes the views of others.

This does not mean that every elder must speak up regarding every decision. Some decisions are more straightforward and require little discussion. Others have a clear consensus or an established precedent. Sometimes an elder’s perspective has already been shared by another elder, and so it is simply not necessary to express that perspective again. The goal in working to unanimity is not to needlessly drag out discussions but to genuinely consider the collective wisdom.

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF A DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

There will undoubtedly be times when a diverse group of elders simply cannot come to a unanimous decision. They need an agreed-upon plan for handling such disagreements in a godly manner that maintains unity among the leadership and congregation. Consider the following example of a policy for unanimity:

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS WHEN THE ELDERS ARE NOT UNANIMOUS

Since the Spirit has only one mind about any given decision, in the normal course of church ministry our goal is for all the elders to be of one mind in following the same Spirit (Phil. 2:2). Thus, we strive to be unanimous in all decisions. We endeavor to reach all decisions only after prayerful consideration and in a spirit of humility, with each elder regarding one another as more important than himself (Phil. 2:3-5).

However, we recognize that godly men sometimes differ (e.g., Acts 15:37-40). If we are unable to reach a unanimous decision with the first vote, we have unanimously agreed to use the following process.

VOTE 1:

1. If any matter receives a unanimous **yes** vote, then the elders' decision is **yes**. In that case, the issue is settled, and the motion should be implemented.
2. If a motion receives a greater than 25% **no** vote, the elders' decision is **no**. In that case, the motion should not be implemented, and the matter is settled (unless the elders agree to bring it up again at a later date for further consideration).
3. If an elder or elders vote **no**, but there are not enough **no** votes to settle the matter (less than the required 25%), a second vote must be scheduled for a future meeting.
4. Before the second vote, the dissenting elder (or elders) are responsible for gathering additional information on the motion, discussing it with the key parties, and seeking godly counsel. The board will grant these men as much time as reasonably necessary to review the matter. After sufficient time to consider the additional information, discussion, and counsel, the elders will then allow adequate time for prayer for all. Again, the desire is that all decisions will be unanimous, and the elders will work in good faith toward that end.
5. Once the necessary time has been allowed, the elders will schedule a second vote on the matter.

VOTE 2:

1. If 75% of the elders vote **yes**, the elders' decision is **yes**, and the matter is settled.
2. If less than 75% of the elders vote **yes**, the decision is **no**, and the matter is settled.
3. The elders agree that a decision will be final after the second vote.

STATEMENT OF UNITY:

Any decision finalized after following this process will be the entire board's unified yes or no decision. All elders agree to be unified in the final decision, in public and in private, even though the final decision may not reflect their personal preference.

- Why is this type of agreement helpful in maintaining unity and making decisions?

- What could happen if there is no such agreement in place?

3. THE IMPORTANCE OF ACTIVELY SUPPORTING AND IMPLEMENTING DECISIONS

When the elders collectively make decisions, those decisions must be actively supported and implemented by each elder so as not to undermine the collective leadership of the elders and not to cause divisions within the church. This does not mean that individual elders cannot listen to concerns expressed by those in the congregation and even at times agree that such concerns are legitimate. It simply means they must actively support the final decision as determined by the elders both publicly and privately. One of the simplest ways for an elder to do this is to guard against talking about the other elders as “they” instead of consistently referring to the elders as “we.”

- How might the following tempt an elder not to support a decision? How should they think and respond in such a case?
 - They feel like others did not fully consider their perspective.

 - They would have made a different decision if it was only up to them.

 - They are talking with a member of the congregation who disagrees with the elders’ decision.

- How does it damage or confuse the church when elders are not individually supportive of decisions made by the group?

- How does it damage or confuse the church when elders are not careful to individually implement policies or practices agreed upon by the elders?

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~15–20 MINUTES):

Discuss any questions you have from this section as well as the following:

1. How do the elders at your church handle decisions when they cannot reach a unanimous consensus initially? Do they have a policy or agreed-upon plan for such occurrences?
2. What are some circumstances that make it challenging for an elder to publicly or privately support a decision made by the elders? Discuss how to think and role-play how to respond in such situations.
3. What decisions might warrant an elder resigning because of disagreement with the other elders?

ELDER ORIENTATION

PART #2: FULFILLING THE ROLE OF AN ELDER

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

The primary functions of an elder are contained in the other biblical terms for that office—pastor and overseer. As pastors, elders are responsible to care for and shepherd the flock. But faithful elders recognize that they are ultimately dependent upon the Lord, the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4), to accomplish this work. This dependence on Christ drives elders to pray. Like the apostles, leaders of the early church, said in Acts 6:4, “we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

PRAYING FOR THE CHURCH

- Read the following prayers of Paul for the churches he served. What stands out about the focus and content of his prayers?
 - Ephesians 1:15–23

 - Ephesians 3:14–21

 - Colossians 1:9–12

- How are Paul’s prayers different than how most people typically pray for one another?

ELDER ORIENTATION

PART #2: DISPLAYING THE CHARACTER OF AN ELDER

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Consider the following biblical qualifications of an elder:

○ **He manages his household well; having children who believe**

1 Timothy 3:4–5 He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?)

Titus 1:6 namely, if any man is... having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion.

- Define this qualification in your own words.

- Do you believe this qualification requires an elder to have children? Must his children be believers or simply faithful in the home? Why?

- Why is this quality necessary for leadership?

- Do you believe you currently meet this qualification? Why or why not?

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~15–20 MINUTES):

1. Discuss the questions from the Individual Preparation.

2. How can an elder maintain a priority focus on his children amid the demands of ministry leadership?

3. How should an elder handle challenges with his children? At what point should an elder consider resigning due to issues within his family?

Chapter 5

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

- **Isaiah:** Salvation
- **Jeremiah:** God's Final Warning
- **Lamentations:** Lament over Jerusalem
- **Ezekiel:** Condemnation, Consolation, and Restoration
- **Daniel:** God's Sovereignty over Human History

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY: ANTHROPOLOGY AND HAMARTIOLOGY

- What does it mean when the Bible says that man was created in the image of God? What differentiates man from animals?
- Does man have a free will? Explain.
- How would you defend the doctrine of inherited sin – that men are sinful not only in their actions but also in their nature?
- Explain the concept of the flesh or the old nature. How is the Christian's relationship to the old man explained in Scripture?

ELDER ORIENTATION

- PART #1: LEADING WITH A PLURALITY OF ELDERS
Plurality in Practice: Humility
- PART #2: FULFILLING THE ROLE OF AN ELDER
Visiting the Sick
- PART #3: DISPLAYING THE CHARACTER OF AN ELDER
Not Self-willed

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Review the overview and key information of each book. Memorize key information as desired or required for your church elder process.

ISAIAH

When Isaiah began his ministry in about 740 b.c., Israel was at a crisis point in its history. Assyria, its menacing neighbor to the northeast, was well on its way to becoming the dominant force in the ancient Near East. Both the northern and southern kingdoms were tempted to form political alliances either with or against Assyria. Meanwhile, both Israel and Judah were suffering the devastating fruits of religious and moral compromise. God commissioned Isaiah to call Israel and Judah to repent of their sins and unbelief and to trust him alone for both personal salvation and national deliverance.⁶⁰

THEME: Salvation

OUTLINE:

- I. Chastening of God (1–39)
- II. Comfort of God (40–66)

KEY CHAPTERS:

- 6 Isaiah's call and commissioning
- 40–48 Deliverance promised to Israel
- 53 Suffering Servant (Jesus Christ)
- 66 Glorious future in Zion; the consummation of history

KEY PASSAGES:

- 7:14 The virgin birth of Immanuel
- 9:6 The birth and reign of the Prince of Peace
- 53:4–6 “The Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him”
– the Vicarious Redeemer
- 64:6 Total depravity of man; “righteous deeds are like a filthy garment”

KEY PEOPLE:

- Isaiah Prophet to Judah

⁶⁰ H. L. Willmington, *Willmington's Bible Handbook* (Wheaton, IL; Tyndale, 1997), 355.

JEREMIAH

Apostasy, idolatry, perverted worship, moral decay – these were the conditions under which Jeremiah lived and ministered. An avalanche of judgment is coming, and Jeremiah is called to proclaim that message faithfully for forty years. In response to his sermons, the tender prophet of God experiences intense sorrows at the hands of his countrymen: opposition, beatings, isolation, imprisonment. But though rejected and persecuted, Jeremiah lives to see many of his prophecies come true. The Babylonian army arrives; vengeance falls; and God’s holiness and justice are vindicated, though it breaks the prophet’s heart.⁶¹

THEME: God’s Final Warning

OUTLINE:

- I. Jeremiah’s Call (1)
- II. Judah’s Prophecies (2–45)
- III. Gentiles’ Prophecies (46–51)
- IV. Jerusalem’s Fall (52)

KEY CHAPTERS:

- 25 Judah’s future judgment through Babylon for 70 years;
Babylon judged; all nations
- 31–32 Restoration; new covenant; Jeremiah imprisoned; buys a field;
God explains
- 52 Destruction of Jerusalem

KEY PASSAGES:

- 1:4–10 The foreknowledge of God, “...I knew you” and calling of Jeremiah,
“...I have appointed you...”
- 29:10 Promised restoration in 70 years

⁶¹ Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 197.

LAMENTATIONS

Lamentations, perhaps the saddest book of the Old Testament, is penned by the mourning prophet Jeremiah after the fall of Jerusalem. In five “dirges of death,” Jeremiah expresses the horror and helplessness of seeing the Jews’ proudest city reduced to rubble. Defeat, slaughter, and ruination – the horrors so long promised and so frequently ignored – now fall from the hands of the brutal Babylonians. And yet, even as the prophet’s heart breaks, he pauses to proclaim a ringing testimony of deep faith in the goodness and mercy of God.⁶²

THEME: Lament over Jerusalem

OUTLINE:

- I. The Ruin of Jerusalem (1)
- II. The Wrath of God (2)
- III. The Request for Mercy (3)
- IV. The Review of the Siege (4)
- V. The Request for Restoration (5)

KEY PASSAGE:

3:22-23 God’s faithfulness seen in the midst of suffering

⁶² Ibid., 206.

EZEKIEL

Ezekiel was taken captive to Babylon in 597 B.C. ... [He] lived in Babylon during the final days of the Southern Kingdom of Judah. It is important to note that chapters 1–24 of Ezekiel were given before the final overthrow and destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. These chapters speak of the sin and unbelief of Judah and are very stern pronouncements. But after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., Ezekiel’s message changes dramatically to prophecies of hope and consolation (chaps. 33–48).⁶³

THEME: Condemnation, Consolation, and Restoration

OUTLINE:

- I. Condemnation (1–32)
- II. Consolation and Restoration (33–48)

KEY CHAPTERS:

- 8–11 God’s glory departs
- 36–37 The mountains of Israel to be blessed; renewal of Israel; valley of dry bones; reunion of Israel and Judah; David to be their king
- 38–39 Prophecy against Gog and Magog
- 40–48 The temple; God’s glory; worship; land restored

KEY PASSAGE:

- 36:24–27 Renewal of Israel from the inside – “...I will cleanse you... I will give you a new heart...I will put My Spirit within you...”

KEY PEOPLE:

- Ezekiel Son of Buzi; a priest called to be a prophet; ministered during the 70-year Babylonian captivity

⁶³ Paul Benware, *Survey of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1993), 233.

DANIEL

Deported to Babylon... and handpicked for government service, Daniel becomes God's prophetic mouthpiece to the gentile and Jewish world declaring God's present and eternal purpose. ... In both his personal adventures and prophetic visions, Daniel shows God's guidance, intervention, and power in the affairs of men.⁶⁴

THEME: God's Sovereignty over Human History

OUTLINE:

- I. Personal History of Daniel/The Remnant (1)
- II. Prophetic Plan for the Gentiles/God is in Control (2-7)
- III. Prophetic Plan for Israel/There is a Future (8-12)

KEY CHAPTERS:

- 3 Nebuchadnezzar's idolatrous image; the fiery furnace
- 5 Belshazzar and wall writing
- 6 Darius' decree and Daniel in the lion's den
- 7 Daniel's four-beast vision
- 9 Daniel's seventy-week vision

KEY PASSAGES:

- 7:13-14 "Son of Man" given "everlasting dominion" by the "Ancient of Days"
- 9:24-27 Vision of the 69 weeks pinpoints the coming of the Messiah at the triumphal entry
- 12:1-2 OT reference to resurrection, "everyone who is found written in the book will be rescued."

KEY PEOPLE:

- Daniel Deported to Babylon by the age of 16; served in government; the mouthpiece of God to Gentile and Jewish nations
- Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego Chosen for special training with Daniel in government; went through the fiery furnace; former names were Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah
- Nebuchadnezzar Son of Nabopolassar; king of Babylon in 605 BC

⁶⁴ Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 221.

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~10–20 MINUTES):

1. Briefly discuss any questions you have about the books covered in this section of Bible Knowledge.

2. Review the information in this section of Bible Knowledge by asking questions such as:
 - What is the theme of Jeremiah?
 - What is found in Lamentations 3:22-23?

3. Review any required memorized content from Genesis to Song of Solomon.

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Read and consider the key texts, terms, provided theological writings, and other additional resources as desired. Write out an answer or outline for each question.

ANTHROPOLOGY AND HAMARTIOLOGY

Anthropology is the study of man, and hamartiology is the study of sin.

- **Some key issues and themes addressed in anthropology:**
 - Creation of Man
 - Image of God
 - Nature of Man
 - Body and Soul
 - Gender
- **Some key issues and themes addressed in hamartiology:**
 - The Fall
 - Depravity
 - Death

1. WHAT DOES IT MEAN WHEN THE BIBLE SAYS THAT MAN WAS CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD? WHAT DIFFERENTIATES MAN FROM ANIMALS?

- **Key passages to consider:**
 - Genesis 1:26–28
 - Genesis 9:6
 - James 3:8–9

- **What theologians say:**

J. I. Packer in *Concise Theology*

The statement at the start of the Bible (Gen. 1:26–27, echoed in 5:1; 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7; James 3:9) that God made man in his own image, so that humans are like God as no other earthly creatures are, tells us that the special dignity of being human is that, as humans, we may reflect and reproduce at our own creaturely level the holy ways of God, and thus act as his direct representatives on earth. This is what humans are made to do, and in one sense we are human only to the extent that we are doing it.

The scope of God's image in man is not defined in Genesis 1:26–27, but the context makes it clear. Genesis 1:1–25 sets forth God as personal, rational (having intelligence and will, able to form plans and execute them), creative, competent to control the world he has made, and morally admirable, in that all he creates is good. Plainly, God's image will include all these qualities. Verses 28–30 show God blessing newly created humans (that must mean telling them their privilege and destiny) and setting them to rule creation as his representatives and deputies. The human capacity for communication and relationship with both God and other humans, and the God-given dominion over the lower creation (highlighted in Ps. 8 as the answer to the question, What is man?), thus appear as further facets of the image.

God's image in man at Creation, then, consisted (a) in man's being a "soul" or "spirit" ...that is, a personal, self-conscious, Godlike creature with a Godlike capacity for knowledge, thought, and action; (b) in man's being morally upright, a quality lost at the Fall that is now being progressively restored in Christ (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10); (c) in man's environmental dominion. Usually, and reasonably, it is added that (d) man's God-given immortality and (e) the human body, through which we experience reality, express ourselves, and exercise our dominion, belong to the image too.⁶⁵

Alan Cairns in *Dictionary of Theological Terms*

"God created man ... after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness and holiness, with dominion over the creatures" (*Shorter Catechism*, Q. 10). NT references such as Col. 3:10 and Eph. 4:24 indicate that knowledge, righteousness, and holiness characterized the state in which man was originally created. Gen. 1:27 teaches that he was created in the image of God, and so we can conclude that his creation in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness constitutes, at least in part, the image of God in man.

...the Scripture continues to speak of the image of God in man after the fall (Gen. 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7; James 3:9). According to Gen. 9:6, the foulness of murder consists in an attack upon the image of God.

These facts indicate that the "image of God" comprises more than original righteousness. Thus it is taken to include such things as spirituality, immortality, and moral and rational powers. Summarizing, we may say that Reformed theology views the image of God in man as consisting in spirituality, immortality, intellect and will, original righteousness, and lordship over the lower creation.⁶⁶

65 Packer, *Concise Theology*, 71–72.

66 Alan Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador Emerald International, 2002), 222.

- Write a summary or outline of your answer to the questions,
“What does it mean when the Bible says that man was created in the image of God?
What differentiates man from animals?”

2. DOES MAN HAVE A FREE WILL? EXPLAIN.

- **Key passages to consider:**

- Genesis 2:16–17
- Romans 3:10–18; 6:6–7
- Ephesians 2:1–3

- **Key terms to include:**

- Uncoerced
- Slave of sin

- **What theologians say:**

Alan Cairns in *Dictionary of Theological Terms*

Free will in man has also been called the *freedom of self-determination*, or spontaneity. That is, man's free will consists in his ability to choose according to the disposition, inclination, or bias of his own will. This is the scriptural doctrine.

Because of the fall, man's will is inclined away from God and disposed toward self and sin. Man cannot choose against the bias of his will. And the bias he has toward self and sin is a voluntary bias; it is not imposed upon him by God. Therefore, his choice is truly a free choice, one which carries with it the responsibility for making it.

When free will is understood in this way, it is easy to see how Reformed theologians can on the one hand teach the Biblical doctrine of predestination while on the other hand maintaining that man is a free and responsible moral agent. Similarly, we

can see how we can speak of free will, while holding with Luther the doctrine of the bondage of the will: man acts according to the inclination of his will, but that inclination is ensnared by Satan and sin. In truth, unregenerate man's vaunted freedom of will is freedom to sin, freedom to become an ever greater slave to sin.⁶⁷

Wayne Grudem in *Systematic Theology*

If God exercises providential control over all events are we in any sense free? The answer depends on what is meant by the word *free*. In some senses of the word *free* everyone agrees that we are free in our will and in our choices. Even prominent theologians in the Reformed or Calvinistic tradition concur. Both Louis Berkhof in his *Systematic Theology* (pp. 103, 173) and John Calvin in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* are willing to speak *in some sense* of the “free” acts and choices of man. However, Calvin explains that the term is so subject to misunderstanding that he himself tries to avoid using it. This is because “free will is not sufficient to enable man to do good works, unless he be helped by grace.” Therefore, Calvin concludes:

Man will then be spoken of as having this sort of free decision, not because he has free choice equally of good and evil, but because he acts wickedly by will, not by compulsion. Well put, indeed, but what purpose is served by labeling with a proud name such a slight thing?

Calvin continues by explaining how this term is easily misunderstood:

But how few men are there, I ask, who when they hear free will attributed to man do not immediately conceive him to be master of both his own mind and will, able of his own power to turn himself toward either good or evil ... If anyone, then, can use this word without understanding it in a bad sense, I shall not trouble him on this account ... I'd prefer not to use it myself, and I should like others, if they seek my advice, to avoid it.

Thus, when we ask whether we have “free will,” it is important to be clear as to what is meant by the phrase. Scripture nowhere says that we are “free” in the sense of being outside of God's control or of being able to make decisions that are not caused by anything. (This is the sense in which many people seem to assume we must be free; see discussion below.) Nor does it say we are “free” in the sense of being able to do right on our own apart from God's power. But we are nonetheless free in the greatest sense that any creature of God could be free—we make *willing* choices, choices that have *real effects*. We are aware of no restraints on our will from God when we make

67 Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 186.

decisions. We must insist that we have the power of *willing* choice; otherwise we will fall into the error of fatalism or determinism and thus conclude that our choices do not matter, or that we cannot really make willing choices. On the other hand, the kind of freedom that is demanded by those who deny God's providential control of all things, a freedom to be outside of God's sustaining and controlling activity, would be impossible if Jesus Christ is indeed "continually carrying along things by his word of power" (Heb. 1:3, author's translation). If this is true, then to be outside of that providential control would simply be not to exist! An absolute "freedom," totally free of God's control, is simply not possible in a world providentially sustained and directed by God himself.⁶⁸

- Write a summary or outline of your answer to the question, "Does man have a free will? Explain."

3. HOW WOULD YOU DEFEND THE DOCTRINE OF INHERITED SIN – THAT MEN ARE SINFUL NOT ONLY IN THEIR ACTIONS BUT ALSO IN THEIR NATURE?

- **Key passages to consider:**
 - Psalm 14:3
 - Psalm 51:5
 - Psalm 58:3
 - Romans 5:12–19
 - 1 Corinthians 15:21–22

68 Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 330–31.

○ **What theologians say:**

Robert Culver in *Systematic Theology: Biblical and Historical*

Through the first two and one-half chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, Paul establishes two facts related to the transmission of sin: (a) every man is a corrupt being at heart even before consciously committing sins. Not only so, we know at heart that this is true unless we suppress the knowledge. (b) We are also aware that we are guilty, under just condemnation by our Creator and deserving of punishment both for being sinners at heart and for transgressions we commit.

This is the main thrust of the first three chapters of Romans ending at chapter 3, verse 20.... Then through Romans 3:21–31, all of chapter 4 and through 5:11, the subject is justification—i.e. that God declares believing sinners righteous wholly of grace on the ground of Christ’s finished work of redemption.

At this point comes Romans 5:12–21, both difficult in certain ways and yet marvellously plain. The unity of the race in Adam and his sin is presented as a parallel to and explanation for the oneness of the ‘many’ elect believers in Christ. It will call for later comment but for now, it seems that Paul felt his readers to be more thoroughly familiar with the harrowing of life and conscience by their sins than with the glories of divine grace. Experiential knowledge of the former (our thorough guilt for sin) would throw light on the latter (our full salvation in Christ), which must be first a matter of faith before it becomes a matter of growing experience.

Great as are the mysteries of justification ‘in Christ’ Paul is saying, they are not without parallel in something every competent sinner knows: that he and the race of which he is a member are guilty, deserving of punishment. The latter throws light on the former and Paul is bold, shocking as it may be, to let the fact of *damnation* in Adam throw light on *redemption* in Christ. Since very early in the patristic age these revealed truths about imputation of guilt of Adam’s first transgression to his posterity and their depravity as basic to the imputation have been called ‘Original Sin.’⁶⁹

Wayne Grudem in *Systematic Theology*

How does the sin of Adam affect us? Scripture teaches that we inherit sin from Adam in two ways.

1. Inherited Guilt: We Are Counted Guilty Because of Adam’s Sin. Paul explains the effects of Adam’s sin in the following way: “Therefore ... sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned” (Rom. 5:12). The context shows that Paul is not talking about actual sins that people commit every day of their lives, for the entire paragraph (Rom. 5:12–21) is taken up with the comparison between Adam and Christ. And when

69 R. D. Culver, *Systematic Theology: Biblical and Historical* (Ross-shir, UK: Mentor, 2005), 379.

Paul says, “so ...death spread to all men because all men sinned,” he is saying that through the sin of Adam “all men sinned.”

...The conclusion to be drawn from these verses is that all members of the human race were represented by Adam in the time of testing in the Garden of Eden. As our representative, Adam sinned, and God counted us guilty as well as Adam. (A technical term that is sometimes used in this connection is *impute* meaning “to think of as belonging to someone, and therefore to cause it to belong to that person.”) God counted Adam’s guilt as belonging to us, and since God is the ultimate judge of all things in the universe, and since his thoughts are always true, Adam’s guilt does in fact belong to us. God rightly imputed Adam’s guilt to us....

2. Inherited Corruption: We Have a Sinful Nature Because of Adam’s Sin. In addition to the legal guilt that God imputes to us because of Adam’s sin, we also inherit a sinful nature because of Adam’s sin. This inherited sinful nature is sometimes simply called “original sin” and sometimes more precisely called “original pollution.” ...David says, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Ps. 51:5)....

Therefore, our nature includes a disposition to sin so that Paul can affirm that before we were Christians “we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind” (Eph. 2:3). Anyone who has raised children can give experiential testimony to the fact that we are all born with a tendency to sin. Children do not have to be taught how to do wrong; they discover that by themselves. What we have to do as parents is to teach them how to do right, to “bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4).

This inherited tendency to sin does not mean that human beings are all as bad as they could be. The constraints of civil law, the expectations of family and society, and the conviction of human conscience (Rom. 2:14–15) all provide restraining influences on the sinful tendencies in our hearts.... But in spite of the ability to do good in many senses of that word, our inherited corruption, our tendency to sin, which we received from Adam, means that as far as God is concerned we are not able to do anything that pleases him.⁷⁰

John Calvin in *Institutes of the Christian Religion*

We say, then, that man is corrupted by a natural viciousness, but not by one which proceeded from nature. In saying that it proceeded not from nature, we mean that it was rather an adventitious event which befell man, than a substantial property assigned to him from the beginning. We, however call it *natural* to prevent any one from supposing that each individual contracts it by depraved habit, whereas all

70 Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 494–97.

receive it by a hereditary law. And we have authority for so calling it. For, on the same grounds the apostle says, that we are “by nature the children of wrath,” (Eph. 2:3). How could God, who takes pleasure in the meanest of his works, be offended with the noblest of them all? The offence is not with the work itself, but the corruption of the work. Wherefore, if it is not improper to say, that, in consequence of the corruption of human nature, man is naturally hateful to God, it is not improper to say, that he is naturally vicious and depraved.⁷¹

- Write a summary or outline of your answer to the question, “How would you defend the doctrine of inherited sin – that men are sinful not only in their actions but also in their nature?”

4. EXPLAIN THE CONCEPT OF THE FLESH OR THE OLD NATURE. HOW IS THE CHRISTIAN’S RELATIONSHIP TO THE OLD MAN EXPLAINED IN SCRIPTURE?

- **Key passages to consider:**

- John 3:3–6
- Romans 6:3–7; 7:22–24
- 2 Corinthians 5:17
- Ephesians 4:22–24

- **What theologians say:**

John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue in *Biblical Doctrine*

The relationship of Adam and Jesus Christ to humanity is also connected to the concepts of “old self” and “new self,” found twice in Paul’s letters:

⁷¹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989) 2:1.

... to put off your *old self*, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the *new self*, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. (Eph. 4:22–24)

Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the *old self* with its practices and have put on the *new self*, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. (Col. 3:9–10)

The Greek word for “self” in both passages is *anthropos* and refers to “man.” Some justifiably translate these as “old man” and “new man.”

Paul is making a contrast with significant implications. In Colossians 3:9–10, he reminds his Christian readers that the old self has been put off while the new self has been put on. This is a statement of fact, not a command. Christians are no longer the old self but are now the new self. This change occurred when they believed in Christ.

In regard to Ephesians 4:22–24, debate exists as to whether Paul is commanding his readers to put off the old self and put on the new self or whether he is stating a fact that Christians are already a new self, much like Colossians 3:9–10. Either way, Paul is emphasizing that in Christ a transformation has occurred. Christians have gone from being the old self to being the new self. And they are to live in light of this reality.

But what does Paul mean by “old self [man]” and “new self [man],” and how does this relate to the doctrines of man and sin? The old self is the unregenerate self, connected with Adam. It encompasses everything a person is in Adam before union with Christ. The new self is the regenerate self, united with Christ, who replaces the old man. When a person becomes a Christian, he puts on the new self and becomes a “new creation” in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). He is no longer the old man. The unregenerate self in Adam is gone forever. The new self in Christ is reality. Yet since glorification of the body has not occurred and Christians still struggle with the flesh, believers must continually put aside fleshly desires. They must walk by the power of the Holy Spirit so they do “not gratify the desires of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16).⁷²

Augustus Strong in *Systematic Theology*

The “old man” which is “crucified”—(Rom 6:6) and “put away” (Eph. 4:22) is simply the sinful bent of the affections and will. When this direction of the dispositions is changed, and becomes holy, we can call the change a new birth of the old nature, because the same *faculties* that acted before are acting now, the only difference being that now these faculties are set toward God and purity. Or, regarding the change from another point of view, we may speak of man as having a “new nature,” as “recreated,”

72 MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 466–67.

as being a “new creature,” because this *direction* of the affection and will, which ensures a different life from what was led before, is something totally new, and due wholly to the regenerating act of God.⁷³

The Westminster Confession of Faith

They who are effectually called and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them, are farther sanctified really and personally, through the virtue of Christ’s death and resurrection, by his word and Spirit dwelling in them; the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified, and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

This sanctification is throughout in the whole man, yet imperfect in this life; there abideth still some remnants of corruption in every part; whence ariseth a continual and irreconcilable war; the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.

In which war, although the remaining corruption for a time may much prevail, yet, through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part doth overcome: and so the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.⁷⁴

- Write a summary or outline of your answer to the question, “Explain the concept of the flesh or the old nature. How is the Christian’s relationship to the old man explained in Scripture?”

73 A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia, PN: American Baptist, 1907), 824.

74 *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 61–63.

- For further discussion or study in anthropology and hamartiology:
 - Why was man created?
 - Compare and contrast the dichotomist and trichotomist views of man.
 - What are the biblical roles for men and women?
 - Are there degrees of sin?

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~30 MINUTES):

1. Briefly discuss any questions you have about anthropology and hamartiology and the specific questions you answered in this chapter.
2. Practice answering the following questions using only a Bible for reference.
 - What does it mean when the Bible says that man was created in the image of God? What differentiates man from animals?
 - Does man have a free will? Explain.
 - How would you defend the doctrine of inherited sin – that men are sinful not only in their actions but also in their nature?
 - Explain the concept of the flesh or the old nature. How is the Christian's relationship to the old man explained in Scripture?
3. Briefly review any of the following theology questions that would be helpful:
 - How can God be known?
 - Defend Trinitarianism.
 - How would you respond to someone who says, "If God is love, then why do bad things happen to good people?"
 - How can you prove the deity of Jesus Christ?
 - Describe the incarnation and its significance.
 - What does the resurrection of Christ signify for the believer?
 - What Scriptures would you use to demonstrate the deity of the Holy Spirit?
 - What is the role of the Holy Spirit in conversion?
 - What does it mean to be baptized by the Holy Spirit?
 - What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit?
 - How would you respond to someone who argues that the charismatic/miraculous gifts are still active today?
 - On what basis do you believe the Bible to be a supernatural document?
 - Why do you believe the Bible to be closed, in that nothing should be added to the current sixty-six books?
 - Define the sufficiency of Scripture. What are the implications of this doctrine for everyday life?

ELDER ORIENTATION

PART #1: LEADING WITH A PLURALITY OF ELDERS ***PLURALITY IN PRACTICE: HUMILITY***

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Nothing destroys the unity of elders and hinders the proper functioning of a plurality of leadership faster than pride. Elders who clearly understand the biblical pattern of plural male leadership, who share doctrinal convictions, and who have clear processes for running meetings and making decisions will nonetheless only provide effective, Christ-exalting leadership if they are humble.

Stuart Scott writes, “When someone is humble, they are focused on God and others, not self. Even their focus on others is out of a desire to love and glorify God. They have no need to be recognized or approved. There is no competition with God or others. They have no need to elevate self, knowing that they have been forgiven and that God’s love has been undeservedly and irrevocably set on them. Instead, a humble person’s goal is to elevate God and encourage others.”⁷⁵

THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMILITY

We would struggle to identify a more critical character quality for the proper functioning of a plurality of elders than humility. When Paul addressed the Ephesian elders in Acts 20, one of the initial characteristics he highlighted was “serving the Lord with all humility...”

“Humility is the only soil in which virtue takes root; a lack of humility is the explanation of every defect and failure. Humility is not so much a virtue along with the others, but is the root of all, because it alone takes the right attitude before God and allows Him, as God, to do all.”⁷⁶

75 Stuart Scott, *The Exemplary Husband* (Bemidji, MN: Focus, 2002), 197.

76 Andrew Murray, *Humility: The Journey Toward Holiness* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House, 2001), 17.

1. GOD HATES PRIDE AND OPPOSES THE PROUD

One of the reasons we should recognize the importance of humility among elders is the clear teaching of Scripture regarding pride and humility.

- Summarize what each of these verses teaches about pride and/or humility.
 - Psalm 25:9
 - Proverbs 8:13
 - Proverbs 11:2
 - Proverbs 16:5
 - Proverbs 16:18
 - Colossians 3:12
 - James 1:21
 - 1 Peter 5:5–7

2. BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP IS CHARACTERIZED BY HUMILITY

In teaching about godly leadership, the biblical authors consistently highlight the importance of humility in contrast with worldly leadership that is self-focused and proud.

- Summarize what the following verses say about leadership.
 - Mark 10:35–45
 - 1 Peter 5:1–4

- Contrast arrogant worldly leadership with humble biblical leadership.

3. CHRIST MODELED PERFECT HUMILITY

Jesus, our perfect example, is the ultimate model of humility.

Philippians 2:3–8

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

- How did Jesus demonstrate humility?

- How should we imitate Christ's humility?

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF PRIDE

Stuart Scott, in his book *From Pride to Humility*, identifies the following biblical characteristics of pride.

1. Complaining against or passing judgment on God (Numbers 14:1–4, 9, 11; Romans 9:20).
2. A lack of gratitude in general (2 Chronicles 32:25).
3. Anger (Matthew 20:1–16).
4. Seeing yourself as better than others (Luke 7:36–50).
5. Having an inflated view of your importance, gifts and abilities (1 Corinthians 4:7).
6. Being focused on the lack of your gifts and abilities (1 Corinthians 12:14–25).
7. Perfectionism (Matthew 23:24–28).
8. Talking too much (Proverbs 10:19).
9. Talking too much about yourself (Proverbs 27:2; Galatians 6:3).
10. Seeking independence or control (1 Corinthians 1:10–13; Ephesians 5:21).
11. Being consumed with what others think (Galatians 1:10).
12. Being devastated or angered by criticism (Proverbs 13:1).
13. Being unteachable (Proverbs 19:20; John 9:13–34).
14. Being sarcastic, hurtful, or degrading (Proverbs 12:18, 23).

ELDER ORIENTATION

PART #2: FULFILLING THE ROLE OF AN ELDER

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

The primary functions of an elder are contained in the other biblical terms for that office – pastor and overseer. As pastors, elders are responsible for caring well for their flock. This primarily involves caring for the spiritual needs of those in the church. But it also involves caring for physical needs and providing counsel and care for the soul during times of physical challenges. One expression of this care is visiting the sick. As Richard Baxter wrote in *The Reformed Pastor*, “We must be diligent in visiting the sick, and helping them prepare either for a fruitful life, or a happy death.”⁷⁸

VISITING THE SICK

When visiting the sick, elders should focus on the individual’s spiritual health while also demonstrating genuine concern for their physical condition. It takes wisdom and discernment to balance issues such as:

- Asking questions about physical health while carefully avoiding giving medical advice.
- Demonstrating care for the current temporal, physical challenges while also seeking to direct the conversation to eternal spiritual realities.

It is important that an elder has given some thought to appropriate questions, Scripture passages, and priorities for their visit while also maintaining flexibility to adapt interactions to the spiritual and physical condition of the individual.

- How should the following passages shape an elder’s thinking about visiting the sick?
 - Matthew 4:23-25

 - Matthew 25:34-40

 - James 5:14-16

78 Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor*, ed. William Brown (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2001), 102.

ELDER ORIENTATION

PART #3: DISPLAYING THE CHARACTER OF AN ELDER

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Consider the following biblical qualification of an elder:

- **Not Self-willed**

Titus 1:7 For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed....

- Define this qualification in your own words.

- Why is this quality necessary for leadership?

- Do you believe you currently meet this qualification? Why or why not?

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~10-15 MINUTES):

1. Discuss the questions from the Individual Preparation.

2. How can an elder be tempted to focus on his own desires and lead in a self-centered manner:

- When interacting with the other elders?
- When interacting with individuals in the church?

Chapter 6

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

- **Hosea:** God's Loyal Love
- **Joel:** The Day of the Lord
- **Amos:** Social Injustice in Israel
- **Obadiah:** Edom's Judgment
- **Jonah:** God's Mercy on Repentant Gentiles
- **Micah:** The Justice of God vs. the Social Injustice of Judah
- **Nahum:** Nineveh's Destruction
- **Habakkuk:** Faith and Doubt in the Face of Judah's Exile
- **Zephaniah:** Future Global Judgment
- **Haggai:** Call to Restart the Rebuilding of the Temple
- **Zachariah:** Israel's Comfort and Glory (Preparation for the Messiah)
- **Malachi:** Call for Repentance; Waiting for Messiah

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY: SOTERIOLOGY (PART 1)

- What must a person do to be saved?
How is the Lordship of Christ tied to this discussion?
Is repentance essential to conversion?
- Define and defend the doctrine of election.
- Define and defend the doctrine of the atonement.
- Define and defend the doctrine of regeneration.

ELDER ORIENTATION

- PART #1: LEADING WITH A PLURALITY OF ELDERS
Plurality in Practice: Communication
- PART #2: FULFILLING THE ROLE OF AN ELDER
Stewarding God's Resources
- PART #3: DISPLAYING THE CHARACTER OF AN ELDER
Not Quick-tempered or Pugnacious but Gentle and Peaceable

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Review the overview and key information of each book. Memorize key information as desired or required for your church elder process.

HOSEA

The unhappy story of Hosea and his faithless wife Gomer illustrates the loyal love of God and the spiritual adultery of Israel. Hosea exposes the sins of Israel and contrasts them to God's holiness. The nation must be judged for its sins, but it will be restored in the future because of the love and faithfulness of God.⁷⁹

THEME: God's Loyal Love

OUTLINE:

- I. Adulterous Wife and Faithful Husband (1-3)
- II. Adulterous Israel and Faithful Lord (4-14)

KEY PASSAGE:

11:1 Out of Egypt God called His Son whom He loved

KEY PEOPLE:

Gomer Wife; the spiritual adultery of Israel

⁷⁹ Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 230.

JOEL

This book looks back to a recent locust plague that decimated the land of Judah to illustrate the far more terrifying day of the Lord. The land will be invaded by a fearsome army that will make the locusts seem mild in comparison. Nevertheless, God appeals to the people to repent in order to divert the coming disaster. Because the people will not change, judgment will come, but it will be followed by great blessing.⁸⁰

THEME: The Day of the Lord

OUTLINE:

- I. Day of the Lord in Retrospect (1:1–2:17)
- II. Day of the Lord in Prospect (2:18–3:21)

KEY PASSAGES:

2:28–32 Promise of His Spirit and Day of the Lord

AMOS

Amos prophesied during a period of national optimism in Israel. Business was booming and boundaries were bulging. But below the surface, greed and injustice were festering. Hypocritical religious motions had replaced true worship, creating a false sense of security and a growing callousness to God's disciplining hand.... Amos, the country-farmer-turned-prophet, lashes out at sin unflinchingly, trying to visualize the nearness of God's judgment and mobilize the nation to repentance.⁸¹

THEME: Social Injustice in Israel

OUTLINE:

- I. The Eight Prophecies of Judgment (1–2)
- II. The Three Sermons on Israel's Sin (3–6)
- III. The Five Visions of Punishment (7–9:10)
- IV. The Five Promises on Restoration of Israel (9:11–15)

KEY PASSAGE:

9:13–15 Future hope for the restoration of Israel

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 239.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 244.

OBADIAH

This obscure prophet of the southern kingdom directs his brief oracle to the nation of Edom that bordered Judah on the southeast. Edom (descended from Esau) refused to act as his brother's keeper toward Judah (descended from Jacob). Because they gloated when Jerusalem was invaded, their judgment would be nothing less than total destruction.⁸²

THEME: Edom's Judgment

OUTLINE:

- I. Judgment of Edom (1:1–18)
- II. Restoration of Israel (1:19–21)

JONAH

The book [of Jonah] shows how God will forgive anyone who repents. This is as true for a disobedient servant of His as it is for the threatening enemies of His people, in this case the Assyrians of Nineveh. Jonah's reluctance and rebellion over going to preach repentance in the Assyrian capital of Nineveh is because he knows that God will have mercy on the Assyrians if they repent, and he sees them, quite correctly, as a great threat to Israel's safety. This book underlines the need for those who know God to obey Him unconditionally. It also reminds us that God is sovereign in His timing and in the way He arranges circumstances.⁸³

THEME: God's Mercy on Repentant Gentiles

OUTLINE:

- I. God's Mercy upon Jonah (1–2)
- II. God's Mercy upon Nineveh (3–4)

KEY PASSAGE:

2:8–9 Salvation is from the Lord

⁸² Ibid., 250.

⁸³ Chrispin, *The Bible Panorama*, 374.

MICAH

Micah prophesied during a period of intense social injustice in Judah. False prophets preached for riches, not for righteousness. Princes thrived on cruelty, violence, and corruption. Priests ministered more for greed than for God. Landlords stole from the poor and evicted widows. Judges lusted after bribes. Businessmen used deceitful scales and weights. Sin had infiltrated every segment of society... Micah enumerates the sins of the nation, sins which will ultimately lead to destruction and captivity. But in the midst of blackness there is hope. A Divine Deliverer will appear and righteousness will prevail. Though justice is now trampled underfoot, it will one day triumph.⁸⁴

THEME: The Justice of God vs. the Social Injustice of Judah

OUTLINE:

- I. Prediction of Retribution (1–3)
- II. Prediction of Restoration (4–5)
- III. Plea for Repentance (6–7)

KEY PASSAGES:

- 5:2 From Bethlehem the “One” will come, “Ruler” from long ago
- 6:8 What does the Lord require of you but to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God?

NAHUM

Nineveh had been given the privilege of knowing the one true God. Under Jonah’s preaching this great gentile city had repented, and God had graciously stayed His judgment. However, a hundred years later, Nahum proclaims the downfall of this same city. The Assyrians have forgotten their revival and have returned to their habits of violence, idolatry, and arrogance. As a result, Babylon will so destroy the city that no trace of it will remain— a prophecy fulfilled in painful detail.⁸⁵

THEME: Nineveh’s Destruction

OUTLINE:

- I. God’s Majestic Holiness (1)
- II. Nineveh’s Judgment (2–3)

⁸⁴ Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 261.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 267.

HABAKKUK

Habakkuk prophesies as the sun is about to set on the Assyrian empire and about to rise on the Babylonian empire. The book presents Habakkuk's problem, namely that he cannot understand why sin, violence, and injustice can proliferate. Then, when he is told that God will judge His people by oppression from the even more heathen and extremely cruel Chaldeans, he cannot grasp how God, who is holy, can use such evil people as His instrument of judgment on His own people. Without a perfect understanding, Habakkuk humbly prays for God's mercy and praises Him for His mighty power. He finds his comfort in God who is his strength and who remains faithful in all circumstances, even adverse ones.⁸⁶

THEME: Faith and Doubt in the Face of Judah's Exile

OUTLINE:

- I. Habakkuk's Perplexities (1-2)
- II. Habakkuk's Prayer/Praise (3)

KEY PASSAGE:

2:4 "The righteous shall live by faith"

ZEPHANIAH

In no uncertain terms, Zephaniah develops the theme of the coming day of the Lord as a day of awesome judgment followed by great blessing. Zephaniah begins with the coming judgment of Judah and broadens his scope to include the Gentiles as well. Because Judah refuses to seek the Lord, it stands condemned. But a Remnant will exult when God restores the fortunes of His people.⁸⁷

THEME: Future Global Judgment

OUTLINE:

- I. Prophecies of Judgment (1-2)
- II. Prophecies of Future Blessing (3)

KEY PASSAGE:

1:14-18 The Day of the Lord is near

⁸⁶ Chrispin, *The Bible Panorama*, 381.

⁸⁷ Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 277.

HAGGAI

After the Babylonian exile, the Jews began to rebuild the temple but allowed the work to stop while they rebuilt their own houses instead. Because of their failure to put God first, they were not enjoying His blessing in the land. Haggai urges the people to finish the temple because of God's promise that it would be filled with glory. After chastening the people for their contamination, Haggai closes with a promise of future blessing.⁸⁸

THEME: Call to Restart the Rebuilding of the Temple

OUTLINE

- I. Rebuke for Disobedience (1:1–11)
- II. Rebuilding the Temple (1:12–15)
- III. Return of God's Glory (2:1–9)
- IV. Religious Questions (2:10–19)
- V. Reign of God (2:20–23)

KEY PASSAGE:

2:20–23 Messiah's future reign prefigured; millennium prophesied

ZECHARIAH

A contemporary of Haggai, Zechariah also exhorts the Jews to complete the construction of the temple. Zechariah's method of motivating them is one of encouragement— the temple is central to Israel's spiritual heritage, and it is related to the coming of Messiah. Zechariah's series of visions, messages, and burdens offer some of the clearest messianic prophecies in Scripture. God reveals that His program for his people is far from complete.⁸⁹

THEME: Israel's Comfort and Glory (Preparation for the Messiah)

OUTLINE:

- | | | |
|------|--------------------------------|---------|
| I. | The Call to Repentance | (1:1–6) |
| II. | The Eight Visions of Zechariah | (1:7–6) |
| III. | The Four Messages of Zechariah | (7–8) |
| IV. | The Two Burdens of Zechariah | (9–14) |

KEY PASSAGES:

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 12:10 | Israel's mourning over the pierced Messiah |
| 14:9–11 | The reign of Christ |

⁸⁹ Ibid., 288.

MALACHI

By the time of the last Old Testament prophet [Malachi], the spiritual and moral climate of the people has grown cold. Their worship is meaningless and indifferent, and as they grow more distant from God, they become characterized by religious and social compromise.⁹⁰

THEME: Call for Repentance; Waiting for the Messiah

OUTLINE:

- | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------------|------------|
| I. | God's Pronouncements against Israel | (1-3:15) |
| II. | God's Promise to Israel | (3:16-4:6) |

KEY PASSAGES:

- | | |
|---------|---------------------|
| 2:15-16 | "I hate divorce" |
| 3:8-10 | Will a man rob God? |

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~10-20 MINUTES):

1. Briefly discuss any questions you have about the books covered in this section of Bible Knowledge.
2. Review the information in this section of Bible Knowledge by asking questions such as:
 - What is the theme of Jonah?
 - What is found in Habakkuk 2:4?
 - What is the theme of Haggai?
3. Review any required memorized content from Genesis to Daniel.

⁹⁰ Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 294.

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Read and consider the key texts, terms, provided theological writings, and other additional resources as desired. Write out an answer or outline for each question.

SOTERIOLOGY (PART 1)

Soteriology is the study of the doctrine of salvation.

- **Some key issues and themes addressed in soteriology include:**
 - The Gospel
 - Redemption
 - God's plan of Redemption
 - Redemption Accomplished
 - Redemption Applied

1. WHAT MUST A PERSON DO TO BE SAVED? HOW IS THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST TIED TO THIS DISCUSSION? IS REPENTANCE ESSENTIAL TO CONVERSION?

- **Key passages to consider:**
 - Mark 1:15
 - Acts 2:36
 - Romans 10:9–10
- **Key terms to include:**
 - Repentance
 - Faith
 - Conversion
 - Lordship of Christ

- **What theologians say:**

John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue in *Biblical Doctrine*

Together, repentance and faith make up the single act of conversion.

It should be apparent that repentance and faith are intimately related and even inseparable from one another. They are truly two sides of the same coin. In the first place, their connection follows a simple logic: it is impossible for someone to turn away from something without turning toward something else. Conversely, one cannot turn toward something without turning away from whatever was previously

occupying his attention. Further, it is impossible to look in two different directions at the same time. But the inseparability of repentance and faith is also a theological necessity. It is inconceivable that one who finally perceives sin and Christ as they actually are should pursue Christ without forsaking sin or should forsake sin without embracing Christ. Remember that regeneration is a spiritual heart transplant—a radical renewal of man’s tastes, desires, and affections. To such a renewed heart, the beauty of Christ’s glory is irresistibly compelling, and it outshines the false glories of sin just as the brilliance of the noonday sun renders the stars invisible. To suggest that one might embrace Christ without also decisively purposing to repudiate sin is to suggest that sin is more objectively desirable to the regenerated heart than Christ is. On the contrary, to the newly awakened sinner, Christ is an inestimably valuable treasure, and to gain him, one delightfully forsakes everything (Matt. 13:44–46; Phil. 3:8). Thus, the faith that saves is a repentant faith, just as the repentance that saves is a believing repentance.

For this reason, the gospel call to salvation is a summons to both repent and believe. According to Mark, the content of “the gospel of God” that the Lord Jesus proclaimed can be summarized as follows: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15)... In true conversion, there is always a turning from sin (repentance) and a simultaneous turning to God in Christ (faith). It is impossible that one should occur without the other.⁹¹

William G. T. Shedd in *Dogmatic Theology*

Conversion is that action of man which results from regeneration. As the etymology implies, it is turning toward (*converto*) a certain point and away from a certain point. Conversion consists of two acts: faith and repentance. Faith is turning to Christ as the ground of justification and away from self as the ground. Repentance is turning to God as the chief end of existence and away from the creature as the chief end. Faith and repentance are converting acts; the first having principal reference to justification, the second to sanctification; the first to the guilt of sin, the second to its corruption.⁹²

Alan Cairns in *Dictionary of Theological Terms*

Lordship Salvation

The belief that the acceptance of Christ as Saviour necessarily includes acceptance of Him as Lord. In other words, saving faith inevitably produces the fruit of godly obedience to Christ, and repentance is more than a mere change of mind; it is also a change of heart and life.

This view has become a divisive issue within American dispensationalism.

91 MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 590–91.

92 Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 787.

Professors from Dallas Theological Seminary have strongly attacked it, claiming that it adds works to faith for salvation. Their opponents in turn charge the Dallas position with “easy believism.”

...Lordship salvation is *the gospel according to Jesus*. Obviously, the question is, “Did the Lord Jesus Christ preach the gospel?” According to Heb. 2:1–4, He preached the very gospel of “so great salvation” that the apostles later preached. To Paul, there was no other gospel, and he anathematized any who preached any other message (Gal. 1:8, 9). So Jesus certainly preached the gospel of God’s grace, the same gospel His apostles preached, and therefore on the very same terms.

That settles the Lordship Salvation controversy. However the disputants dress their arguments in theological language, the simple matter is that according to the Lord Jesus Christ, no man can be His disciple without acknowledging His Lordship. No man can receive Him by faith as Saviour while deliberately rejecting Him as Lord.

Really the Lordship Salvation controversy is the old dispute on the relation of grace to law and of faith to works. We are not saved by works. We are saved by grace through faith. But living faith always produces good works—that is, it acknowledges Christ as Lord (Rom. 10:9). The works prove the reality of the faith that produced them.⁹³

- Write a summary or outline of your answer to the questions, “What must a person do to be saved? How is the Lordship of Christ tied to this discussion? Is repentance essential to conversion?”

2. DEFINE AND DEFEND THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION.

○ Key passages to consider:

- Romans 8:28–30
- Romans 9:8–16
- Ephesians 1:3–6

○ Key terms to include:

- Election
- Foreknowledge
- Predestination

○ What theologians say:

Wayne Grudem in *Systematic Theology*

We may define election as follows: *Election is an act of God before creation in which he chooses some people to be saved, not on account of any foreseen merit in them, but only because of his sovereign good pleasure.*

Several passages in the New Testament seem to affirm quite clearly that God ordained beforehand those who would be saved. For example, when Paul and Barnabas began to preach to the Gentiles in Antioch in Pisidia, Luke writes, “And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of God; and *as many as were ordained to eternal life believed*” (Acts 13:48). It is significant that Luke mentions the fact of election almost in passing. It is as if this were the normal occurrence when the gospel was preached. How many believed? “As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.” In Romans 8:28–30, we read: We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.* In the following chapter, when talking about God’s choosing Jacob and not Esau, Paul says it was not because of anything that Jacob or Esau had done, but simply in order that God’s purpose of election might continue. Though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad, *in order that God’s purpose of election might continue* not because of works but because of his call, she was told, “The elder will serve the younger.” As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.” (Rom. 9:11–13) Regarding the fact that some of the people of Israel were saved, but others were not, Paul says: “Israel failed to obtain what it sought. *The elect* obtained it, but the rest were hardened” (Rom. 11:7). Here again Paul indicates two distinct groups within the people of Israel. Those who were “the elect” obtained the salvation that they sought, while those who were not the elect simply “were hardened.” Paul

talks explicitly about God's choice of believers before the foundation of the world in the beginning of Ephesians.

“He chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace.” (Eph. 1:4–6) Here Paul is writing to believers and he specifically says that God “chose us” in Christ, referring to believers generally. In a similar way, several verses later he says, “We who first hoped in Christ have been *destined and appointed* to live for the praise of his glory” (Eph. 1:12). He writes to the Thessalonians, “For we know, brethren beloved by God, that *he has chosen you*; for our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction” (1 Thess. 1:4–5). Paul says that the fact that the Thessalonians *believed* the gospel when he preached it (“for our gospel came to you...in power...and with full conviction”) *is the reason he knows that God chose them*. As soon as they came to faith Paul concluded that long ago God had chosen them, and therefore they had believed when he preached. He later writes to the same church, “We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, *because God chose you from the beginning to be saved* through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth” (2 Thess. 2:13).⁹⁴

John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue in *Biblical Doctrine*

The saving blessings that flow from God's sovereign election are not enjoyed by all who are made in his image. The Lord Jesus says that few will enter the narrow gate that leads to life but that many will travel the broad way to destruction (Matt. 7:13–14). He teaches that there will be sheep as well as goats—those who inherit eternal life and others who go away into eternal punishment (Matt. 25:46). Most succinctly, he declares that “many are called, but few are chosen” (Matt. 22:14). Thus, Scripture instructs that in his inscrutable wisdom, God has not chosen to save all men. His election is particular, not universal. Given this, we must inquire as to the destiny of those whom he has not chosen to save.

Because God's decree is exhaustive, the doctrine of predestination extends not only to his decision to elect some unto salvation but also to his decision not to elect others and thus to leave them to the destruction that their sins deserve. Just as God has determined the eternal destiny of those sinners who will eventually be saved, so also has he determined the destiny of those sinners who will eventually be lost. The former is the decree of election; the latter is the decree of reprobation. The decree of reprobation is the free and sovereign choice of God, made in eternity past, to pass over certain individuals, choosing not to set his saving love on them but instead determining to punish them for their sins unto the magnification of his

94 Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 670–72.

justice.... Neither do the doctrines of election and reprobation undermine the reality that all are commanded to repent and believe the gospel. Those who suppose that God's sovereign choice is incompatible with man's responsibility to believe fail to do justice to the whole of God's revelation. Indeed, immediately following what is the most exalted teaching on divine sovereignty in Romans 9, Paul just as clearly teaches human responsibility in Romans 10. He declares that "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (10:13), mandates that preachers of the gospel be sent to call all to repentance (10:14–17), and pictures God's loving benevolence even to the obstinate by depicting him as one who stretches out his hands and calls them to salvation (10:21). Scripture never teaches that God's absolute sovereignty obviates the sinner's responsibility to turn from his sins and trust in Christ. Neither is the sinner exhorted to determine whether God has chosen him for salvation or not. The sinner's responsibility is not to discern the secret counsels of God's decree but rather to heed the clear commands of Scripture to repent and believe the gospel (Mark 1:15; Acts 17:30).⁹⁵

Louis Berkhof in *Systematic Theology*

The characteristics of election are identical with the characteristics of the decrees in general. The decree of election: (1) *Is an expression of the sovereign will of God, His divine good pleasure....* By saying that the decree of election originates in the divine good pleasure the idea is also excluded that it is determined by anything in man, such as foreseen faith or good works, Rom. 9:11; 2 Tim. 1:9. (2) *It is immutable, and therefore renders the salvation of the elect certain.* God realizes the decree of election by His own efficiency, by the saving work which He accomplishes in Jesus Christ.... And as such it is the source of rich comfort for all believers. Their final salvation does not depend on their uncertain obedience, but has its guarantee in the unchangeable purpose of God. (3) *It is eternal, that is, from eternity....* (4) *It is unconditional.* Election does not in any way depend on the foreseen faith or good works of man, as the Arminians teach, but exclusively on the sovereign good pleasure of God, who is also the originator of faith and good works, Rom. 9:11; Acts 13:48; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Pet. 1:2.... (5) *It is irresistible.* This does not mean that man cannot oppose its execution to a certain degree, but it does mean that his opposition will not prevail. Neither does it mean that God in the execution of His decree overpowers the human will in a manner which is inconsistent with man's free agency. It does mean, however, that God can and does exert such an influence on the human spirit as to make it willing, Ps. 110:3; Phil. 2:13. (6) *It is not chargeable with injustice.* The fact that God favors some and passes by others, does not warrant the charge that He is guilty of injustice. We can speak of injustice only when one party has a claim on another. If God owed the forgiveness of sin and eternal life

95 MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 510–11.

to all men, it would be an injustice if He saved only a limited number of them. But the sinner has absolutely no right or claim on the blessings which flow from divine election. As a matter of fact he has forfeited these blessings. Not only have we no right to call God to account for electing some and passing others by, but we must admit that He would have been perfectly just, if He had not saved any, Matt. 20:14, 15; Rom. 9:14, 15.⁹⁶

- Write a summary or outline of your definition and defense of the doctrine of election.

3. DEFINE AND DEFEND THE DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT.

- **Key passages to consider:**

- Mark 10:45
- Romans 3:21–26
- 2 Corinthians 5:21

- **Key terms to include:**

- Atonement
- Penal
- Substitution(ary)
- Propitiation

- **What theologians say:**

Alan Cairns in Dictionary of Theological Terms

Atonement

The satisfaction of divine justice by the Lord Jesus Christ in His active and passive obedience (i.e., His life and death), which procures for His people a perfect salvation.

The Characteristics of the Atonement

1. **It is vicarious or substitutionary.** It was rendered by the Lord Jesus Christ for His people, i.e., not merely for their benefit, but “in their place” (Matt. 20:28).
2. **Suffering is an essential element in the atonement** (Luke 9:22; 24:26; Matt. 16:21). In Matt. 27:34, Christ on the cross refused to have His pain deadened. His

⁹⁶ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 114–15.

sufferings were penal on account of His bearing our sin (1 Pet. 2:24).

3. It is *objective*—i.e., it makes its primary impression on God, to whom it is offered.
4. It is *necessary*. God has decreed it as the only way whereby He could be just and yet save sinners. Thus the necessity of the atonement is based on God's nature and God's will. By nature He is holy and must punish sin; by His gracious will He has decreed the salvation of His elect. Christ's work of atonement is the only way to execute that gracious purpose. "The Son of man must be lifted up" (John 3:14).
5. It is *definite*—i.e., Christ made atonement with a definite purpose in view. That purpose was to save sinners. This view is in sharp contrast with the Arminian view that Christ's death merely made salvation possible. Definite atonement emphasizes that in His death Christ was actually the substitute and surety for all for whom He died.
6. It was *particular*: it was made specifically for God's elect. Calvinists hold that Christ gave Himself for His church (Eph. 5:25) and laid down His life for His sheep (John 10:15). Arminians and universalists hold that He offered up a sacrifice equally for each and every man.... The Calvinist position is that the blood of Christ is sufficient to save each and every man who ever lived, but is efficient to save only God's elect. John Owen's famous summary of the situation put it like this:
 - a. Either, Christ died for all the sins of all men—in which case all men must be saved;
 - b. Or, He died for some of the sins of all men, in which case none will be saved;
 - c. Or, He died for all the sins of some men—in which case, while some are lost, some will be saved.

We know that conclusions (a) and (b) are unscriptural, and that (c) is an accurate statement of scriptural fact. Clearly, Christ died to make atonement for all the sins of His elect, His Church, His sheep, those given to Him by His Father (John 6:37; 17:2, 6, 9, 19).

7. It is *successful*. What God aimed at in the atonement is exactly what He accomplished, and what He accomplished is exactly what He aimed at. Isaiah 53:11 tells us of the Lord's entire satisfaction with His sacrificial work. The great anthem of Rev. 5 allows no room for the thought that Jesus tried to accomplish a lot more than He actually did.

Also, the entire doctrine of gospel assurance depends on the fact that Christ's atonement cannot fail to accomplish its end. Christ did not merely attempt to bear away our sin; He did it. He did not seek to redeem us; He did it. The cause and effect inherent in the message of the Cross is clear in such texts as 2 Cor. 5:21: "He [God] hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." All for whom Christ was made sin must of necessity be made the righteousness of God in Him. His suffering cannot be in vain.⁹⁷

97 Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 44–46.

John Frame in *Systematic Theology*

Jesus' passive obedience is an atoning sacrifice. That sacrifice accomplishes a number of things.

First, *expiation*. This means that Jesus bore our sins, took them on himself, and therefore did away with them (Isa. 53:6, 12; John 1:29; Heb. 9:28; 1 Peter 2:24). As we saw earlier in 2 Corinthians 5:21, he was "made sin" for us. He became our *substitute*. As such, he took the full penalty that we owed God, the penalty of death (Ezek. 18:4; Rom. 6:23). By expiation, Jesus wiped our slate clean. We have nothing to fear from God. God forgives our sins fully and completely, taking them as far from us as the east is from the west.

Second, *propitiation*. This means that he bore the wrath and anger of God that was due to sin (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 4:10). In some mysterious way, he was even estranged from his Father on the cross, as the Father regarded him bearing our sins. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" he cried, quoting Psalm 22 (Matt. 27:46). Some scholars have tried to eliminate the theme of *propitiation* from the Bible, trying to make it a synonym for *expiation*. These scholars don't like the idea of God's being angry with people because of sin. But that attempt has failed. Our God cares about right and wrong. "God is a righteous judge, and a God who feels indignation every day," Psalm 7:11 tells us. God is angry with the wicked, and Jesus on the cross turned God's anger away from his people.... We should not forget, however, that God's anger against the wicked coexists with his love for his elect, indeed even for the wicked elect. God sent his Son because he loved the sinful world (John 3:16). All of us were "dead in...trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1), but before we had committed any sin, God loved us in Christ (1:4). It is certainly mysterious how God can hate and love the same people at the same time, but that is the testimony of Scripture (chapter 13).

Third, the atonement is *reconciliation*, as the English word implies. Since we are now righteous in God's sight (expiation), and he is no longer angry with us (propitiation), we are reconciled, no longer enemies (2 Cor. 5:18–19). Again, some scholars have tried to soften this idea, by saying that the atonement purges our enmity against God, not God's against us. They think, again, that God has no enmity toward sinners. But that is biblically wrong. Scores of Scripture verses speak of God's anger with the wicked. In sin, man is the enemy of God and vice versa. Christ brings us together, so that believers will live together with God in blessed fellowship forever and ever. We anticipate that fellowship in the Lord's Supper, in which we have table fellowship with God.

Finally, the atonement is *redemption*. *Redemption* means literally "buying back" something. In the OT, when someone sold his property, or even got so far into debt that he sold himself into slavery, a relative could buy back the property, or buy the man's freedom. This relative is often called the *kinsman-redeemer*, and Leviticus 25 describes him. In the book of Ruth, Boaz redeems Ruth and her mother-in-law from

poverty by marrying her. In Mark 10:45, Jesus says that he has come to give his life “as a ransom for many,” buying us back as God’s lost property. His sacrifice on the cross was an act of great value, and it purchased for him a people of his own possession. So we belong to God, both by creation and by redemption.

Those four terms summarize what the atonement is, according to Scripture. But I should also warn against some false ways of looking at the atonement. Some theologians have not liked the idea of Jesus’ dying in our place, so they have tried to make the atonement an easier concept. First, some, such as the third-century writer Origen, have picked up on the ransom passage in Mark 10:45, and have suggested that Jesus paid the ransom to Satan. That idea has no biblical basis. Satan has no rights over us. It is to God alone that Jesus pays our ransom.

Second, some, such as the medieval thinker Abelard, together with many modern liberals, have argued that the atonement is not a sacrifice, but only a moral example. On this view, Jesus dies on the cross to show us how to behave. This position does have some biblical basis: 1 Peter 2:21 says, “For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.” The atonement is an example to us. The question is whether the atonement is *only* an example. If it is only an example, then, as Roger Nicole has pointed out, it is a very poor example. For if Jesus died merely to encourage us to do the same thing, he is encouraging suicide, something that Scripture never honors. But if Jesus laid down his life to bring life to others, then there is something here that we can imitate. We should be cautious at this point: in one sense, we can never do what Jesus did. He took away the punishment of our sins; I cannot do that for anyone else. Yet his self-sacrifice is an excellent model for us, in that it tells us to give ourselves in love for the benefit of others. First John 3:16 says, “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.”

The third wrong view of the atonement is the governmental view of Grotius, Charles Finney, and others. It teaches that God forgives our sins without any need of sacrifice. But to impress us of the seriousness and solemnity of God’s law, God put his Son to death. This view is unbiblical in a number of ways. First, Scripture teaches that sacrifice is required to receive God’s forgiveness: without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins (Heb. 9:22). As we have seen, the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23; cf. Ezek. 18:4). Second, on this view, God demonstrates the severity of his law by putting to death an innocent man. But unless Jesus is a substitute for us, his death is a demonstration of injustice, not justice.⁹⁸

- Write a summary or outline of your definition and defense of the doctrine of atonement.

3. DEFINE AND DEFEND THE DOCTRINE OF REGENERATION.

- **Key passages to consider:**

- John 3:3–8
- Ephesians 2:4–5
- Titus 3:5

- **What theologians say:**

Charles Hodge in *Systematic Theology*

By a consent almost universal the word regeneration is now used to designate, not the whole work of sanctification, nor the first stages of that work comprehended in conversion, much less justification or any mere external change of state, but the instantaneous change from spiritual death to spiritual life. Regeneration, therefore, is a spiritual resurrection; the beginning of a new life. Sometimes the word expresses the act of God. God regenerates. Sometimes it designates the subjective effect of his act. The sinner is regenerated. He becomes a new creature. He is born again. And this is his regeneration. These two applications of the word are so allied as not to produce confusion. The nature of regeneration is not explained in the Bible further than the account therein given of its author, God, in the exercise of the exceeding greatness of his power; its subject, the whole soul; and its effects, spiritual life, and all consequent holy acts and states.⁹⁹

Rolland McCune in *Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity*

Regeneration is the instantaneous, supernatural impartation of spiritual life to the spiritually dead.... Regeneration is a complete change in the governing disposition of the individual. Prior to the new birth, the governing heart attitude, which controlled one's dominant motives, was hostility, enmity and hatred toward God and spiritual things. That is to say, one's direction and bent in spiritual matters, the "wanter" of the

⁹⁹ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, *Soteriology*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 5–6.

human psyche, was away from God, mired in total inability to make any kind of an autonomous appeal to God and bereft of any power to respond rightly to the convicting call of God. Resistance to God and a perversion of His revelational goodness are hallmarks of the natural man (Rom 1:18–32). Therefore, the governing disposition must be addressed first in the subjective application of the *ordo salutis* to the sinner. His dominant motives must be transformed from darkness to light and from death to life so that he is enabled to make a positive response to the promptings of the Holy Spirit through the gospel. This transformation is accomplished by the moral miracle of regeneration and accordingly precedes all the other acts of human participation in the overall event and process of salvation.... Birth is an event, not a long drawn-out or life-long process. In short, there is no middle ground between death and life, and the transition from the one to the other is instantaneous.... Man is passive in regeneration; he is the recipient. He cannot cooperate or make any contribution to regeneration. The total depravity/inability and moral paralysis of the natural man renders him powerless to initiate any kind of an overture to God for mercy or to make any form of favorable or correct response to the calling overtures of God. In himself, His moral plight could not be more helpless. He is dependent on God alone to impart the necessary spiritual life and energy to lift him out of his hopeless estate.... While man is essentially passive, he will exercise the awakened governing disposition in repentance and faith. Regeneration itself occurs below consciousness. Man is conscious, but he is not conscious of God's regenerating agency. Conversion and sanctification are the immediate and consciously recognizable results of regeneration.¹⁰⁰

- Write a summary or outline of your definition and defense of the doctrine of regeneration.

100 Rolland D. McCune, *A Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity, vol. 3, The Doctrines of Salvation, the Church, and Last Things* (Allen Park, MI: Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010), 54.

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~30 MINUTES):

1. Briefly discuss any questions you have about soteriology and the specific questions you answered in this chapter.

2. Practice answering the following questions using only a Bible for reference.
 - What must a person do to be saved? How is the Lordship of Christ tied to this discussion? Is repentance essential to conversion?
 - Define and defend the doctrine of election.
 - Define and defend the doctrine of the atonement.
 - Define and defend the doctrine of regeneration.

3. Briefly review any of the following theology questions that would be helpful:
 - How can God be known?
 - Defend Trinitarianism.
 - How would you respond to someone who says, “If God is love, then why do bad things happen to good people?”
 - How can you prove the deity of Jesus Christ?
 - Describe the incarnation and its significance.
 - What does the resurrection of Christ signify for the believer?
 - What Scriptures would you use to demonstrate the deity of the Holy Spirit?
 - What is the role of the Holy Spirit in conversion?
 - What does it mean to be baptized by the Holy Spirit?
 - What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit?
 - How would you respond to someone who argues that the charismatic/miraculous gifts are still active today?
 - On what basis do you believe the Bible to be a supernatural document?
 - Why do you believe the Bible to be closed, in that nothing should be added to the current sixty-six books?
 - Define the sufficiency of Scripture. What are the implications of this doctrine for everyday life?
 - Explain and defend the historical/grammatical method of hermeneutics.
 - What does it mean when the Bible says that man was created in the image of God? What differentiates man from animals?
 - Does man have a free will? Explain.
 - How would you defend the doctrine of inherited sin—that men are sinful not only in their actions but also in their nature?
 - Explain the concept of the flesh or the old nature. How is the Christian’s relationship to the old man explained in Scripture?

ELDER ORIENTATION

PART #1: LEADING WITH A PLURALITY OF ELDERS PLURALITY IN PRACTICE: COMMUNICATION

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Working together to make wise decisions in leading the church requires elders to communicate well with one another. Such communication begins with each elder having a humble heart that appreciates the perspective and wisdom of the other elders. And it involves that humble heart being manifested through the biblical skills of communication.

CAREFUL LISTENING

Elders should be good listeners. They should listen carefully to the individuals in the congregation to whom they minister. And they should listen carefully to one another.

- What do the following verses teach about listening and its importance:
 - Proverbs 1:5
 - Proverbs 15:28
 - Proverbs 15:31
 - Proverbs 18:2
 - Proverbs 18:12–13
- Why do people struggle to listen to one another?

The goal of biblical listening is not simply to have heard what someone else says as a way to earn the right to talk to them. Instead, the goal is to grow in understanding and wisdom. One skill that fosters this is asking clarifying questions. Ken Sande identifies such questions and statements that indicate you are trying to understand, including:

- “Are you saying...?”
- “Tell me more about...”
- “Can you give me an example?”
- “I’m confused about...”
- “What did you mean when you said...?”¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Ken Sande, *Peacemaking for Families* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2002), 69.

- How would an elder meeting characterized by good listening look different than one that is not?

- When is it most challenging for you to listen well to others? How can you grow as a listener?

CONSIDERATE SPEECH

In addition to being good listeners, elders should be considerate in their speech to one another. Each elder should be careful regarding:

1. The Amount of their Speech

No one elder should dominate every meeting or discussion. Elders should be eager participants in discussions as they recognize the value of the plurality of leadership, but they should also exercise restraint in their speech. And they should be careful not to respond hastily, without seeking understanding first.

- What do the following verses teach about restraining our words:
 - Proverbs 10:19

 - Proverbs 15:28

 - Proverbs 17:27-28

 - Proverbs 18:2

 - Proverbs 29:20

- How would an elder meeting characterized by restraint of speech look different than one that is not?

2. The Content of their Speech

It is not enough for elders to talk less. They must also be careful regarding the content of what they say. Our speech should be:

- Truthful (Proverbs 6:16–19, 12:17–19; Ephesians 4:25)
 - Edifying (Ephesians 4:29–32)
 - Humble (Proverbs 27:2)
- Give an example of something that might be said at an elder meeting that is not:
- Truthful
 - Edifying
 - Humble

3. The Tone of their Speech

God not only cares about how much we say and what we say, but He also cares about how we say it. Elders must be careful how they talk to one another, particularly in challenging or heated discussions.

- What do the following verses teach about our tone or manner of speech?
- Proverbs 15:1–2
 - Proverbs 16:23–24
 - Proverbs 22:11
 - Proverbs 25:15

4. The Heart of their Speech

Godly speech is not ultimately about self-control or learning biblical principles. It is about having the right heart. For as Jesus said, “...the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart” (Matthew 12:34).

- How does your speech flow from and reveal your heart?

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~15–20 MINUTES):

Discuss any questions you have from this section as well as the following:

1. How can a group of elders foster healthy communication among themselves?
2. Should you serve as an elder, what temptations do you anticipate facing with regard to listening and speaking
 - To members of the congregation?
 - To other elders?
3. What heart attitudes lead to godly communication?

ELDER ORIENTATION

PART #2: FULFILLING THE ROLE OF AN ELDER

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

The primary functions of an elder are contained in the other biblical terms for that office – pastor and overseer. As overseers, elders are responsible to manage and lead the church. Another area of oversight for elders is the finances of the church. While others (such as deacons, a finance committee, or staff) may deal with the specifics of the church finances, elders should feel a weight of responsibility for the financial integrity and stewardship of the church. At the same time, elders should respect the confidentiality of contributions to the church to not be tempted toward partiality (James 2:1–4).

STEWARDSHIP GOD’S RESOURCES

- What biblical principles should shape and influence how a church uses its financial resources?

- Review a copy of your church budget. How does the budget reflect these biblical principles of financial stewardship for the church?

- What questions do you have about the budget?

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~10–15 MINUTES):

1. Discuss any questions you have from the Individual Preparation.

2. What is the elders’ role in the approval of the church budget and management of church finances?

3. What other people or groups in the church are involved in the church finances? What are their roles, and how do they interact with the elders?

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~15–20 MINUTES):

Discuss the questions from the Individual Preparation.

1. Why is it so destructive for an elder to be quick-tempered or pugnacious?
2. When are you most tempted to be quick-tempered?
3. How should an elder balance leading with strong, biblical convictions while at the same time maintaining a gentle and peaceable spirit?

Chapter 7

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

- **Matthew:** Jesus as King
- **Mark:** Jesus as Servant
- **Luke:** Jesus as the Son of Man
- **John:** Jesus as the Son of God

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY: SOTERIOLOGY (PART 2)

- Define and defend the doctrine of justification.
- Define and defend the doctrine of sanctification.
- Define and defend the doctrine of preservation or perseverance.
- Define and defend the doctrine of glorification.

ELDER ORIENTATION

- PART #1: LEADING WITH A PLURALITY OF ELDERS
Plurality in Practice: Recognizing the Chief Shepherd
- PART #2: FULFILLING THE ROLE OF AN ELDER
Caring for the Needy
- PART #3: DISPLAYING THE CHARACTER OF AN ELDER
Free from the Love of Money; Not Fond of Sordid Gain

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Review the overview and key information of each book. Memorize key information as desired or required for your church elder process.

MATTHEW

Since Matthew is concerned with setting forth Jesus as Messiah, the King of the Jews, an interest in the OT kingdom promises runs throughout this gospel. Matthew's signature phrase "the kingdom of heaven" occurs 32 times in this book (and nowhere else in all of Scripture). The opening genealogy is designed to document Christ's credentials as Israel's king, and the rest of the book completes this theme.... He demonstrates that He is the fulfillment of dozens of OT prophecies regarding the king who would come. He offers evidence after evidence to establish Christ's kingly prerogative. All other historical and theological themes in the book revolve around this one.¹⁰²

THEME: Jesus as King

OUTLINE:

- I. The Presentation of the King (1-10)
- II. The Rejection of the King (11-28)

KEY CHAPTERS:

- 4 The temptation and introduction to Jesus' ministry; call of Peter, Andrew, James and John
- 5-7 Sermon on the Mount
- 10 The twelve sent out to preach
- 13 Kingdom parables: sower, wheat and tares, mustard seed, leaven and meal, etc.
- 18 Woes to stumbling blocks; church discipline; unforgiving slave
- 23 7 woes to the "Scribes and Pharisees"
- 24-25 Olivet discourse

KEY PASSAGES:

- 1:1-17 Abrahamic and Davidic genealogies showing Jesus Christ's right to the throne of David, King of Israel

¹⁰² MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, 1389.

- 1:23 “Behold, the virgin shall be with child...Immanuel...”
– prophecy of virgin birth of Jesus fulfilled
- 2:15 “Out of Egypt did I call my Son”
– Jesus’ flight to Egypt from Herod prophesied in Hosea 11:1
- 5:1–11 Beatitudes – qualities of the true kingdom citizen and their resulting blessing from God
- 5:17–20 “I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill” – Christ’s confirmation of the law by His perfect life and His teaching (real meaning of law)
- 5:31–32 / Why unrighteous divorce and remarriage is wrong;
19:4–9 God hates divorce (Mal 2:16); allowable only in the case of adultery
- 7:21–23 “Lord, Lord, did we not...?” – false standard of Christianity;
issue is knowing Christ and practicing righteousness vs. lawlessness
- 16:18 The rock is Peter’s confession “You are the Christ”; though he would be given special authority in the kingdom as an apostle and spokesman, but not as the first pope
- 18:3–5 “Unless you are converted and become like children...” sons of the kingdom are to be as humble as children; “and whoever receives one such child receives Me” welcoming any who belong to Christ, no matter how insignificant, welcomes Christ
- 29:18–20 Great Commission, all three members of the Trinity

KEY PEOPLE:

- Andrew Brother of Simon Peter and one of Jesus’ first disciples; was a follower of John the Baptist; when JTB identified Jesus as the Lamb of God, Peter and Andrew followed Jesus
- Annas High Priest at Jerusalem, along with Caiaphas, when JTB began his ministry
- Caiaphas Sadducee who was high priest with Annas during JTB’s ministry
- John the Baptist Forerunner of Jesus; a moral reformer and preacher of messianic hope; cousin of Jesus
- Herod The name of several Roman rulers in Israel during Jesus’ earthly ministry and the periods shortly before His birth and after His resurrection
- Pilate The fifth Roman procurator of Judea (ruled 26–36 AD); issued the official order sentencing Jesus to death by crucifixion
- Simon of Cyrene The man who was forced to carry Jesus’ cross

KEY DATES:

- Birth of Christ 4–6 BC
- Death of Christ 30 AD

MARK

Mark was not one of the twelve apostles, but was a very close associate of the apostle Peter and no doubt drew from Peter's experience of Christ. His Gospel is written largely for Gentiles, especially Romans.... It underlines Jesus as a servant, and thus carries no genealogy, for who is concerned about the family tree of a servant? It is the shortest and simplest of the Gospels.... The teaching ministry of Jesus is, of course, authoritatively portrayed here, but it is the deeds of Christ, rather than His words, which are accentuated.¹⁰³

THEME: Jesus as Servant

OUTLINE:

- | | | |
|-----|---------------|---------|
| I. | Sent to Serve | (1-10) |
| II. | Sent to Save | (11-16) |

KEY PASSAGES:

- | | |
|---------|---|
| 8:34-35 | Self-denial and cross-bearing |
| 10:45 | “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” |

LUKE

Luke, a Gentile non-apostle, was closely associated and identified with the apostle Paul and wrote, under the influence of God's Holy Spirit, mainly for other Gentiles. To do this, he coordinated and collated reliable reports to write this book. His Gospel harmonizes perfectly with the other Gospels, yet with authentic variety. This third Gospel portrays Jesus as a man, and thus traces his genealogy, to the first man (Adam) through Mary's line. The key-phrase is 'the Son of Man'. Jesus' humanity is underlined by the inclusion in the Gospel of the ten prayers that he prays. But Jesus is both fully man and fully God, and His deity shines forth from this Gospel as from the other three.¹⁰⁴

THEME: Jesus as the Son of Man

OUTLINE:

- | | | |
|------|--|---------|
| I. | The Birth of the Son of Man | (1-3) |
| II. | The Ministry of the Son of Man | (4-19) |
| III. | The Crucifixion and Resurrection of the Son of Man | (20-24) |

KEY CHAPTERS:

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| 2 | Birth of Christ |
|---|-----------------|

KEY PEOPLE:

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| Zacharias | Priest; husband of Elizabeth and father of John the Baptist; couldn't speak but later prophesied of his son's ministry |
| Elizabeth | Wife of Zacharias; barren; later, mother of John the Baptist; relative of Mary |
| Mary | Mother of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit as a virgin; husband was Joseph |
| Gabriel | Angel who announced the miraculous births of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ to Elizabeth and Mary |
| Martha & Mary | Sisters of Lazarus; one too busy and one who worshipped Jesus |
| Zacchaeus | Repentant tree-climbing tax gatherer |

¹⁰⁴ Chrispin, *The Bible Panorama*, 426.

JOHN

John is written partly to complement the synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, but mainly to show and prove that the Lord Jesus Christ is the everlasting Son of God and, at the same time, God the Son.... Because He is God, there is no genealogy. He always has been, always is, and always will be! Thus John stresses the Lord Jesus Christ's eternality, creatorhood, incarnations and deity. He is God, despite being despised and rejected by some of those He came to save. Signs are given in His miracles to help the humble observer see who Jesus is. Salvation by faith in Him is clearly portrayed. The Gospel constantly underlines His special relationship and entity with God the Father, the signs validating His eternal Sonship, the need to 'believe', the person of Jesus (seven times He says, 'I am', clearly claiming Godhood), and the emphasis on new, spiritual and eternal life that He alone can give. John is written to the 'whomever' of any generation and any national, religious or ethnic background.¹⁰⁵

THEME: Jesus as the Son of God

OUTLINE:

- | | | |
|------|--|---------|
| I. | The Public Ministry of Jesus | (1-12) |
| II. | The Private Ministry of Jesus – Upper Room | (13-17) |
| III. | The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus | (18-21) |

KEY CHAPTERS:

- | | |
|----|---|
| 2 | Wedding in Cana (first sign); cleansing of the temple |
| 3 | Nicodemus; John the Baptist's testimony |
| 4 | Samaritan woman |
| 10 | Good Shepherd; debate on His deity |
| 13 | Last supper/foot washing; Judas' betrayal; Peter's denial predicted |
| 14 | Q and A: He's "the way" (14:6);
"in the Father" (14:9ff);
sending the Holy Spirit (14:26ff) |
| 15 | Relationships: God – vine/branches; believers – "love one another";
world – "hates you" |
| 16 | Revelation of what is to come: rejection; Holy Spirit; resurrection; Father |
| 17 | High Priestly prayer |
| 21 | Jesus appears to the disciples in Galilee |

¹⁰⁵ Crispin, *The Bible Panorama*, 445.

KEY PASSAGES:

- 1:1–14 “In the beginning was the Word...”
– eternal pre-existence and equality of the Word with God
- 3:5 “Born of water and the Spirit”
– the purifying cleansing of Ezekiel 36, and the transformation of the Holy Spirit necessary for the entering the kingdom
- 3:16 God’s love sent Christ to the cross
- 10:30 “I and the Father are one” – deity of Christ; neuter pronoun asserts unity of nature or essence; Jews knew, wanting to stone Him for blasphemy
- 20:31 Written so that you may believe

KEY PEOPLE:

- Mary Magdalene One of Jesus’ most prominent Galilean female disciples; not the woman of bad character and loose morals from Luke 7
- Nathanael Native of Cana in Galilee who became a disciple of Jesus; introduced to Jesus by his friend Philip
- Nicodemus A Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin who probably became a disciple of Jesus; Jesus told him he must be born again

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~10–20 MINUTES):

1. Briefly discuss any questions you have about the books covered in this section of Bible Knowledge.
2. Review the information in this section of Bible Knowledge by asking questions such as:
 - What is found in Matthew 1:23?
 - What is the theme of Mark?
 - Who was Zacharias?
 - Where is Jesus’ high priestly prayer?
3. Review any required memorized content from Genesis to Malachi.

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Read and consider the key texts, terms, provided theological writings, and other additional resources as desired. Write out an answer or outline for each question.

SOTERIOLOGY (PART 2)

Soteriology is the study of the doctrine of salvation.

- **Some key issues and themes addressed in soteriology include:**
 - The Gospel
 - Redemption
 - God's plan of Redemption
 - Redemption Accomplished
 - Redemption Applied

1. DEFINE AND DEFEND THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION.

- **Key passages to consider:**
 - Romans 3:21–26
 - Romans 5:1–2
 - 2 Corinthians 5:21
- **Key terms to include:**
 - Judicial/Legal
 - Imputation

- **What theologians say:**

Louis Berkhof in *Systematic Theology*

Justification is a judicial act of God, in which He declares, on the basis of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, that all the claims of the law are satisfied with respect to the sinner. It is unique in the application of the work of redemption in that it is a judicial act of God, a declaration respecting the sinner, and not an act or process of renewal, such as regeneration, conversion, and sanctification. While it has respect to the sinner, it does not change his inner life. It does not affect his condition, but his state, and in that respect differs from all the other principal parts of the order of salvation. It involves the forgiveness of sins, and restoration to divine favor....The following points of difference between justification and sanctification should be carefully noted:

1. Justification removes the guilt of sin and restores the sinner to all the filial rights involved in his state as a child of God, including an eternal inheritance. Sanctification removes the pollution of sin and renews the sinner ever-increasingly in conformity with the image of God.
2. Justification takes place outside of the sinner in the tribunal of God, and does not change his inner life, though the sentence is brought home to him subjectively. Sanctification, on the other hand, takes place in the inner life of man and gradually affects his whole being.
3. Justification takes place once for all. It is not repeated, neither is it a process; it is complete at once and for all time. There is no more or less in justification; man is either fully justified, or he is not justified at all. In distinction from it sanctification is a continuous process, which is never completed in this life.
4. While the meritorious cause of both lies in the merits of Christ, there is a difference in the efficient cause. Speaking economically, God the Father declares the sinner righteous, and God the Holy Spirit sanctifies him.¹⁰⁶

Augustus Strong in *Systematic Theology*

By justification we mean that judicial act of God by which, on account of Christ, to whom the sinner is united by faith, he declares that sinner to be no longer exposed to the penalty of the law, but to be restored to his favor. Or, to give an alternative definition from which all metaphor is excluded: Justification is the reversal of God's attitude toward the sinner, because of the sinner's new relation to Christ. God did condemn; he now acquits. He did repel; he now admits to favor.

Justification, as thus defined, is therefore a declarative act, as distinguished from an efficient act; an act of God external to the sinner, as distinguished from an act within the sinner's nature and changing that nature; a judicial act, as distinguished from a sovereign act; an act based upon and logically presupposing the sinner's union with Christ, as distinguished from an act which causes and is followed by that union with Christ.¹⁰⁷

Alan Cairns in *Dictionary of Theological Terms*

The two elements in justification are pardon and imputed righteousness. That is, the total obedience of Christ, both passive and active, avails for the believer. The vicarious atonement of Christ pays the debt of the believer's sin, satisfies divine justice on his behalf, and renders it possible for God to be just and yet to justify him (Rom. 3:26). The imputed righteousness of Christ gives the believer "the adoption of children" (Gal. 4:5) and the title to eternal life.¹⁰⁸

106 Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 513–14.

107 Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 849.

108 Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 244.

- Write a summary or outline of your definition and defense of the doctrine of justification.

2. DEFINE AND DEFEND THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION.

- **Key passages to consider:**
 - 1 Corinthians 1:2
 - Philippians 1:6
 - Philippians 2:12–13
- **Key terms to include:**
 - Positional/Definitive Sanctification
 - Progressive Sanctification
- **What theologians say:**

John Frame in *Systematic Theology*

As we have seen, God declares believers to be righteous in Christ (justification) and welcomes them into his own family (adoption). But he also works within believers to *make* them holy.... God's work to make us holy is called *sanctification*.... To sanctify is to make holy....

Definitive Sanctification

The instantaneous beginning of sanctification is called *definitive sanctification*, contrasted with the ongoing process of *progressive sanctification*. The first is a single act of God that happens at a single point in time. The second is a continuing work of God with which he calls us to cooperate. This distinction reflects the fact we have noted, that for the believer holiness is both a fact and a command. Let us first look at definitive sanctification.

Definitive sanctification is a once-for-all event...that transfers us from the sphere of sin to the sphere of God's holiness, from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God (Heb. 9:13–14; 10:10; 13:12). It is at this point that each of us joins the people of God. This is analogous to God's bringing Israel out of all the surrounding nations to be his holy people.... So the NT says that all Christians are saints, that is, holy (Acts

20:32; Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; 6:11). Sainthood does not belong to just a few special Christians, as in the Roman Catholic view. It belongs to all believers.

Definitive sanctification is based on the fact that we belong to Christ.... Paul expresses this often by the phrase “in Christ.” We are justified in Christ, adopted in Christ, sanctified in Christ. We are set apart from all other people, holy, because we are in Christ. So in him we have been sanctified, past tense....

Progressive Sanctification

But sanctification is not only that initial reorientation. It is also our gradual growth in holiness and righteousness, our progress in God’s way, the way of good works. This is what we usually think of when we hear the word *sanctification*.

Definitive sanctification is a break with our sinful past. But as we’ve seen, it does not make us sinlessly perfect. We are not perfectly free from sin until our death or the last judgment (Phil. 3:12; 1 John 1:8, 10). As with other aspects of salvation, sanctification displays the tension of the *already* and the *not yet*. We are already saved through the finished work of Christ, but we must wait for the fulfillment of our salvation at the return of Jesus on the last day.... But we should not be complacent about the presence of sin in our lives. Rather, there is a battle to be fought, with God’s help (1 Cor. 9:24–27).

So sanctification is not only a past event, but also an ongoing process. It begins in regeneration, and we can think of sanctification as the outworking of the new life given in regeneration. In that ongoing process, God works in us (1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 13:20–21), but he also calls us to work out our salvation (Phil. 2:12–13). It is all of God, for all things are of God. Sanctification is a work of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16–18, 22–23; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2) on the basis of Christ, who is our sanctification (1 Cor. 1:30).¹⁰⁹

John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue in *Biblical Theology*

Though sanctification is primarily understood to be a process in which the believer is conformed into the image of Christ (e.g., Scripture speaks of believers as “those who *are being* sanctified,” Heb. 10:14), that process has a definite beginning at regeneration. The present-tense aspect of sanctification is often called progressive sanctification, whereas the past-tense aspect may be called either initial, positional, or definitive sanctification.

...The holy disposition that is strengthened throughout the believer’s progressive sanctification is that same holy disposition that is born in the believer at regeneration. In this sense, regeneration is the beginning of sanctification.

For this reason, the New Testament often employs the terminology of

sanctification in the past tense, characterizing the Christian as one who has been initially sanctified by God. In his farewell address to the Ephesian elders at Miletus, Paul spoke of the inheritance they share “among all those who are sanctified” (Acts 20:32). In his defense before Agrippa, he recounted his conversion experience on the Damascus road, when Jesus had commissioned him to the Gentiles so “that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me” (Acts 26:18). That such a designation does not refer to some completed state of progressive sanctification is established by Paul’s letter to the sinful Corinthian church members, whom he addressed as “those sanctified in Christ Jesus” (1 Cor. 1:2). The Corinthians were that motley crew of professing believers.... And yet Paul spoke of their definitive sanctification: “But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11).

The most significant reality in definitive sanctification is that, through union with Christ, the believer is set free from the dominion of sin. While justification and imputed righteousness grant the Christian freedom from sin’s penalty, initial sanctification grants him freedom from sin’s power....

The Christian’s freedom from the dominion of sin through union with Christ is the necessary foundation for all progress in progressive sanctification....

...Though the believer enjoys this decisive victory over the dominion of sin as a result of union with Christ, his heart and life are not totally purified. Though the penalty of sin is paid for and the power of sin is broken, the presence of sin still remains in the believer’s flesh and therefore must continually be put to death. Thus, the sanctification that begins definitively at regeneration necessarily continues throughout the entirety of the Christian life. This continuous aspect of sanctification is called progressive sanctification....

...Sanctification is fundamentally a supernatural work of God done in the inner nature of man. Paul declares that God is at work *in* believers that they may not only work for his good pleasure but even will for his good pleasure (Phil. 2:13). That is to say, God works for the believer to sanctify not merely his external actions but also his internal desires....

...While sanctification is properly said to be an internal work of the Spirit, it does not follow that the believer has nothing to do in this matter, since Scripture is replete with exhortations and imperatives for the believer to pursue holiness. Paul commands the church to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” precisely because God is at work within them (Phil. 2:12–13). So far from being an excuse not to work, God’s sanctifying work in believers is the very ground of their efforts....

Thus we are to “strive for...the holiness without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14), to “put to death the deeds of the body” (Rom. 8:13), to “flee from sexual

immorality” (1 Cor. 6:18), to “pursue righteousness” (2 Tim. 2:22), and even to “cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1)....

In other words, while it is true that God is the One who causes grass to grow and makes the land produce crops, only a foolish farmer passively waits for the land to yield its produce by divine fiat. Instead, he acknowledges that God brings forth fruits and vegetables from the earth by means of a farmer’s labors—through the cultivation of the soil, the sowing of the seed, and the plant’s exposure to sunlight and water. Similarly, in and of himself, the believer is just as powerless to effect holiness in his heart, for it is the work of God. Yet only a foolish person waits passively for his heart to spring forth in righteousness by divine fiat. Instead, the faithful Christian acknowledges that God brings forth the fruit of holiness by means of the believer’s labors. Scripture’s repeated calls to effort, action, and obedience are commands for believers to put themselves in the way of those channels of sanctifying grace that the Spirit employs to conform Christ’s people into his image.¹¹⁰

- Write a summary or outline of your definition and defense of the doctrine of sanctification.

3. DEFINE AND DEFEND THE DOCTRINE OF PRESERVATION OR PERSEVERANCE.

- **Key passages to consider:**
 - John 10:27–29
 - Romans 8:29–30
 - Philippians 1:6
 - 1 John 2:19

- **Key terms to include:**
 - Eternal Security
 - Assurance of Salvation

110 MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 632–41.

○ **What theologians say:**

The Westminster Confession of Faith

They whom God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.

This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ; the abiding of the Spirit, and of the seed of God within them; and the nature of the covenant of grace: from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof.

Nevertheless they may, through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins; and for a time continue therein: whereby they incur God's displeasure, and grieve his Holy Spirit; come to be deprived of some measure of their graces and comforts; have their hearts hardened, and their consciences wounded; hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgments upon themselves.¹¹¹

Louis Berkhof in *Systematic Theology*

The doctrine of perseverance requires careful statement, especially in view of the fact that the term “perseverance of the saints” is liable to misunderstanding. It should be noted first of all that the doctrine is not merely to the effect that the elect will certainly be saved in the end, though Augustine has given it that form, but teaches very specifically that they who have once been regenerated and effectually called by God to a state of grace, can never completely fall from that state and thus fail to attain to eternal salvation, though they may sometimes be overcome by evil and fall in sin. It is maintained that the life of regeneration and the habits that develop out of it in the way of sanctification can never entirely disappear.... It is, strictly speaking, not man but God who perseveres. Perseverance may be defined as *that continuous operation of the Holy Spirit in the believer, by which the work of divine grace that is begun in the heart, is continued and brought to completion*. It is because God never forsakes His work that believers continue to stand to the very end.¹¹²

Rolland McCune in *A Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity*

1. Preservation and eternal security are synonymous. The perspective of *preservation* is from God's viewpoint. God keeps the believer saved and safe. A kindred doctrine, *perseverance*, looks at it from the believer's viewpoint; that is, the believer will progress in the Christian life until the day of final redemption.

¹¹¹ *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, 73–75.

¹¹² Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 545–46.

2. Eternal security deals only with those who are truly saved, not just professing Christians. Only true believers are considered....
3. Eternal security does not mean that a believer may never backslide. A Christian can never be sinless in this life, and it is even possible for a believer to fall into grievous disobedience. But, as seen in the preceding chapter on sanctification, there is a definite limit to what a genuine believer can get into in this regard. Sin will never again have mastery over him (Rom 6:14). The decisive and eternal break with sin via union with Christ (in His death and resurrection; Rom 6:2, 6–10) precludes a complete abandonment of the believer’s faith and loss of eternal life....

The fundamental idea of preservation or eternal security is *to be kept by God*, found in the words of Peter concerning true believers:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are *protected* by the power of God for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Pet 1:3–5).

Three thoughts arise out of the passage. One, believers are kept by God. The key word is *phroureo*, which is used only here and means *to keep, guard, protect or provide security*. The underlying connotation is to be kept in a state of settlement or security, and the keeper is God Himself through His infinite power. Two, believers are kept through faith, not irrespective of faith. The Christian life is one of faith—initial saving faith and a subsequent life of trusting, sanctifying faith. In no sense is there security in a do-as-you-wish or live-as-you-please mentality. Third, believers are kept unto final salvation, not temporarily or just for a while. Security is unconditional. Genuine eternal life is *eternal*; eternal life is forever life.¹¹³

- Write a summary or outline of your definition and defense of the doctrine of preservation or perseverance.

4. DEFINE AND DEFEND THE DOCTRINE OF GLORIFICATION.

- **Key passages to consider:**

- Romans 8:30
- 1 Corinthians 15:50–53
- Philippians 3:21

- **Key terms to include:**

- Resurrection
- Glorified Body
- Perfected

- **What theologians say:**

John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue in *Biblical Doctrine*

Glorification is the radical transformation of both the body and the soul of believers, perfecting them in holiness, and thereby fitting them for eternal life on the new earth in perfect communion with the triune God. Murray helpfully describes glorification as “the complete and final redemption of the whole person, when in the integrity of body and spirit, the people of God will be conformed to the image of the risen, exalted, and glorified Redeemer, when the very body of their humiliation will be conformed to the body of Christ’s glory” (cf. Phil. 3:21)....

The resurrection of the body is the consummation of our salvation, as the Spirit applies to completion the redemption that the Father planned and that Christ purchased. Romans 8:30 features glorification as the climax of redemption: “And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also *glorified*.” Those on whom the Father set his electing love he predestined for salvation, and these—whose redemption Christ purchased by dying in their place as a propitiation for their sins—enjoy the benefits of that redemption. In justification, they are freed from the penalty of sin, and in sanctification, they are freed from the power of sin. In glorification, they are finally freed from the very presence of sin in both body and soul....

Glorification is also the fulfillment of Jesus’s desire to see his church purified from all spot, wrinkle, or any such thing (cf. Eph. 5:27), dwelling with him for all eternity. Jesus explicitly prays for this in his High Priestly Prayer, saying, “Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24). Finally, glorification consummates the objective of salvation—namely, to glorify Christ by making him the firstborn among many brethren (Rom. 8:29). Because glorification is the consummation of sanctification, in which believers

are perfectly conformed to the image of Christ, glorification especially magnifies Christ as the preeminent source of the beauty of holiness that is reflected in his perfected brethren.¹¹⁴

Wayne Grudem in *Systematic Theology*

When Christ redeemed us he did not just redeem our spirits (or souls)—he redeemed us as whole persons, and this includes the redemption of our bodies. Therefore the application of Christ’s work of redemption to us will not be complete until our bodies are entirely set free from the effects of the fall and brought to that state of perfection for which God created them. In fact, the redemption of our bodies will only occur when Christ returns and raises our bodies from the dead. But at this present time, Paul says that we wait for “*the redemption of our bodies*,” and then adds, “for in this hope we were saved” (Rom. 8:23–24). The stage in the application of redemption when we receive resurrection bodies is called *glorification*. Referring to that future day Paul says that we will be “*glorified with him*” (Rom. 8:17). Moreover, when Paul traces the steps in the application of redemption, the last one he names is glorification: “And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also *glorified*” (Rom. 8:30). The day we are glorified will be a day of great victory because on that day the last enemy, death, will be destroyed, just as Scripture predicts: “For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death” (1 Cor. 15:25–26).... When our bodies are raised from the dead we will experience complete victory over the death that came as a result of the fall of Adam and Eve. Then our redemption will be complete.

We may therefore define *glorification* as follows: *Glorification is the final step in the application of redemption. It will happen when Christ returns and raises from the dead the bodies of all believers for all time who have died, and reunites them with their souls, and changes the bodies of all believers who remain alive, thereby giving all believers at the same time perfect resurrection bodies like his own.*¹¹⁵

- Write a summary or outline of your definition and defense of the doctrine of glorification.

114 MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 653–54.

115 Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 828.

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~20–30 MINUTES):

1. Briefly discuss any questions you have about soteriology and the specific questions you answered in this chapter.

2. Practice answering the following using only a Bible for reference:
 - Define and defend the doctrine of justification.
 - Define and defend the doctrine of sanctification.
 - Define and defend the doctrine of preservation or perseverance.
 - Define and defend the doctrine of glorification.

3. Briefly review any of the following theology questions that would be helpful:
 - How can God be known?
 - Defend trinitarianism.
 - How would you respond to someone who says, “If God is love, then why do bad things happen to good people?”
 - How can you prove the deity of Jesus Christ?
 - Describe the incarnation and its significance.
 - What does the resurrection of Christ signify for the believer?
 - What Scriptures would you use to demonstrate the deity of the Holy Spirit?
 - What is the role of the Holy Spirit in conversion?
 - What does it mean to be baptized by the Holy Spirit?
 - What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit?
 - How would you respond to someone who argues that the charismatic/miraculous gifts are still active today?
 - On what basis do you believe the Bible to be a supernatural document?
 - Why do you believe the Bible to be closed, in that nothing should be added to the current sixty-six books?
 - Define the sufficiency of Scripture. What are the implications of this doctrine for everyday life?
 - Explain and defend the historical/grammatical method of hermeneutics.
 - What does it mean when the Bible says that man was created in the image of God? What differentiates man from animals?
 - Does man have a free will? Explain.
 - How would you defend the doctrine of inherited sin – that men are sinful not only in their actions but also in their nature?
 - Explain the concept of the flesh or the old nature. How is the Christian’s relationship to the old man explained in Scripture?
 - What must a person do to be saved? How is the Lordship of Christ tied to this

discussion? Is repentance essential to conversion?

- Define and defend the doctrine of election.
- Define and defend the doctrine of the atonement.
- Define and defend the doctrine of regeneration.

ELDER ORIENTATION

PART #1: LEADING WITH A PLURALITY OF ELDERS

PLURALITY IN PRACTICE: RECOGNIZING THE CHIEF SHEPHERD

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Elders must diligently serve the Lord in shepherding the flock. They should work hard to teach and lead carefully, with strong biblical convictions. At the same time, an elder who strongly feels the weight of this responsibility can easily take more ownership for the church than they ought, resulting in discord with the other leaders and undue stress in their own life and family. Each elder must recognize that though they will give an account to God, they are not ultimately responsible for the flock of God under their care.

First Peter 5 exhorts elders to carefully “shepherd the flock of God among you,” but it also reminds each one that there is a “Chief Shepherd.” It is Jesus who is the head of the church, who builds the church, who protects the church, and who purifies the church. He will one day “present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing...” (Ephesians 5:27).

Elders have the privilege of participating in that amazing work, but they do not have authority to determine how to accomplish it, nor the means in and of themselves to see it done. So, elders must shepherd well, but they also must be careful to recognize Jesus as head of the church and to entrust their church to Him as the Chief Shepherd.

LEADING UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST

Elders are not the ultimate authority in the church. In Ephesians 5:23–24, it is clear that “Christ... is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body,” and as such “the church is subject to Christ...” The church, including its leadership, is subject to Christ. Elders are authorities in the church, but they are also under authority. The primary question elders must ask in every discussion is not “what do I think?” but “what does Christ think?”

- How does the headship of Christ over the church affect how an elder will approach any discussion or decision?

Too often discord occurs between elders because they focus on what they want for the church. At times this may be sinfully lording it over, but it may also be well-intentioned because of a deep love for the body. Regardless of the motives, whenever personal opinions or preferences take priority over the clear commands of Christ, disunity will ensue.

- How does focusing on the headship of Christ over the church promote and preserve unity among the church's leadership?

COMMITTING TO THE MEANS CHRIST HAS GIVEN

Elders may be tempted to try to produce spiritual growth in individuals or numerical growth in their church. Many well-intentioned elders have given in to pragmatic ideas because they believed they would ultimately lead to mature saints or a larger congregation. But when elders trust and recognize the authority of the Chief Shepherd, they will be content to faithfully follow His instructions regarding what should characterize ministry and life in the church, leaving the results up to Him.

- What are the primary means God has given for the growth of individuals and the church?

- What was the early church devoted to in Acts 2:42–47?

- What has Christ commanded the church to do when gathered in the following verses:
 - Colossians 3:16

 - 1 Timothy 2:1–2, 8

 - 1 Timothy 4:13

 - 2 Timothy 4:1–5

HUMBLY BRINGING OUR CARES AND CONCERNS TO THE LORD

Because of his deep affection for the saints, Paul undoubtedly had many restless nights as he ministered under the “the daily pressure...of concern for all the churches” (2 Corinthians 11:28). Elders should expect no less.

- What are some of the pressures and concerns elders face in shepherding and overseeing the church?

Elders need not bear the weight of concern for the church alone. One of the most beautiful realities of a plurality of leadership in the local church is the spreading out of and sharing of those concerns for individual members and the church. But elders not only have other elders to help shoulder that load, they also have the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

This Chief Shepherd, the Lord Jesus, is the one seen “in the middle of the lampstands [the churches]” in Revelation 1:13. He fully knows the condition of every flock and cares for every member far more than any elder ever could. This recognition has a profound impact on how elders should handle the weight of concerns they feel.

- Consider the following exhortations:

1 Peter 5:5–7 You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

Philippians 4:6–7 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

The proper response of an elder to the cares and concerns they have regarding the church is to cast those cares on the Lord. Rather than being anxious, elders must humbly come to the Lord in prayer, bringing those concerns to the one who died for the church and who has promised to complete the work He began, bringing her to glory.

Were it not for confidence in the sovereign care of Christ for His bride, no man could bear the weight of serving as an elder. But with that confidence, the weighty load of responsibility entrusted to him as a steward becomes not only doable, but also a delight.

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~15–20 MINUTES):

Discuss any questions you have from this section as well as the following:

1. Why is it such a comfort as an elder knowing that Christ has already given all the instruction and resources needed to shepherd and oversee the church?
2. How can an elder tell when they are bearing too many cares themselves and not casting them on the Lord?
3. How should an elder respond when they are feeling overwhelmed by the demands and concerns of ministry?

ELDER ORIENTATION

PART #2: FULFILLING THE ROLE OF AN ELDER

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

The primary functions of an elder are contained in the other biblical terms for that office – pastor and overseer. As pastors, elders are responsible for caring well for their flock. This primarily involves caring for the spiritual needs of those in the church. But it also involves caring for physical needs. Since its inception at Pentecost, the church has faithfully cared for those in need.

CARING FOR THE NEEDY

When caring for the needy, elders must balance generosity and compassion with the biblical wisdom needed to be wise stewards and to encourage diligence and hard work from those who are able. Elders must also balance the priority of supporting those within the church with the commands to care generally for the poor in our midst.

- How should the following passages shape an elder's thinking about caring for those in need?
 - Proverbs 14:31
 - Matthew 25:34–40
 - Acts 2:44–45
 - Galatians 6:9–10
 - 2 Thessalonians 3:6–13
 - 1 Timothy 5:8, 16
 - James 1:27

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~15–20 MINUTES):

1. Discuss the questions from the Individual Preparation.
2. How might an elder be tempted to use their position of authority or influence for financial gain?
3. 1 Peter 5:2 contrasts an elder who serves for sordid gain with one who serves eagerly. What does it look like for an elder to serve with eagerness rather than for what they receive in return?
4. What safeguards are in place in your church so that elders are not accused of or tempted to use their position for financial gain (consider elders' access to church funds, to information about financial contributions, etc.)?

Chapter 8

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

- **Acts:** Birth and Growth of the Church
- **Romans:** The Gospel of God
- **1 Corinthians:** Correction and Condemnation
- **2 Corinthians:** Defense of Apostleship

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY: ECCLESIOLOGY

- What is the difference between elders and deacons?
- What is the proper process for church discipline?
What circumstances or situations warrant beginning this process?
- What are the primary goals or purposes of the local church?
- What are the ordinances prescribed in the New Testament to the church?
What is the proper way for administering these ordinances?

ELDER ORIENTATION

- PART #1: LEADING WITH A PLURALITY OF ELDERS
Plurality in Practice: Meeting together
- PART #2: FULFILLING THE ROLE OF AN ELDER
Confronting Sin and Practicing Church Discipline
- PART #3: DISPLAYING THE CHARACTER OF AN ELDER
Not Addicted to Wine but Self-controlled, Temperate, and Prudent

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Review the overview and key information of each book. Memorize key information as desired or required for your church elder process.

ACTS

Luke begins the Book of Acts where he left off in his gospel. Acts records the initial fulfillment of the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19–20 as it traces the beginning and growth of the New Testament church. Christ’s last words before His ascension were so perfectly realized in the Book of Acts that they effectively and concisely outline its contents: “You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem [chs. 1–7], and in all Judea and Samaria [chs. 8–12], and to the end of the earth [chs. 13–28]” (1:8). Thus, Acts traces the rapid expansion of the gospel, beginning in Jerusalem and spreading throughout the Roman Empire.¹¹⁶

THEME: Birth and Growth of the Church

OUTLINES:

Geographical:	I.	Jerusalem	(1–7)	ca. 3 yrs
	II.	Judea and Samaria	(8–12)	ca. 11 yrs
	III.	The Ends of the Earth	(13–28)	ca. 18 yrs

Apostles:	Peter	(1–12)
	Paul	(13–28)

KEY CHAPTERS:

1	40 days post-resurrection; choosing of Matthias
2	Pentecost; coming of Holy Spirit
5	Ananias and Sapphira; persecution; deity of the Holy Spirit
6	First deacons
7	Stephen’s sermon and martyrdom
9	Saul’s conversion – Paul
13–14	First missionary journey
15	Jerusalem council
27–28	Paul’s passage to Rome

¹¹⁶ Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 351.

KEY PASSAGES:

1:8	“You shall be my witnesses”
2:38	“Repent and be baptized”
4:12	“...No other name under heaven...”
5:29	“We must obey God rather than man”
8:14–17	Samaritans receive the Spirit
10:44–46	Gentiles receive the Spirit
16:31	“...Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved...”
19:1–7	Disciples of John the Baptist receive the Spirit

KEY PEOPLE:

Ananias	A Christian who, with his wife, Sapphira, sold land and withheld money he pledged to the church; was killed by God
Apollos	Learned and eloquent Jew from Alexandria in Egypt; influential leader in the early church; was a disciple of JTB, and only knew some of Jesus’ teaching; Aquilla and Priscilla clued him in
Aquila	Jewish Christian living in Corinth with his wife Priscilla when Paul arrived there; he and Priscilla traveled with Paul from Corinth
Barnabas	Name means “son of encouragement”; an apostle in the early church; Paul’s companion on his first missionary journey
Matthias	The disciple chosen to succeed Judas Iscariot as an apostle
Cornelius	Roman soldier stationed in Caesarea; first recorded Gentile convert to Christianity
Gamaliel	Famous member of the Jewish Sanhedrin and a teacher of the law; taught Paul; advised the Sanhedrin to treat the apostles of the young Christian church with moderation
Paul	Prominent leader of the first-century church; apostle to the Gentiles; author of 13 New Testament Epistles
Peter	One of Jesus’ 12 disciples; rose to preeminence both among the disciples during Jesus’ ministry and among the apostles afterwards
Philip	An evangelist; witnessed to the Ethiopian Eunuch from Isaiah 53
Priscilla	Wife of Aquila; left Corinth to travel with Paul
Sapphira	Wife of Ananias; killed by God for holding back proceeds from field and lying to God
Silas	Accompanied Paul to Antioch of Syria to report the decision of the Jerusalem Council to accept Gentile Christians into the church; went on 2nd missionary journey with Paul
Stephen	One of the first seven deacons of the early church; the first Christian martyr

KEY DATES:

Jerusalem Council	50 AD
Paul's missionary journeys:	
First	47-49 AD
Second	50-52 AD (including 18 months in Corinth)
Third	52-56 AD (including over 2 years in Ephesus)
Destruction of temple	70 AD

ROMANS

The theme of this book is the gospel itself, as applying not only to Jews but to the lost sinners everywhere. Romans is basically about justification by faith based on the righteousness of God in Christ and on the promises of God.... It shows how all the people are sinners under God's righteous condemnation and how the answer is in Christ whose righteousness is credited to the repentant sinner trusting Him, just as that sinner's sin is debited to Jesus' substitutionary death on the cross. This produces a practical application and outworking of God's righteousness in the sanctification of the believer through God's Spirit. Christian conduct will always flow from the correct application of biblical doctrine.¹¹⁷

THEME: The Gospel of God

OUTLINE:

- I. Revelation of God's Righteousness (1-8)
- II. Vindication of God's Righteousness (9-11)
- III. Application of God's Righteousness (12-16)

KEY CHAPTERS:

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 3-5 | Justification |
| 9-11 | Israel – past election, present rejection, future restoration |
| 12-13 | Responsibilities toward God, government and society |
| 14-15 | Christian liberty – principles and practices |
| 16 | Conclusion – praise and greeting |

KEY PASSAGES:

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 1:18-32 | God's wrath against man's sin – guilt of the Gentiles |
| 7:1-14 | Paul's struggle with coveting before Christ |
| 7:15-25 | The mature Christian's struggle against the sinful flesh |
| 8:28-29 | God causes all things to work together for good for those who love God
– to be conformed to His image |
| 10:9-15 | The gospel proclamation |

¹¹⁷ Chrispin, *The Bible Panorama*, 477.

1 CORINTHIANS

The basic theme of this epistle is the application of Christian principles on an individual and social level. The cross of Christ is a message that is designed to transform the lives of believers and make them different, as people and as a corporate body, from the surrounding world. But the Corinthians were destroying their Christian testimony because of immorality and disunity. Paul wrote this letter as his corrective response to the news of problems and disorders among the Corinthians. It was designed to refute improper attitudes and conduct and to promote a spirit of unity among the brethren in their relationships and worship.¹¹⁸

THEME: Correction and Condemnation

OUTLINE:

- | | | |
|------|----------------------------|--------|
| I. | Divisions in the Church | (1-4) |
| II. | Disobedience in the Church | (5-6) |
| III. | Difficulties in the Church | (7-16) |

KEY CHAPTERS:

- | | |
|------|--|
| 3 | Immaturity; foundation; fleshliness; rewards |
| 5 | Incest/attitude toward a sinning brother |
| 6 | Lawsuits/suing; immorality/liberty |
| 7 | Guidelines for marriage and singleness |
| 8-10 | Christian liberty |
| 11 | Order! Women/communion |
| 12 | Basic principles of spiritual gifts |
| 13 | The priority of love over spiritual gifts |
| 14 | Procedure and order in spiritual gifts (tongues) |
| 15 | Resurrection |

KEY PASSAGES:

- | | |
|---------|---|
| 2:1-3 | Paul came not with superiority of speech, but with a simple message: Christ and Him crucified |
| 2:12-16 | A natural man cannot understand the things of the Spirit |
| 6:9-11 | The unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God |

¹¹⁸ Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 382.

2 CORINTHIANS

[In 2 Corinthians,] Paul builds on and follows up his first letter to the Corinthian church in three main divisions, namely, Paul's ministry seen in action, his appeal to give to others through Christian concern, and his defense of his God-given apostleship. As well as relating to the situation he addressed in his first letter, he also covers new ground. Whereas the first letter largely reveals Paul's message, the second letter reveals even more of Paul's character. Although written to a church it is personal, giving his biographical details.¹¹⁹

THEME: Defense of Apostleship

OUTLINE:

- | | | |
|------|--|---------|
| I. | Character: Paul's Explanation of His Ministry | (1–7) |
| II. | Collection: Paul's Collection for the Saints | (8–9) |
| III. | Credentials: Paul's Defense of His Apostleship | (10–13) |

KEY CHAPTERS:

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 3 | Validation of apostolic ministry through changed lives; fading glory of Moses versus transforming glory sanctification |
| 5 | Ministry motivations |
| 8–9 | Giving |

KEY PASSAGES:

- | | |
|------|------------------------------|
| 5:17 | New Creation |
| 5:21 | Justification through Christ |

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~10–20 MINUTES):

- Briefly discuss any questions you have about the books covered in this section of Bible Knowledge.
- Review the information in this section of Bible Knowledge by asking questions such as:
 - What is found in Acts 5:29?
 - When was the Jerusalem Council?
 - What is the theme of Romans?
 - Where do you find guidelines for marriage and singleness?
- Review any required memorized content from Genesis to John.

¹¹⁹ Chrispin, *The Bible Panorama*, 497.

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Read and consider the key texts, terms, provided theological writings, and other additional resources as desired. Write out an answer or outline for each question.

ECCLESIOLOGY

Ecclesiology is the study of the doctrine of the church.

○ **Some key issues and themes addressed in ecclesiology include:**

- The Nature of the Church (Local and Universal)
- The Purposes of the Church
- The Government of the Church
 - Elders
 - Deacons
- The Ordinances of the Church
 - Baptism
 - The Lord's Supper

1. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ELDERS AND DEACONS?

○ **Key passages to consider:**

- Titus 1:5–9
- 1 Timothy 3:1–13
- Acts 6:1–6
- 1 Peter 5:1–4
- Acts 20:28–31

○ **Key terms to include:**

- Pastor/Shepherd
- Overseer
- Able to Teach

○ **What theologians say:**

John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue in *Biblical Doctrine*

By God's design, churches depend on faithful leadership in order to be strong, healthy, productive, and fruitful. Scripture teaches that God has given elders to each local congregation in order to oversee and lead his people. As those tasked with feeding

and protecting the flock, elders will one day give an account before the Lord for the souls under their spiritual care. In fact, spiritual authority, unlike worldly leadership, is characterized by Christlike humility and a desire to serve (Mark 10:43–45). Any who wish to lead in the church must demonstrate personal holiness, doctrinal purity, self-sacrifice, spiritual discipline, and Christ-centered devotion. The office of elder entails a responsibility that must not be taken lightly (cf. Luke 12:48), as highlighted in the sober warning of James 3:1: “Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.”¹²⁰

Alan Cairns in Dictionary of Theological Terms

Elders are stewards commissioned to administer the affairs of God’s house, in the name, and according to the will, of the Lord (Tit. 1:7). They are servants of God to His people and are not to be lords over them (1 Pet. 5:3). They are called to do the work of shepherds among the flock of God, feeding them and exercising scriptural discipline (Heb. 13:7, 17; 1 Pet. 5:2; Acts 20:28).

They have a God-given authority in the church, but they must exercise it in the light of the fact that Christ is the sole king and head of the church, to whom they must give account of their stewardship (Heb. 13:17).¹²¹

Paul Enns in The Moody Handbook of Theology

The word *deacon* (Gk. *diakonos*) is the common word that means “minister” or “servant” and is used many times in the New Testament in a nontechnical sense (Matt. 20:26; Mark 9:35).

...Whereas it is not clearly stated, it appears that the origin of the office began in Acts 6:1–6 where seven men were selected to care for the material needs of widows in the congregation. That allowed the apostles to devote their time to prayer and ministry of the Word. This indicates the function of deacons is to be subordinate and auxiliary to the elders; while the elders teach the congregation, the deacons care for the material needs of the congregation.¹²²

Wayne Grudem in Systematic Theology

It is significant that nowhere in the New Testament do deacons have ruling authority over the church as the elders do, nor are deacons ever required to be able to teach Scripture or sound doctrine.¹²³

120 MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 759–60.

121 Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 145.

122 Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, 371–72.

123 Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 920.

- Write a summary or outline of your answer to the question, “What is the difference between elders and deacons?”

2. WHAT IS THE PROPER PROCESS FOR CHURCH DISCIPLINE?

WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES OR SITUATIONS WARRANT BEGINNING THIS PROCESS?

- **Key passages to consider:**

- Matthew 18:15–17
- 1 Timothy 5:19–20
- Galatians 6:1
- Titus 3:10–11
- 1 Corinthians 5:1–5

- **What theologians say:**

John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue in *Biblical Doctrine*

Though the word *discipline* carries negative connotations, the practice of church discipline ought to be motivated by a positive, loving desire both to preserve the purity of the church (2 Cor. 7:1; cf. Acts 5:11; 1 Cor. 5:1–13; 2 Thess. 3:6–15; 1 Tim. 1:19–20; Titus 1:10–16) and to restore sinning brothers and sisters to the fellowship (cf. Luke 15:3–8; Jude 23). Church discipline should never be motivated out of self-righteous pride, political agendas, a desire to exercise power in an unbiblical way, or an intent to embarrass people. Rather, it should be overseen by the elders who, as shepherds of the flock, sincerely long to see wandering sheep repent, return, and be restored (cf. Gal. 6:1)....

...[Matthew 18:15–17] delineates a four-step process for how churches are to deal with sin among their members. First, believers are to address sin on an individual level, approaching the offending party with a spirit of gentleness and humility. If the sinning brother responds to that private confrontation in repentance, the church discipline process comes to an end. He is forgiven and restored (Matt. 18:15). But if he refuses to repent, the process moves to a second step, in which one or two more believers join in confronting the sinning brother. These witnesses (cf. Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15; John 8:17; 2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Tim. 5:19; Heb. 10:28) primarily confirm that the sin was committed, and they also observe how the offending party responds after being confronted a second time (Matt. 18:16). It is hoped that the added weight

of their rebuke will be enough to prompt a change of heart in the sinning brother.

Should he still refuse to repent after being given adequate time, the process moves to a third step. In light of the sinning brother's persistent hardheartedness, the witnesses are to bring the matter to the church (Matt. 18:17) by notifying the elders, who in turn communicate it to the congregation. Because of the public nature of this step, the elders must perform due diligence to confirm the facts of the situation—that the church member has sinned, has been confronted, and has refused to repent—before announcing it to the entire congregation. The purpose of alerting the church is twofold: to remind other members of the seriousness of sin (cf. 1 Tim. 5:20) and to encourage them to confront the sinning brother in the hopes that he will repent and be restored.

If the confronted brother still refuses to repent, the final step of church discipline is to formally separate and to ostracize him from the fellowship. The unrepentant person is no longer to be treated as a brother but as “a Gentile and a tax-collector” (Matt. 18:17)—meaning as an outsider to whom the benefits and blessings of church membership are no longer extended. The motivation is not to punish the person but to see him yet come to his senses and repent (cf. 2 Thess. 3:11–15). Consequently, the only contact with such individuals should be for the purpose of admonishing them and calling them to repentance. In the early church, believers were not even to share a meal with those who persisted in unrepentant sin (1 Cor. 5:11; cf. 2 Thess. 3:6, 14). Putting them out of the church protects the purity of the remaining members (1 Cor. 5:6) and safeguards the congregation's testimony in the eyes of the world.¹²⁴

Robert Reymond in *A New Systematic Theology of Christian Faith*

Just as God authorized Israel in its “theocratic” character to place those who committed sins “with a high hand” under the ban...to be punished with extermination, so also the Lord Jesus Christ has given his church the authority to discipline its unruly and reprobate members in order to promote its purity and well-being (Matt. 16:19; 18:15–18; John 20:23). Just as by the preaching of the Word the wicked are doctrinally separated from the holy, so also by discipline the church authoritatively separates between the profane and the holy.

The exercise of discipline is extremely important for the glory of God and of Christ, the purity of the church, and the reclaiming of disobedient members (Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:1–5; Gal. 6:1; 2 Thess. 3:14–15; 1 Tim. 1:20; Titus 3:10). However, the authority to discipline that Christ has given his church is for building up and not for destroying (2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10). Therefore, it is to be exercised in mercy and not in wrath (Gal. 6:1). In this the church is to take the part of a tender mother (1 Thess. 2:7), correcting her children for their good, that every one of them may be presented faultless in the day of the Lord Jesus.¹²⁵

124 MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 793–94.

125 Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 98.

Wayne Grudem in *Systematic Theology*

Sin hinders fellowship among believers and with God. In order for reconciliation to occur, the sin must be dealt with. Therefore, the primary purpose of church discipline is to pursue the twofold goal of *restoration* (of the offender to right behavior) and *reconciliation* (between believers, and with God). Just as wise parents discipline their children (Prov. 13:24: “He who loves [his son] is diligent to discipline him”), and just as God our Father disciplines those whom he loves (Heb. 12:6; Rev. 3:19), so the church in its discipline is acting in love to bring back a brother or sister who has gone astray, reestablishing that person in right fellowship and rescuing him or her from destructive patterns of life....

Although the primary goal of church discipline is restoration and reconciliation for the erring believer, in this present age reconciliation and restoration will not always come about. But whether restoration comes about or not, the church is told to carry out discipline because two other purposes are served as well.

One other purpose is that the sin will be kept from spreading to others.... Paul... says, “*A little leaven leavens the whole lump,*” and tells the Corinthians to put out of the church a man living in incest (1 Cor. 5:2, 6–7), lest his sin affect the whole church. If that man were not disciplined, the effects of the sin would spread to many others who were aware of it and saw that the church paid little attention to it. This would cause many to think that perhaps that sin was not as bad as they had thought, and others might be tempted to commit similar or related kinds of sin....

...A third purpose of church discipline is that the purity of the church is to be protected, so that Christ will not be dishonored. Of course, no believer in this age has a completely pure heart, and we all have remaining sin in our lives. But when a church member continues to sin in a way that is outwardly evident to others, especially to unbelievers, this clearly brings dishonor to Christ....

...There does not seem to be any explicit limitation specified for the kinds of sin that should be subject to church discipline. The examples of sins subject to church discipline in the New Testament are extremely diverse: divisiveness (Rom. 16:17; Titus 3:10), incest (1 Cor. 5:1), laziness and refusing to work (2 Thess. 3:6–10), disobeying what Paul writes (2 Thess. 3:14–15), blasphemy (1 Tim. 1:20), and teaching heretical doctrine (2 John 10–11).

Nonetheless, a definite principle appears to be at work: all sins that were explicitly disciplined in the New Testament were publicly known or outwardly evident sins, and many of them had continued over a period of time. The fact that the sins were publicly known meant that reproach was being brought on the church, Christ was being dishonored, and there was a real possibility that others would be encouraged to follow the wrongful patterns of life that were being publicly tolerated.

There is always the need, however, for mature judgment in the exercise of church discipline, because there is lack of complete sanctification in all our lives.

Furthermore, when we realize that someone is already aware of a sin and struggling to overcome it, a word of admonition may in fact do more harm than good.¹²⁶

- Write a summary or outline of your answer to the questions, “What is the proper process for church discipline?” and “What circumstances or situations warrant beginning this process?”

3. WHAT ARE THE PRIMARY GOALS OR PURPOSES OF THE LOCAL CHURCH?

- **Key passages to consider:**

- Matthew 28:19–20
- Acts 2:42
- Ephesians 3:20–21, 4:11–16
- Colossians 1:28

- **What theologians say:**

Paul Enns in *The Moody Handbook of Theology*

Two overriding purposes of the church can be delineated: gathered, ministering to the body, and scattered, ministering to the world. It is important to distinguish these two purposes. On the one hand, the church gathers as a body of believers wherein believers minister to one another; on the other hand, the church is to minister the gospel to unbelievers in the world. These two purposes must be kept distinct: the church ministers to both believers and unbelievers. There are a number of functions in each of these two major areas.¹²⁷

MacArthur, J., & Mayhue, R., *Biblical Doctrine*

When viewed from the standpoint of salvation history, the church exists to display the wisdom and mercy of God in this age (Eph. 3:10; cf. Rom. 9:23–24; 11:33; 1 Cor. 1:20–31) by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world (Matt. 28:19–20; Acts 1:8; 1 Pet. 2:9), so that sinners from every ethnic background (Rev. 5:9–10) might be rescued from the domain of darkness and ushered into the kingdom of

¹²⁶ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 894–97.

¹²⁷ Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, 365.

God (Col. 1:12–13), and so that unbelieving Israel might be provoked to jealousy and repentance (Rom. 10:19; 11:11). Looking to the future, the New Testament also promises that the church will one day reign with Christ in glory (1 Cor. 6:2; cf. 2 Tim. 2:11–13; Rev. 20:4–6).

From the standpoint of how the church relates to its members, its purpose might be stated as follows: the church exists to glorify God (Eph. 1:5–6, 12–14; 3:20–21; 2 Thess. 1:12) by actively building its members up in the faith (Eph. 4:12–16), faithfully teaching the Word (2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16–17), regularly observing the ordinances (Luke 22:19; Acts 2:38–42), proactively fostering fellowship among believers (Acts 2:42–47; 1 John 1:3), and boldly communicating the truth of the gospel to the lost (Matt. 28:19–20). This purpose can be summarized under the following three headings.

Exalting God

Because God is zealous for his glory (Isa. 48:9–11; cf. Isa. 43:6–7; 49:3), his people should likewise be consumed with a desire to glorify and exalt him (1 Cor. 10:31; cf. 6:20). Consequently, a faithful church is God centered, not man centered. The church has been redeemed so that believers might glorify him both by serving one another (1 Pet. 4:11) and by proclaiming “the excellencies of him who called [them] out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9).

One of the primary ways in which the church exalts God is through worship and praise. Whenever the church gathers, worship ought to be the ultimate priority....

Edifying Believers

...Edification takes place through the ministry of the Word (Acts 20:32; 2 Tim. 3:15–17; 1 Pet. 2:2), the mentoring of godly leadership (Eph. 4:11–12), the selfless exercise of spiritual giftedness (1 Cor. 12:7; 1 Pet. 4:10), and the practice of the “one another” commands in the New Testament....

Evangelizing the Lost

A church that is passionately pursuing the glory of God will likewise have a strong emphasis on evangelism, both locally and around the world.... The church’s evangelistic commission is articulated by Jesus himself in Matthew 28:18–20¹²⁸

Robert Culver in Systematic Theology: Biblical and Historical

Let us note some specific practical ways in which the church in union with Christ does His work on earth today. I think the first of the two most important is that it is in the church, *per se*, where most sinners who are saved, come to be aware of their sins and receive forgiveness of their sins. So it was on the Day of Pentecost

at the close of Peter’s sermon and likewise for most of us—remembering of course that the church sends missionaries and evangelists and that Christian fathers and mothers are associated with and strengthened in their local churches. The second most important way is that it is in the church, in its integral ministries of teaching, preaching, administering ordinances, providing the support of a praying fellowship, that sanctification of believers takes place. Jesus prayed, ‘Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.’ The church has preserved, printed, distributed, explained the Word. Jesus gave Himself for us that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word. Our spots and wrinkles (Eph. 5:27) are removed that Jesus may present ‘himself a glorious church.’ His church’s ministries are precisely engineered for that purpose.¹²⁹

- Write a summary or outline of your answer to the question, “What are the primary goals or purposes of the local church?”

4. WHAT ARE THE ORDINANCES PRESCRIBED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT TO THE CHURCH? WHAT IS THE PROPER WAY FOR ADMINISTERING THESE ORDINANCES?

- **Key passages to consider:**
 - Matthew 28:18–20
 - Acts 8:36–39
 - 1 Corinthians 11:23–28

- **Key terms to include:**
 - Baptism
 - Immersion
 - Paedobaptism (Infant Baptism)
 - Credobaptism (Believer’s Baptism)
 - Lord’s Supper/Communion

129 Culver, *Systematic Theology: Biblical and Historical*, 910.

○ **What theologians say:**

Augustus Strong in *Systematic Theology*

Christian Baptism is the immersion of a believer in water, in token of his previous entrance into the communion of Christ's death and resurrection, —or, in other words, in token of his regeneration through union with Christ.¹³⁰

The Lord's Supper is that outward rite in which the assembled church eats bread broken and drinks wine poured forth by its appointed representative, in token of its constant dependence on the once crucified, now risen Savior, as source of its spiritual life; or, in other words, in token of that abiding communion of Christ's death and resurrection through which the life begun in regeneration is sustained and perfected.¹³¹

John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue in *Biblical Doctrine*

In order to symbolize that internal reality of salvation, the New Testament calls believers to be baptized in water as a public testimony to their faith in and solidarity with the Lord Jesus. Water baptism, then, is the outward, postconversion demonstration of an inward reality that has already occurred at conversion. The baptism of John the Baptist symbolized repentance from sin and turning to God (Matt. 3:6; cf. Acts 19:4–5). In Christ, baptism not only signifies a turning away from sin but also serves as a public affirmation of one's identification and union with him in his death, burial, and resurrection.

Scripture presents baptism as the first step of obedience for believers after they have embraced the Lord Jesus in saving faith. Though not salvific, baptism is commanded by Christ himself (Matt. 28:19). Those unwilling to confess their Lord and Savior publicly through baptism are living in disobedience and thus call into question the genuineness of their faith because they are unwilling to obey (cf. Matt. 10:32–33).

The proper mode of baptism is by immersion, as indicated by the Greek word *baptizō*. Immersion also serves as a symbol of one's burial and resurrection, signifying the spiritual reality that believers have died to sin and risen with Christ (cf. Rom. 6:4, 10).

Though pervasive throughout church history, the practice of infant baptism lacks clear New Testament support, since saving faith precedes baptism and not vice versa. In Scripture, only believers are said to be baptized. The New Testament definition of baptism, in fact, requires that the inner realities of repentance and faith precede the external symbol.... Yet none of these realities—repentance, faith, or a conscious appeal to God for a good conscience—can be exhibited by an infant. Hence, the practice of infant baptism (or paedobaptism) should be rejected. Believer's baptism

¹³⁰ Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 931.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 959.

(or credobaptism) appears to have been the prevailing practice of the early church until at least the third century, when explicit attestations of paedobaptism appear more frequently in extant Christian literature.¹³²

Wayne Grudem in *Systematic Theology*

The practice of baptism in the New Testament was carried out in one way: the person being baptized was *immersed* or put completely under the water and then brought back up again. Baptism *by immersion* is therefore the “mode” of baptism or the way in which baptism was carried out in the New Testament. This is evident for the following reasons:

1. The Greek word βαπτίζω (G966) means “to plunge, dip, immerse” something in water. This is the commonly recognized and standard meaning of the term in ancient Greek literature both inside and outside of the Bible.
2. The sense “immerse” is appropriate and probably required for the word in several New Testament passages. In Mark 1:5, people were baptized by John “*in the river Jordan*”... Mark also tells us that when Jesus had been baptized “he came up *out of the water*” (Mark 1:10)... The fact that John and Jesus went into the river and came up out of it strongly suggests immersion, since sprinkling or pouring of water could much more readily have been done standing beside the river...

When Philip had shared the gospel with the Ethiopian eunuch, “as they went along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, ‘See, here is water! What is to prevent my being baptized?’” (Acts 8:36). Apparently neither of them thought that sprinkling or pouring a handful of water from the container of drinking water that would have been carried in the chariot was enough to constitute baptism. Rather, they waited until there was a body of water near the road. Then “he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went *down into the water* Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came *up out of the water* the Spirit of the Lord caught up Philip; and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8:38–39). As in the case of Jesus, this baptism occurred when Philip and the eunuch went down into a body of water, and after the baptism they came up out of that body of water. Once again baptism by immersion is the only satisfactory explanation of this narrative.

3. The symbolism of union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection seems to require baptism by immersion. Paul says, *Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore*

132 MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 783–84.

with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. (Rom. 6:3–4)

Similarly, Paul tells the Colossians, “You were *buried with him in baptism* in which you were also *raised with him* through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead” (Col. 2:12).

Now this truth is clearly symbolized in baptism by immersion. When the candidate for baptism goes down into the water it is a picture of going down into the grave and being buried. Coming up out of the water is then a picture of being raised with Christ to walk in newness of life. Baptism thus very clearly pictures death to one’s old way of life and rising to a new kind of life in Christ. But baptism by sprinkling or pouring simply misses this symbolism.¹³³

Paul Enns in *The Moody handbook of Theology*

Protestants have historically recognized two ordinances, baptism and the Lord’s Supper....

The memorial view [of the Lord’s Supper] has much to commend it in the Scriptures. An examination of the passages reveals the significance of the Lord’s Supper. It is a memorial to His death (1 Cor. 11:24, 25): the recurring statement “in remembrance of Me” makes this clear, the bread symbolizing His perfect body offered in sin-bearing sacrifice (1 Peter 2:24) and the wine His blood shed for forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7). It is a proclamation of the death of Christ while waiting for His coming (1 Cor. 11:26): it involves a looking back to the historical event of the cross and an anticipating of His return in the future (Matt. 26:29). It is a communion of believers with one another (1 Cor. 10:17): they eat and drink the same symbolic elements, focusing on their common faith in Christ.¹³⁴

- Write a summary or outline of your answer to the questions, “What are the ordinances prescribed in the New Testament to the church?” and “What is the proper way for administering these ordinances?”

¹³³ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 967–68.

¹³⁴ Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, 375–78.

- For further discussion or study in ecclesiology:
 - Discuss the different approaches to church government in contemporary evangelicalism. How do each of these models compare with the biblical data?
 - What are the components of a New Testament church? What constitutes a church as opposed to simply a gathering of Christians?
 - What is the role of women in the church?

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~20–30 MINUTES):

1. Briefly discuss any questions you have about ecclesiology and the specific questions you answered in this chapter.
2. Practice answering the following questions using only a Bible for reference:
 - What is the difference between elders and deacons?
 - What is the proper process for church discipline? What circumstances or situations warrant beginning this process?
 - What are the primary goals or purposes of the local church?
 - What are the ordinances prescribed in the New Testament to the church? What is the proper way for administering these ordinances?
3. Briefly review any of the following theology questions that would be helpful:
 - How can God be known?
 - Defend trinitarianism.
 - How would you respond to someone who says, “If God is love, then why do bad things happen to good people?”
 - How can you prove the deity of Jesus Christ?
 - Describe the incarnation and its significance.
 - What does the resurrection of Christ signify for the believer?
 - What Scriptures would you use to demonstrate the deity of the Holy Spirit?
 - What is the role of the Holy Spirit in conversion?
 - What does it mean to be baptized by the Holy Spirit?
 - What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit?
 - How would you respond to someone who argues that the charismatic/miraculous gifts are still active today?
 - On what basis do you believe the Bible to be a supernatural document?
 - Why do you believe the Bible to be closed, in that nothing should be added to the current sixty-six books?
 - Define the sufficiency of Scripture. What are the implications of this doctrine for everyday life?

- Explain and defend the historical/grammatical method of hermeneutics.
- What does it mean when the Bible says that man was created in the image of God? What differentiates man from animals?
- Does man have a free will? Explain.
- How would you defend the doctrine of inherited sin – that men are sinful not only in their actions but also in their nature?
- Explain the concept of the flesh or the old nature. How is the Christian's relationship to the old man explained in Scripture?
- What must a person do to be saved? How is the Lordship of Christ tied to this discussion? Is repentance essential to conversion?
- Define and defend the doctrine of election.
- Define and defend the doctrine of the atonement.
- Define and defend the doctrine of regeneration.
- Define and defend the doctrine of justification.
- Define and defend the doctrine of sanctification.
- Define and defend the doctrine of preservation or perseverance.
- Define and defend the doctrine of glorification.

- Is any portion of the meeting open for members of the congregation to observe? If so, what items are discussed in the open portion of the meeting? In the closed portion?

- How are decisions reached? When do the elders formally vote on decisions as opposed to reaching agreement more informally?

- How are minutes from the meeting written, approved, and archived? How detailed are the minutes?

- Do you have any regular “special” meetings (e.g. retreats, etc.)? If so, when, and what is the focus of these meetings?

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~15–20 MINUTES):

1. Discuss the above questions about the specifics of your church’s elder meetings.
2. Discuss any other key characteristics of or questions you have about elder meetings.
3. Discuss a plan to get the last 6–12 months of elder minutes to the elder candidate so they can familiarize themselves with the minutes and recent decisions.

ELDER ORIENTATION

PART #2: FULFILLING THE ROLE OF AN ELDER

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

The primary functions of an elder are contained in the other biblical terms for that office – pastor and overseer. As pastors, elders are responsible for caring well for their flock. At times, this involves going after wayward sheep by confronting sin and practicing church discipline.

CONFRONTING SIN AND PRACTICING CHURCH DISCIPLINE

- What principles for confronting sin and practicing church discipline are found in the following passages?
 - Matthew 7:3–5

 - Galatians 6:1

 - Matthew 18:15–17

 - 1 Corinthians 5:1–13

 - Titus 3:10–11

- Who should typically be the first person to confront someone for their sin? When might this not be possible or wise?

- What are the benefits of practicing church discipline? What are the consequences of a church failing to practice church discipline?

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~10-15 MINUTES):

1. Discuss any questions you have from the Individual Preparation.

2. Discuss how your elders have handled church discipline in the past. When have elders typically become involved? When and how are issues communicated to the church?

3. What temptations must an elder guard against when confronting another person or moving through the steps of church discipline?

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~15–20 MINUTES):

1. Discuss the questions from the Individual Preparation.
2. What are your personal convictions regarding drinking alcohol? What fences or safeguards do you have in place?
3. What damage can an elder do to his family and the church if he is controlled by alcohol rather than self-controlled and under the influence of the Spirit and the word of God?

Chapter 9

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

- **Galatians:** Justification by Faith Alone
- **Ephesians:** The Eternal Plan of God
- **Philippians:** Basic Christian Living
- **Colossians:** All-Sufficiency of Christ
- **1 Thessalonians:** Growth of a New Church; the Model Church
- **2 Thessalonians:** Comfort and Correction

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY: ESCHATOLOGY

- Discuss the various rapture views: pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation, pre-wrath, and post-tribulation. Which view best fits the biblical data? Why?
- Give a general timeline of end-time events.
Where are each of these events discussed in Scripture?
- Discuss the various millennial views: amillennialism, postmillennialism, premillennialism. Which view best fits the biblical data? Why?
- Define and defend the doctrines of heaven and hell, including the new heavens, the new earth, and the lake of fire.

ELDER ORIENTATION

- PART #1: LEADING WITH A PLURALITY OF ELDERS
Being the New Guy
- PART #2: FULFILLING THE ROLE OF AN ELDER
Evangelism and Contacting New People
- PART #3: DISPLAYING THE CHARACTER OF AN ELDER
Hospitable

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Review the overview and key information of each book. Memorize key information as desired or required for your church elder process.

GALATIANS

Paul wrote Galatians to counter judaizing false teachers who were undermining the central NT doctrine of justification by faith.... Ignoring the express decree of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:23–29), they spread their dangerous teaching that Gentiles must first become Jewish proselytes and submit to all the Mosaic law before they could become Christians.... Shocked by the Galatians' openness to that damning heresy (cf. 1:6), Paul wrote this letter to defend justification by faith, and warn these churches of the dire consequences of abandoning that essential doctrine.¹³⁵

THEME: Justification by Faith Alone

OUTLINE:

- | | | |
|------|----------------------------------|-------|
| I. | Justification by Faith Defended | (1–2) |
| II. | Justification by Faith Explained | (3–4) |
| III. | Justification by Faith Applied | (5–6) |

KEY CHAPTERS:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 2 | Paul dealing with other apostles; rebukes Peter |
| 5 | Christian liberty; free to serve; walk by the Spirit |

KEY PASSAGES:

- | | |
|---------|----------------------|
| 2:19–21 | “Christ lives in me” |
|---------|----------------------|

EPHESIANS

The first half of the letter is doctrinal and is written to the Christians to correct the errors and teach sound doctrine by emphasizing all that they have in the glorious Head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ. The second half is practical and encourages the outworking of God-honouring teaching in practical living. In so doing, important themes and issues are dealt with, including God's purpose and plans for His church. Key teaching is given on election, predestination, redemption through shed blood, the resurrection, the church as the body of Christ, salvation by God's grace through faith in Christ, working out what God works in, Christ as the cornerstone, God's plans to save Gentiles, true Christian oneness, the ascension, God's gifting to the church, sanctification and not grieving the Spirit, conduct in special relationships including marriage, and the Christian armour. It is a letter of great encouragement and doctrinal depth.¹³⁶

THEME: The Eternal Plan of God

OUTLINE:

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------|-------|
| I. | Christian Position | (1-3) |
| II. | Christian Practice | (4-6) |

KEY CHAPTERS:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Chosen and sealed |
| 2 | Saved by grace; unity in one body |
| 3 | The mystery of the church |
| 4 | Unity in the body; spiritual gifts; the former life |
| 5 | Walking in the Spirit; home responsibilities |
| 6 | Slaves and masters; believer's armor |

KEY PASSAGES:

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 1:3-14 | Father, Son and Holy Spirit in salvation; election |
| 4:11-16 | The gift of leaders to the body |
| 5:22-25 | Biblical role for husbands and wives |

¹³⁶ Chrispin, *The Bible Panorama*, 507.

PHILIPPIANS

This letter was written to convey Paul's love and gratitude for the believers at Philippi and to exhort them to a lifestyle of unity, holiness, and joy. Paul evidently enjoyed a very warm relationship with the Philippian church.... Philippians was not written because of any crisis, but to express Paul's affection for them, his gratitude for their gift, his encouragement concerning their Christian growth, his admonitions against false teaching, and his thoughts about his circumstances.¹³⁷

THEME: Basic Christian Living

OUTLINE:

- | | | |
|------|-----------------------|-----|
| I. | Partakers with Christ | (1) |
| II. | People of Christ | (2) |
| III. | Pursuit of Christ | (3) |
| IV. | Power of Christ | (4) |

KEY CHAPTERS:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 2 | Unity of the body; the kenosis; work out your salvation; deity of Christ; Timothy and Epaphroditus |
| 3 | Warnings against Judaizers; justification |

KEY PASSAGES:

- | | |
|---------|-------------------------------|
| 4:12-13 | Christ's strength |
| 4:19 | God supplies all of our needs |

KEY PEOPLE:

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| Epaphroditus | Leader in the Philippian church; assisted Paul in his first Roman imprisonment; became ill and almost died in Rome |
|--------------|--|

¹³⁷ Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 407.

COLOSSIANS

Colossians is one of the most Christ-centered books of the Bible. In it, Paul stresses the supremacy of the person of Christ and the completeness of the salvation He provides in order to combat a growing heresy in the church at Colossae. Christ, the Lord of creation and Head of the body which is His church, is completely sufficient for every spiritual and practical need of the believer. The believer's union with Christ in His death, resurrection, and exaltation is the foundation upon which his earthly life must be built.¹³⁸

THEME: All-Sufficiency of Christ

OUTLINE:

- I. Sufficiency of Christ (1-2)
- II. Submission to Christ (3-4)

KEY CHAPTERS:

- 1 Paul's prayer; the exalted Christ
- 3 Position and practice of the believer

KEY PASSAGES:

- 1:15-16 Christ the image of God and Creator – the firstborn over all creation
- 2:16-17 Error of legalism

1 THESSALONIANS

The church at Thessalonica was in many ways a model church. Paul had many things to commend the believers for: their exemplary faith, diligent service, patient steadfastness, and overflowing joy. But in the midst of his commendation, Paul voices a word of caution. Abounding in the work of the Lord is only one step removed from abandoning the work of the Lord through complacency. Thus, Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to excel in their faith, to increase in their love for one another, and to give thanks always for all things.¹³⁹

THEME: Growth of a New Church; the Model Church

OUTLINE:

- I. Personal Experience (1-3)
- II. Practical Exhortation (4-5)

KEY CHAPTER:

- 4 Purity; disciplined living; the rapture

KEY PASSAGES:

- 5:1-3 “The Day of the Lord” will come as a surprise to the world with destruction after the believers in 4:13-18 have been taken from the earth

139 Ibid., 416.

2 THESSALONIANS

2 Thessalonians builds on the teaching in the first letter and emphasizes that it [the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ] has not yet happened. It gives milestones that need to be passed before Christ will return, including the apostasy to come and revelation of the man of sin, who will be destroyed by the breath and brightness of the all powerful coming Lord! But the second coming of Christ, that comforts the believer in his Sovereign God, should strike terror in the heart of those who are lost and facing God's condemnation. 2 Thessalonians also has a pastoral theme centered on the need to live a Christian life, which includes working hard and not using the eagerly expected coming of Christ as a rationale or excuse for laziness.¹⁴⁰

THEME: Comfort and Correction

OUTLINE:

- I. Encouragement in Persecution (1)
- II. Explanation of the Day of the Lord (2)
- III. Exhortations to Readiness (3)

KEY CHAPTERS:

- 2 Before the Day of the Lord – apostasy and antichrist (man of lawlessness) will come and delude the world
- 3 Exhortations to diligence in light of the coming Day of the Lord

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~10–20 MINUTES):

1. Briefly discuss any questions you have about the books covered in this section of Bible Knowledge.
2. Review the information in this section of Bible Knowledge by asking questions such as:
 - What is the theme of Galatians?
 - Where in Ephesians do you find the biblical role for husbands and wives?
 - What is found in 1 Thessalonians 4?
 - What is the theme of 2 Thessalonians?
3. Review any required memorized content from Genesis to 2 Corinthians.

¹⁴⁰ Chrispin, *The Bible Panorama*, 520–21.

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Read and consider the key texts, terms, provided theological writings, and other additional resources as desired. Write out an answer or outline for each question.

ESCHATOLOGY

Eschatology is the study of the doctrine of last things.

○ **Some key issues and themes addressed in eschatology include:**

- Death
- Heaven
- Hell
- Timing and Nature of Future Events
 - Rapture
 - Bema Seat Judgment
 - Tribulation
 - Second Coming of Christ
 - Millennial Kingdom
 - Great White Throne Judgment
 - New Heavens and New Earth

1. DISCUSS THE VARIOUS RAPTURE VIEWS: PRE-TRIBULATION, MID-TRIBULATION, PRE-WRATH, AND POST-TRIBULATION. WHICH VIEW BEST FITS THE BIBLICAL DATA? WHY?

○ **Key passages to consider:**

- 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18
- 1 Corinthians 15:50–58
- John 14:1–3
- Revelation 3:10
- Daniel 9:24–27

○ **What theologians say:**

John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue in *Biblical Doctrine*

First, the pretribulational rapture view asserts that the church will be raptured before Daniel's seventieth week. Since the entire period of tribulation is the "wrath of God," the church must be rescued prior to the tribulation to fulfill God's promise that the church will escape the wrath of God (1 Thess. 1:9–10; Rev. 3:10). The pretribulational

rapture functions as a rescue mission by which Jesus delivers his church from the divine wrath of the tribulation.

Second, the midtribulation rapture view argues that the church will be raptured at the midpoint of Daniel's seventieth week. The church goes through the first half of the tribulation but then is raptured at the midpoint to avoid the most severe wrath of God that characterizes the latter period of Daniel's seventieth week. The midtribulation perspective arbitrarily does not see the first half of the tribulation as divine wrath; it maintains that the wrath of man and Satan is occurring but not the wrath of God.

Third, the prewrath rapture view teaches that the rapture will occur somewhere in the latter part of the tribulation and removes the church from the trumpet and bowl judgments, which it defines as the wrath of God. The rapture occurs after the midpoint of the tribulation but before Jesus's second coming to earth.

Fourth, the posttribulation rapture view asserts that the rapture occurs at the time of the second coming and is the initial phase of Jesus's bodily return. The church, which goes through the tribulation period, is snatched into the air to meet the returning Jesus, who then descends to earth with his people. The posttribulation scenario is like subjects of a king rushing out of a city to greet the returning and victorious king and then immediately returning to the city. This is the only rapture view that has the church going through the entire tribulation period.

Evidence for Pretribulationism. Pretribulationism has the most biblical support, and we believe that it is the correct view for several reasons. First, Jesus declares that the church will be removed prior to the hour of trial that is coming on the entire earth: "Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth" (Rev. 3:10)....

Second, the church goes unmentioned in Revelation 6–18. The common New Testament term for "church" is *ekklēsia*. It is used nineteen times in Revelation 1–3 in relation to the historical church of the first century. However, "church" appears only once more in Revelation, in the epilogue of the book (Rev. 22:16). Nowhere in Revelation 6–18 is the "church" mentioned. Why is this significant? It is unlikely that John would shift from detailed instructions for the church in Revelation 1–3 to absolute silence about the church for thirteen chapters if the church continued into the tribulation. If the church will experience the tribulation, surely the most detailed study of tribulation events would include the church's role in this period. But it does not. A pretribulation rapture best explains the total absence of the "church" on earth during the events of Revelation 6–18.

Third, the rapture is rendered inconsequential if the church goes through the tribulation. If God miraculously preserves the church through the tribulation, why

have a rapture at all? If it is to avoid the wrath of God at Armageddon, then why would God not continue to protect the saints on earth (as postulated by posttribulationism) as he protected the church in the events leading up to Armageddon....

Fourth, the Epistles contain no preparatory warnings of an impending tribulation for church-age believers. God's instructions to the church in the Epistles contain a variety of warnings, but believers are not warned to prepare for entering and enduring the tribulation. The New Testament warns vigorously about coming error and false prophets (Acts 20:29–30; 2 Pet. 2:1; 1 John 4:1–3; Jude 4). It warns against ungodly living (Eph. 4:25–5:7; 1 Thess. 4:3–8; Heb. 12:1). The New Testament admonishes believers to endure in the midst of present tribulation (1 Thess. 2:13–14; 2 Thess. 1:4). However, there is silence concerning preparing the church for the global and catastrophic tribulation described in Revelation 6–18....

Fifth, 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 demands a pretribulational rapture. Suppose that some other rapture view is true. What then would we expect to find in 1 Thessalonians 4? The reverse of the concerns reflected there. To begin, we would expect the Thessalonians to be rejoicing that their loved ones are home with the Lord and will not endure the horrors of the tribulation. But instead, we discover that the Thessalonians are actually grieving because they fear their loved ones will miss the rapture....

Additionally, several of Christ's parables in Matthew 13 confirm differences between the rapture and Christ's second coming to earth. In the parable of the wheat and the tares, the tares (unbelievers) are taken out from among the wheat (believers) at the climax of the second coming (Matt. 13:30, 40), while believers are removed from among unbelievers at the rapture (1 Thess. 4:15–17). In the parable of the dragnet, the bad fish (unbelievers) are taken out from among the good fish (believers) at the culmination of Christ's second coming (Matt. 13:48–50), while believers are removed from among unbelievers at the rapture (1 Thess. 4:15–17). Finally, there is no mention of the rapture in the detailed second-coming texts Matthew 24 and Revelation 19.¹⁴¹

Paul Enns in *The Moody Handbook of Theology*

The term *rapture* comes from the Latin translation, meaning “caught up,” in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. The rapture, which is distinguished from the second coming of Christ, is taught in John 14:1–3; 1 Corinthians 15:51–57; and 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18. Prior to the advent of the tribulation, Christ will descend from heaven, catching up the church to be with Himself while the tribulation is unleashed on an unrepentant and unbelieving world.

A range of differing views exists of the rapture: will it take place before the tribulation (pretribulation rapture), during the tribulation (midtribulation rapture), after the seal and trumpet judgments (pre-wrath rapture), at the end of the tribulation (posttribulation rapture), or will only some believers be raptured (partial rapture)?

...The pretribulation rapture is espoused for a number of reasons. (1) The *nature* of the tribulation. The seventieth week of Daniel—the tribulation—is an outpouring of the wrath of God throughout the seven years (Rev. 6:16–17; 11:18; 14:19; 15:1; 16:1, 19); it is described as God’s judgment (Rev. 14:7; 15:4; 16:5–7; 19:2) and God’s punishment (Isa. 24:21–22). (2) The *scope* of the tribulation. The whole earth will be involved (Isa. 24:1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 21; 34:2). It also involves God’s chastisement of Israel (Jer. 30:7; Dan. 9:24). If this is the nature and scope of the tribulation, it is inconceivable that the church will be on earth to experience the wrath of God. (3) The *purposes* of the tribulation. The divine intentions of the tribulation will be to judge people living on earth (Rev. 6:10; 11:10; 13:8, 12, 14; 14:6; 17:8) and to prepare Israel for her King (Ezek. 36:18–32; Mal. 4:5–6). Neither of these pertain to the church. (4) The *unity* of the tribulation. The tribulation is the seventieth week of Daniel; Daniel 9:24 makes it clear that it has reference to Israel. (5) The *exemption* of the tribulation. The church is the bride of Christ, the object of Christ’s love, not His wrath (Eph. 5:25). It would be a contradiction of the very relationship of Christ and the church for the church to go through the punishments of the tribulation. Specific statements affirm the church will be kept from the tribulation (cf. Rom. 5:9; 1 Thess. 5:9; 2 Thess. 2:13; Rev. 3:10). (6) The *sequel* of the tribulation. The signs of Matthew 24 (and numerous other passages) were given to Israel concerning the second coming of Christ; no signs, however, were given to the church to anticipate the rapture (which means it will come suddenly, as pretribulationists have affirmed).¹⁴²

- Write a summary or outline of your answer to the questions, “Discuss the various rapture views: pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation, pre-wrath, and post-tribulation. Which view best fits the biblical data? Why?”

2. GIVE A GENERAL TIMELINE OF END-TIME EVENTS. WHERE ARE EACH OF THESE EVENTS DISCUSSED IN SCRIPTURE?

○ Key passages to consider

- Daniel 9:24–27
- Matthew 24–25
- 1 Thessalonians 4:13–17
- Revelation 19–21

○ Key terms to include:

- Rapture
- Tribulation
- Second Coming of Christ
- Millennial Kingdom
- Great White Throne Judgment
- New Heavens and New Earth

○ What theologians say:

Paul Enns in *The Moody Handbook of Theology*

The rapture. The term *rapture* comes from the Latin translation, meaning “caught up,” in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. The rapture, which is distinguished from the second coming of Christ, is taught in John 14:1–3; 1 Corinthians 15:51–57; and 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18. Prior to the advent of the tribulation, Christ will descend from heaven, catching up the church to be with Himself while the tribulation is unleashed on an unrepentant and unbelieving world....

The tribulation. The tribulation is the seventieth week of Daniel (Dan. 9:24–27), a week according to the prophet’s terminology equaling seven years. It is the last of a seventy-week (490 years) prophecy regarding Israel’s future (Dan. 9:24–27), which began in 444 b.c. Sixty-nine weeks (483 years) concluded with the death of Christ (Dan. 9:26). There is a gap between the sixty-ninth week (a.d. 33) and the seventieth week (the future tribulation period). As the seventieth week of Daniel, the tribulation has particular reference to Israel (not the church), because Daniel was told, “Seventy weeks have been decreed for *your people*” (Dan. 9:24). When Jesus detailed the events of the tribulation in Matthew 24–25, He explained to the disciples what would happen to the *nation Israel*, indicating the tribulation has reference to Israel....

...The tribulation will involve the judgment of God upon an unbelieving world, as detailed in Revelation 6–19. The consecutive series of seals, trumpets, and bowl judgments of Revelation detail God’s judgment upon unbelievers, climaxing in the triumphant return of Christ to earth with His bride, the church (Rev. 19:11–21)....

Judgment seat of Christ. The judgment seat of Christ is mentioned in Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 3:9–15, and 2 Corinthians 5:10. It does not denote a judgment concerning eternal destiny but rather rewarding church-age believers for faithfulness.... The purpose of the judgment seat will be recompense for deeds done in the body, whether good or worthless (2 Cor. 5:10). The believer's works will be examined (1 Cor. 3:13) as to whether done by self-effort or by God through the individual. If the believer's works do not endure, he is saved but receives no reward (1 Cor. 3:15); if the believer's works are genuine, he is rewarded (1 Cor. 9:25; 1 Thess. 2:19; 2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Peter 5:4; James 1:12). That the rewarding takes place prior to the second advent is seen in that the bride has already been rewarded when returning with Christ (Rev. 19:8)....

Second coming of Christ. At the end of the tribulation Christ will return physically to earth (Zech. 14:4) to render judgment and to inaugurate the millennial kingdom (Zech. 14:9–21; Matt. 25:31; Rev. 20:4)....

Millennial kingdom. When Christ returns to earth He will establish Himself as King in Jerusalem, sitting on the throne of David (Luke 1:32–33). The unconditional covenants demand a literal, physical return of Christ to establish the kingdom. The Abrahamic covenant promised Israel a land, a posterity and ruler, and a spiritual blessing (Gen. 12:1–3); the Palestinian covenant promised Israel a restoration and occupation of the land (Deut. 30:1–10); the Davidic covenant promised a ruler for the throne of David (2 Sam. 7:16); the new covenant promised Israel forgiveness—the means whereby the nation could be blessed (Jer. 31:31–34). At the second advent these covenants will be fulfilled as Israel is regathered from the nations (Matt. 24:31), converted (Zech. 12:10–14), and restored to the land under the rulership of her Messiah....

At the end of the millennium the unsaved dead of all ages are resurrected and judged at the great white throne. They will be condemned and cast into the lake of fire, their final abode (Rev. 20:11–15). The Devil, the Beast (the Antichrist), and the False Prophet are also cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10).

Eternal state. Following the millennium, the heavens and the earth are judged (2 Peter 3:10), because they were the domain of Satan's rebellion against God. The eternal state, the abode of all the redeemed (Heb. 12:22–24), will be ushered in (Rev. 21–22).¹⁴³

John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue in *Biblical Doctrine*

Several prophetic events await future fulfillment. These include the rapture, the tribulation period, the coming of the Antichrist, the day of the Lord, the second coming of Jesus, the millennium, Satan's final revolt, and the eternal state.

THE RAPTURE

...The English word *rapture* comes from the Latin term *raptura*, which in Latin Bibles translates the Greek word *harpazō*. This Greek word means "to suddenly remove" or "to snatch away." ...[It] describes God's sudden taking of the church from earth to heaven as the first part of Christ's second coming (1 Thess. 4:17)....

...The pretribulation rapture view asserts that the church will be raptured before Daniel's seventieth week. Since the entire period of tribulation is the "wrath of God," the church must be rescued prior to the tribulation to fulfill God's promise that the church will escape the wrath of God (1 Thess. 1:9–10; Rev. 3:10). The pretribulation rapture functions as a rescue mission by which Jesus delivers his church from the divine wrath of the tribulation....

THE TRIBULATION PERIOD

...Jesus also predicted a unique time that would be the most severe and difficult in human history: "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be" (Matt. 24:21). This unique time is called the tribulation or tribulation period, based on Jesus's use of this term in Matthew 24:9, 21. The tribulation is a period of divine judgments before the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of his kingdom on earth. This period will last seven years, based on the future seventieth week of Daniel, which is seven years in length (Dan. 9:27)....

THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS

The focal point of prophetic events still to come is the second coming of Jesus Christ. While specific language of "second coming" is rare in Scripture, the concept is well established (Matt. 25:31; John 14:3; Acts 1:11). Belief in the return of Jesus is an indispensable doctrine of orthodox Christianity....

The Old Testament did not explicitly reveal two comings of the Messiah separated by a considerable period of time. It predicted both a suffering servant and a reigning king but did not explain that these roles would be fulfilled over two comings.... With the testimony of progressive revelation and the hindsight of history, we can look at the Old Testament and see that kingdom passages still need to be fulfilled at the second coming of Jesus....

THE MILLENNIUM

The millennium is the coming thousand-year reign of Jesus and his saints on the earth after this present age and before the eternal state.... Jesus the Messiah also fulfills the promise that an ultimate Son of David will rule from David's throne over Israel (Luke 1:32–33) and the entire earth (Zech. 14:9). Jesus's enemies who opposed him during the tribulation are defeated (Rev. 19:20–21). Satan is bound (Rev. 20:1–3). Deceased Old Testament saints and martyrs from the tribulation period come to life and reign with Christ (Dan. 12:2; Rev. 20:4). Jesus rules and shares his kingdom reign with the church of the current age, which remained faithful during persecution (Rev. 2:26–27; 3:21; 5:10). The millennial kingdom is a time of creation renewal, prosperity, righteousness, peace, and international harmony on the earth (Matt. 19:28; Isa. 2:2–4; 11; 65:17–25). It is also the period when all covenant promises, both spiritual and physical, come to complete fulfillment for both Israel and the nations. Israel is saved and restored, and she fulfills her role of leadership and service to the nations, functioning out of the capital city of Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2–4)....

SATAN'S FINAL REVOLT

At the end of the millennium, Satan is released from his incarceration in the Abyss and leads an intentional revolt against the holy city of Jerusalem. Those involved in this rebellion are immediately destroyed with fire from heaven, and Satan is sent to the lake of fire forever (Rev. 20:7–10)....

This rebellion highlights two important truths. First, the presence of unbelievers in the millennium while Satan is bound in the Abyss shows that man's primary problem is a wicked heart, whether Satan is present or not. Even under ideal conditions with Jesus physically present on the earth, some choose to rebel in sin. Second, the rebellion offers a display of God's power against evil before the great white throne judgment takes place (Rev. 20:11–15) and the eternal state begins (Rev. 21:1–22:5). This is a dramatic display of kingdom power over the final rebellion against God in human history.

THE ETERNAL STATE

The new heaven and new earth are the final destiny of redeemed humanity. The millennium is past. The great white throne judgment has occurred. Satan and all unbelievers have been cast into the lake of fire forever. A glorious destiny awaits God's saints when they will live on a new earth with direct access to God, who will then live among them. This is what John the apostle explains: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away" (Rev. 21:1).¹⁴⁴

144 MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 897–910.

- Write a summary or outline of your general timeline of end-time events, including where each of these events is discussed in Scripture.

3. DISCUSS THE VARIOUS MILLENNIAL VIEWS: AMILLENNIALISM, POSTMILLENNIALISM, PREMILLENNIALISM. WHICH VIEW BEST FITS THE BIBLICAL DATA? WHY?

- **Key passages to consider:**
 - Matthew 24–25
 - 1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11
 - 2 Thessalonians 1–2
 - Revelation 20:1–6
- **Key terms to include:**
 - Amillennialism
 - Postmillennialism
 - Dispensational Premillennialism
 - Historic Premillennialism
- **What theologians say:**

Alan Cairns in *Dictionary of Theological Terms*

Amillennialism

The theory that there will be no thousand-year period of great spiritual blessing before the Lord Jesus returns, and no thousand-year reign of Christ on earth after His return. Thus in Revelation 20 the multiple references to the thousand years are spiritualized to convey the idea of completeness or perfection: “It expresses no period of time” (W. W. Milligan). Amillennialists view the thousand years of Rev. 20 as a spiritual description of the entire period between Christ’s ascension and the end of the age.¹⁴⁵

145 Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 16.

Postmillennialism

The belief that Christ's second coming will be preceded by the Millennium, a golden age of gospel blessing upon the ministry of the church. At Christ's coming there will be the general resurrection, the general judgment, followed by the creation of the new heavens and the new earth, and the eternal state.¹⁴⁶

Premillennialism

The belief that Christ's second coming will occur before the millennium and that he will then reign for 1,000 years on the earth.¹⁴⁷

Wayne Grudem in *Systematic Theology*

Dispensational Premillennialism. A form of premillennialism that teaches that the church will be raptured before the Tribulation when God will again focus on Israel in His plan for the world. Christ will return at the end of the Tribulation to rescue Israel and establish the Millennium. Identified by: (1) a consistently literal interpretation and (2) a distinction between Israel and the church.

Historic Premillennialism. The view that Christ will return to the earth after a period of great tribulation and then establish a millennial kingdom. At this time believers who have died will be raised from the dead and believers who are alive will receive glorified resurrection bodies, and both will reign with Christ on earth for a thousand years.¹⁴⁸

John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue in *Biblical Doctrine*

Returning with his raptured and glorified church, Christ will establish his millennial kingdom on earth (Acts 1:9–11; 1 Thess. 4:13–18; Rev. 20:1–6). Six times Revelation 20 mentions Christ's kingdom that will last a thousand years. There is no reason not to take these references as a literal thousand-year period during which Jesus Christ will reign on the earth in fulfillment of both numerous Old Testament prophecies (2 Sam. 7:12–16; Psalm 2; Isa. 11:6–12; 24:23; Amos 9:8–15; Mic. 4:1–8; Zech. 14:1–11) and Jesus's own teaching (Matt. 24:29–31, 36–44).¹⁴⁹

Kevin Zuber in *The Essential Scriptures: A Handbook of the Biblical Texts for Key Doctrines*

Typically, the several millennial views are labelled with reference to the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus premillennialism...holds that Christ returns before ("pre") the millennial kingdom, and postmillennialism holds that Christ returns after ("post") the millennial kingdom. The postmillennial view anticipates a long period of

146 Ibid., 334.

147 Ibid., 336.

148 Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1243.

149 MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 324.

gradual improvement of the world (through gospel preaching and the influence of the Christian church and Christian civilization) after which Christ returns.

The other major view, amillennialism, holds that the kingdom is a spiritual kingdom. Some amillennial theologians say this began with the heavenly reign of Christ at the ascension, and thus there will be no (using the “a” in a negative way) distinct, earthly, and physical millennium as such. Amillennialism does not hold that the world will gradually improve but rather that the world, under the sway of Satan, will grow worse and worse until Christ returns to judge the world, Satan, and the lost. He will also come to vindicate believers and bring the new heavens and earth.

While there are several arguments set forth by each view, the differences of these views can be reduced to one question: should the promises made in the biblical covenants...be understood as being literally fulfilled or should they be understood as being spiritually or figuratively fulfilled?

In different ways, both amillennialism and postmillennialism hold that the promises in those biblical covenants are to be fulfilled spiritually. “Both views require extraordinary handling of the prophetic passages of Scripture, demanding that the interpreter allegorize or spiritualize the meaning of such texts, rather than employing the same historical and grammatical principles of interpretation we apply to the rest of Scripture.” Since the prophecies of Christ that were fulfilled in his first coming...were fulfilled literally, and since there was no indication at the time when those prophecies were first given that they were intended to be spiritually or figuratively fulfilled, it seems preferable to hold that the promises in those biblical covenants are to be fulfilled literally. Arguments that the church has inherited those promises in the place of national Israel...are unconvincing and require a spiritualizing, or figurative interpretation, of those promises. Only premillennialism expects a literal fulfillment of all the promises of the biblical covenants. Thus, “if we simply interpret the prophetic passages with the same hermeneutical method we use for the rest of God’s Word, premillennialism emerges naturally from the text. A simple, straightforward reading of Revelation 20 will reveal this; its plain ordinary meaning is simply a succinct statement of premillennialism.”¹⁵⁰

150 Kevin Zuber, *The Essential Scriptures: A Handbook of the Biblical Texts for Key Doctrines* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 2021), 323–24.

- Write a summary or outline of your general timeline of end-time events, including where each of these events is discussed in Scripture.

4. DEFINE AND DEFEND THE DOCTRINES OF HEAVEN AND HELL, INCLUDING THE NEW HEAVENS, THE NEW EARTH, AND THE LAKE OF FIRE.

- **Key passages to consider:**

- Matthew 6:19–20
- Matthew 8:11–12
- Matthew 25:31–46
- John 14:2–4
- Revelation 20:11–21:8

- **Key terms to include:**

- Heaven
- Hell
- New Heavens and New Earth
- Lake of Fire

- **What theologians say:**

Paul Enns in *The Moody Handbook of Theology*

Evangelicals agree that the souls of all men will live forever in resurrected bodies in either heaven or hell.

Unbelievers will continue in an eternal state of torment. The expression “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28) suggests both suffering and despair implying a continued existence of suffering. In Matthew 25:46 the terms “punishment” and “life” are modified by the same word “eternal”; hence if life is eternal, then of necessity so is punishment. Annihilation is denied in this verse; punishment continues for an endless duration. The account of Lazarus and the rich man in Luke 16:19–31 also stresses the eternal existence of punishment. The phrase “being in torment” emphasizes the rich man’s continued

state of suffering (Luke 16:23). One of the words for *hell* is Gehenna, the word being related to the Hinnom Valley which lay along the southern side of Jerusalem. The bodies of criminals and refuse were thrown into the Valley of Hinnom where they burned constantly, making the term *Gehenna* an apt one for emphasizing eternal suffering in hell....

At the end of the age the devil, the beast, and the false prophet will be thrown into the lake of fire where “they will be tormented day and night forever and ever” (Rev. 20:10).

While there is not much said about it, it appears there will be degrees of punishment in hell. This is generally acknowledged from Luke 12:47–48 where the slave who did not know his master’s will and did not do it will receive few floggings, whereas the slave who knew his master’s will but did not do it will receive many lashes. Some also use Revelation 20:12 to suggest degrees of suffering, but this text probably stresses that the works of unbelievers will be deficient and will condemn them....

Believers will enjoy an eternal fellowship in Christ’s company (John 14:2). The eternal dwelling places in the Father’s house are taken from the imagery of Jewish family life. When a son married, he added an apartment to his father’s house, and the son and his bride took up residence in the father’s household. Believers will enjoy that same family fellowship in the Father’s household in heaven.

Heaven is also pictured as a banqueting scene (Matt. 8:11), emphasizing the fellowship, relaxation, joy, and happiness in Christ’s presence.

Believers’ eternal dwelling place will be the new heaven and the new earth (Isa. 65:17). John describes the new heaven and new earth in great detail (Rev. 21:1–22:5).¹⁵¹

Louis Berkhof in *Systematic Theology*

The final state of believers will be preceded by the passing of the present world and the appearance of a new creation. Matt. 19:28 speaks of “the regeneration,” and Acts 3:21, of “the restoration of all things.” In Heb. 12:27 we read: “And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken (heaven and earth), as of things that are made, that those things which are not shaken (the kingdom of God) may remain.” Peter says: “But according to His promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness,” 2 Pet. 3:13, cf. vs. 12; and John saw this new creation in a vision, Rev. 21:1. It is only after the new creation has been established, that the new Jerusalem descends out of heaven from God, that the tabernacle of God is pitched among men, and that the righteous enter upon their eternal joy. The question is often raised, whether this will be an entirely

151 Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, 406–07.

new creation, or a renewal of the present creation. Lutheran theologians strongly favor the former position with an appeal to 2 Pet. 3:7–13; Rev. 20:11; and 21:1; while Reformed theologians prefer the latter idea, and find support for it in Ps. 102:26, 27; (Heb. 1:10–12); and Heb. 12:26–28.¹⁵²

Wayne Grudem in *Systematic Theology*

Hell

We may define hell as follows: *Hell is a place of eternal conscious punishment for the wicked.* Scripture teaches in several passages that there is such a place. At the end of the parable of the talents, the master says, “Cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth” (Matt. 25:30). This is one among several indications that there will be consciousness of punishment after the final judgment. Similarly, at the judgment the king will say to some, “Depart from me, you cursed, into *the eternal fire* prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt. 25:41), and Jesus says that those thus condemned “will go away into *eternal punishment* but the righteous into eternal life” (Matt. 25:46). In this text, the parallel between “eternal life” and “eternal punishment” indicates that both states will be without end.

Jesus refers to hell as “the unquenchable fire” (Mark 9:43), and says that hell is a place “where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:48). The story of the rich man and Lazarus also indicates a horrible consciousness of punishment:

The rich man also died and was buried; and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes, and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus in his bosom, and he called out, “Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame.” (Luke 16:22–24)

He then begs Abraham to send Lazarus to his father’s house, “for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they also come into *this place of torment*” (Luke 16:28).

When we turn to Revelation, the descriptions of this eternal punishment are also very explicit:

If anyone worships the beast and its image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also shall drink the wine of God’s wrath, poured unmixed into the cup of his anger, and he shall be tormented with fire and sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. *And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image* and whoever receives the mark of its name. (Rev. 14:9–11)

This passage very clearly affirms the idea of eternal conscious punishment of unbelievers.¹⁵³

152 Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 736–37.

153 Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1148–49.

The New Heavens and New Earth

...After the final judgment, believers will enter into the full enjoyment of life in the presence of God forever. Jesus will say to us, “Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 25:34). We will enter a kingdom where “there shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall worship him” (Rev. 22:3).

When referring to this place, Christians often talk about living with God “in heaven” forever. But in fact the biblical teaching is richer than that: it tells us that there will be new heavens *and a new earth*—an entirely renewed creation—and we will live with God there.

The Lord promises through Isaiah, “For behold, I create *new heavens and a new earth*; and the former things shall not be remembered” (Isa. 65:17), and speaks of “the new heavens and the new earth which I will make” (Isa. 66:22). Peter says, “according to his promise we wait for *new heavens and a new earth* in which righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:13). In John’s vision of events to follow the final judgment, he says, “Then I saw a *new heaven and a new earth*; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away” (Rev. 21:1). He goes on to tell us that there will also be a new kind of unification of heaven and earth, for he sees the holy city, the “new Jerusalem,” coming “down out of heaven from God” (Rev. 21:2), and hears a voice proclaiming that “the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them” (v. 3). So there will be a joining of heaven and earth in this new creation, and there we will live in the presence of God.¹⁵⁴

- Write a summary or outline of your definition and defense of the doctrines of heaven and hell, including the new heavens, the new earth, and the lake of fire.

¹⁵⁴ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1158.

- For further discussion or study of eschatology:
 - Define and defend the rapture of the church.
 - How does one's understanding of hermeneutics affect his eschatology, and vice versa?
 - Compare and contrast Dispensationalism and Covenantalism with respect to eschatology. How would you respond to each view from a biblical perspective?

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~20–30 MINUTES):

1. Briefly discuss any questions you have about eschatology and the specific questions you answered in this chapter.
2. Practice answering the following questions using only a Bible for reference:
 - Discuss the various rapture views: pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation, pre-wrath, and post-tribulation. Which view best fits the biblical data? Why?
 - Give a general timeline of end-time events. Where in Scripture is each of these events discussed?
 - Discuss the various millennial views: amillennialism, postmillennialism, premillennialism. Which view best fits the biblical data? Why?
 - Define and defend the doctrines of heaven and hell, including the new heavens, the new earth, and the lake of fire.
3. Briefly review any of the following theology questions that would be helpful:
 - How can God be known?
 - Defend trinitarianism.
 - How would you respond to someone who says, “If God is love, then why do bad things happen to good people?”
 - How can you prove the deity of Jesus Christ?
 - Describe the incarnation and its significance.
 - What does the resurrection of Christ signify for the believer?
 - What Scriptures would you use to demonstrate the deity of the Holy Spirit?
 - What is the role of the Holy Spirit in conversion?
 - What does it mean to be baptized by the Holy Spirit?
 - What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit?
 - How would you respond to someone who argues that the charismatic/miraculous gifts are still active today?
 - On what basis do you believe the Bible to be a supernatural document?
 - Why do you believe the Bible to be closed, in that nothing should be added to the current sixty-six books?
 - Define the sufficiency of Scripture. What are the implications of this doctrine for everyday life?

- Explain and defend the historical/grammatical method of hermeneutics.
- What does it mean when the Bible says that man was created in the image of God? What differentiates man from animals?
- Does man have a free will? Explain.
- How would you defend the doctrine of inherited sin – that men are sinful not only in their actions but also in their nature?
- Explain the concept of the flesh or the old nature. How is the Christian's relationship to the old man explained in Scripture?
- What must a person do to be saved? How is the Lordship of Christ tied to this discussion? Is repentance essential to conversion?
- Define and defend the doctrine of election.
- Define and defend the doctrine of the atonement.
- Define and defend the doctrine of regeneration.
- Define and defend the doctrine of justification.
- Define and defend the doctrine of sanctification.
- Define and defend the doctrine of preservation or perseverance.
- Define and defend the doctrine of glorification.
- What is the difference between elders and deacons?
- What is the proper process for church discipline? What circumstances or situations warrant beginning this process?
- What are the primary goals or purposes of the local church?
- What are the ordinances prescribed in the New Testament to the church? What is the proper way for administering these ordinances?

ELDER ORIENTATION

PART #1: LEADING WITH A PLURALITY OF ELDERS ***BEING THE NEW GUY***

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

When a new elder joins a plurality of leadership, it is important for both the existing elders and the new elder to understand the realities and challenges associated with this transition. Existing elders should welcome the additional input and wisdom of the new elder. The new elder, while being eager to participate in discussions and ministry, must also recognize that it will take time for him to fully get up to speed and he should be careful not to rock the boat unnecessarily during that process.

KNOW WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW

One of the realities for a newer elder is that he will not have the common background of prior discussions and decisions that many, if not all, of the other elders will have when considering an issue. This can be helpful in bringing a new perspective. But it can also create challenges if the newer elder insists on revisiting every past decision or precedent. Rather than pushing to rehash past decisions, a newer elder should simply seek to understand them by asking good questions, both in meetings and when interacting with elders outside of meetings. Unless there is clear biblical warrant to revisit past decisions, a new elder should respect the past decisions that have been made by the plurality of leaders.

A newer elder or elder candidate should also work to get up to speed on past decisions so they can actively participate in future discussions without needlessly bogging them down.

- Read any church or elder policy documents that are available to you (e.g. facility or church use policies, wedding policies, etc.).
 - What questions do you have about these policies?

 - What, if any, significant disagreements do you have with these policies? Are you willing to defer to these policies even though you were not a part of shaping them?

- Read the last 6–12 months of elder meeting minutes.
 - What, if any, questions do you have from the minutes?

 - What patterns of decision making or precedents that might affect future decisions did you observe?

SHOWING PROPER (BUT NOT PARALYZING) DEFERENCE

While recognizing he does not have the experience of more seasoned elders, a newer elder should not be overly hesitant to share his perspective in elder discussions and to participate in the ministry of the church. From the moment he becomes an elder, each one brings his gifts, experience, and wisdom to the leadership of the church in accordance with God's good plan. At the same time, a newer elder should typically show appropriate deference to the other elders by initially listening to their perspectives first, before offering his own.

- How can a newer elder balance listening to and learning from the other more experienced elders while also faithfully fulfilling his role?

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~15–20 MINUTES):

1. Discuss the questions from the Individual Preparation.
2. Ask your mentor to share:
 - Some lessons he has learned since becoming an elder.
 - Anything he wishes he had known when he first became an elder.

ELDER ORIENTATION

PART #2: FULFILLING THE ROLE OF AN ELDER

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

The primary functions of an elder are contained in the other biblical terms for that office – pastor and overseer. As pastors, elders are responsible for caring well for their flock. This not only involves care for current members of the church but also reaching out to see others added to and integrated into the church.

EVANGELISM AND CONTACTING NEW PEOPLE

In 2 Timothy 4:5 Paul charged Timothy to “do the work of an evangelist.” While every elder will not necessarily be gifted for evangelism, all are to be committed to actively sharing the gospel with others. There are opportunities for evangelism among family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers, but also opportunities within the context of the church. Some of the best such opportunities come from those who visit the church or who are seeking to formally join the church.

- What regular opportunities for evangelism do you have? How can you be more faithful to take advantage of these opportunities to proclaim Christ?

- How do you seek to turn conversations toward the gospel:
 - At work?

 - With neighbors and other acquaintances?

 - When interacting with newer church attendees?

- Why is it important for elders to not assume that everyone who comes to their church understands the gospel and is a believer?

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~10–15 MINUTES):

1. Discuss any questions you have from the Individual Preparation.
2. Discuss how your church gets to know potential new members and seeks to discern their understanding of the gospel and testimony of faith in Christ.
3. What opportunities do elders have to interact with first-time guests or those who are newer to the church? How can they make the most of these opportunities? What are some common questions they have about the church?

ELDER ORIENTATION

PART #3: DISPLAYING THE CHARACTER OF AN ELDER

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Consider the following biblical qualification of an elder:

- **Hospitable**

1 Timothy 3:2 An overseer, then, must be above reproach...hospitable...

Titus 1:7-8 For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward...hospitable...

- Define this qualification in your own words.
- Why is this quality necessary for leadership?
- Do you believe you currently meet this qualification? Why or why not?

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~15-20 MINUTES):

1. Discuss the questions from the Individual Preparation.
2. What opportunities do you have to show hospitality to:
 - Strangers?
 - Those in your church?
3. Why is hospitality such an important aspect of ministry to others?

Chapter 10

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

- **1 Timothy:** A Manual for Church Life
- **2 Timothy:** Ministry as Spiritual Combat
- **Titus:** Adorning the Doctrine of God
- **Philemon:** Manual on Forgiveness
- **Hebrews:** Superiority of Christ

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY: BIBLICAL COUNSELING

- What is biblical counseling?
What are the key components of a biblical counseling relationship/meeting(s)?
- What is the biblical process for change for a believer who is struggling with a sinful habit?
- What Scriptures and biblical principles might you use to help a believer who is suffering during difficult circumstances?
- What is the elder's role when asked questions with medical implications?
With legal implications?

ELDER ORIENTATION

- PART #1: LEADING WITH A PLURALITY OF ELDERS
Spiritually Protecting the Flock
- PART #2: FULFILLING THE ROLE OF AN ELDER
Discipleship
- PART #3: DEMONSTRATING THE CHARACTER OF AN ELDER
Loving What Is Good; Just; Devout

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Review the overview and key information of each book. Memorize key information as desired or required for your church elder process.

1 TIMOTHY

Paul, the aged and experienced apostle, writes to young pastor Timothy who is facing a heavy burden of responsibility in the church at Ephesus. The task is challenging: false doctrine must be erased, public worship safeguarded, and mature leadership developed. In addition to the conduct of the church, Paul talks pointedly about the conduct of the minister. Timothy must be on his guard lest his youthfulness become a liability, rather than an asset to the gospel. He must be careful to avoid false teachers and greedy motives, pursuing instead righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness as befitting a man of God.¹⁵⁵

THEME: A Manual for Church Life

OUTLINE:

- I. For Timothy (1–3)
- II. For Timothy to the Church (4–6)

KEY CHAPTERS:

- 2 Duty of men to pray in public worship; role of women in public worship
- 3 Qualifications of elders; qualifications of deacons; purpose of the letter
- 5 Duties toward the young, widows, elders

KEY PEOPLE:

Alexander and Hymanaeus False teachers in Ephesus, where Timothy served as Pastor

¹⁵⁵ Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 426.

2 TIMOTHY

2 Timothy continues some of the themes of 1 Timothy and majors on the need to be bold and faithful, and to serve and teach faithfully, as false teachers extend their ungodly influence. Paul's close relationship with Timothy is evident as he stresses the need to study God's Word, to stay faithful, and be aware that 'the last days' will usher in increased spiritual and moral wickedness and darkness. Paul faces the prospect of his imminent death and gives his closing instructions and testimony to his younger protégé.¹⁵⁶

THEME: Ministry as Spiritual Combat

OUTLINE:

- I. Instructions for Spiritual Combat (1-3)
- II. Commission to Spiritual Combat (4)

KEY CHAPTERS:

- 3 The peril of and protection from apostasy

KEY PASSAGES:

- 3:16-17 "All Scripture is inspired by God..."

¹⁵⁶ Chrispin, *The Bible Panorama*, 527.

TITUS

Titus, a young minister, is left on the island of Crete by Paul to begin the challenging task of organizing new converts into local churches. In this letter, Paul shares with Titus some practical wisdom regarding church organization and administration. Leaders must be chosen based on proven character and conduct; false teachers must be quickly detected and removed; church members of all ages must be encouraged to live lives worthy of the gospel they claim to believe. Young and old, leader and laity, must demonstrate the reality of their faith by being “careful to maintain good works” (3:8).¹⁵⁷

THEME: Adorning the Doctrine of God

OUTLINE:

- I. As Leaders (1)
- II. In the Church (2)
- III. In the World (3)

KEY PASSAGES:

- 1:5-9 Elder qualifications
2:3-5 “Older women likewise are to be reverent...train younger women”
2:11-13 “...to live sensibly, righteously...”
3:5 Salvation apart from works; regeneration and the Holy Spirit

PHILEMON

Philemon had been saved under Paul's ministry...several years earlier. Wealthy enough to have a large house...Philemon also owned at least one slave, a man named Onesimus.... Onesimus was not a believer at the time he stole some money (v. 18) from Philemon and ran away.... Through circumstances not recorded in Scripture, Onesimus met Paul in Rome and became a Christian. ...By stealing and running away from Philemon, Onesimus had both broken Roman law and defrauded his master. Paul knew those issues had to be dealt with, and decided to send Onesimus back.... Along with Onesimus, Paul sent Philemon this beautiful personal letter, urging him to forgive Onesimus and welcome him back to service as a brother in Christ.¹⁵⁸

THEME: Manual on Forgiveness

OUTLINE:

- I. Prayer (vs 1-7)
- II. Petition (vs 8-16)
- III. Promise (vs 17-25)

KEY PEOPLE:

- Philemon Christian slave owner
- Onesimus Slave who receives Christ under Paul's ministry and must now return to his master Philemon

HEBREWS

The book of Hebrews warns and urges any lingering on the borders of salvation to enter by faith in Christ, or face God's judgement. Those who have entered into forgiveness are assured of their salvation and encouraged to persevere. Hebrews provides an amazing and inspiring analysis of salvation through Christ, and illustrates vividly the need and comforts of faith in Him and in God's promises. This book is truly Christ-centered in all its teaching. The key thought is 'better'. The word itself is used twelve times and demonstrated many times more. Salvation in Christ is so much better than everything in Judaism, all of which was intended to prepare for and point to Christ.¹⁵⁹

THEME: Superiority of Christ

OUTLINE:

- | | | |
|------|---|------------|
| I. | Superiority of Christ's Person | (1-7) |
| II. | Superiority of Christ's Work | (8-10:18) |
| III. | Response of Faith is Perseverance and Obedience | (10:19-13) |

KEY CHAPTERS:

- | | |
|----|---|
| 1 | Christ the Son is God's full revelation; exalted above angels, enthroned as God, awaiting the subjection of the world |
| 3 | Christ is greater than Moses; beware of an unbelieving heart |
| 5 | Christ, a sympathetic High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek |
| 6 | Warning of apostasy; God's oath to Abraham; our sure hope through Christ |
| 7 | Melchizedek priesthood superior to inadequate Aaronic priesthood; Christ's priesthood is eternal |
| 10 | Animal sacrifices are not efficacious; Christ's sacrifice of lasting value; access to God guaranteed in Christ, but willful sinners are doomed; readers need perseverance |
| 11 | Faith: defined and illustrated |
| 12 | The fatherly discipline of God; need of sanctification; Mt. Sinai and Mt. Zion contrasted |
| 13 | Christian living: love, hospitality, marriage, doctrine, obey leaders; benediction |

KEY PASSAGE:

- | | |
|---------|--------------------------------------|
| 4:12 | The word of God is living and active |
| 4:15 | Christ tempted as we are |
| 9:11-15 | Superiority of Christ's sacrifice |

¹⁵⁹ Chrispin, *The Bible Panorama*, 533.

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~10–20 MINUTES):

1. Briefly discuss any questions you have about the books covered in this section of Bible Knowledge.
2. Review the information in this section of Bible Knowledge by asking questions such as:
 - Where are the qualifications for elders?
 - What is the theme of 2 Timothy?
 - Who was Onesimus?
 - What is found in Hebrews 11?
3. Review any required memorized content from Genesis to 2 Thessalonians.

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Read and consider the key texts, terms, provided theological writings, and other additional resources as desired. Write out an answer or outline for each question.

BIBLICAL COUNSELING

1. WHAT IS BIBLICAL COUNSELING? WHAT ARE THE KEY COMPONENTS OF A BIBLICAL COUNSELING RELATIONSHIP/MEETING(S)?

○ **Key passages to consider:**

- Proverbs 18:2, 13
- Galatians 6:1–2
- Ephesians 4:11–24
- 1 Thessalonians 5:14

○ **What biblical counselors say:**

Paul Tautges in *Counseling One Another*

Biblical counseling is an intensely focused and personal aspect of the discipleship process, whereby believers come alongside one another for three main purposes: first, to help the other person consistently apply Scriptural theology to his or her life in order to experience victory over sin through obedience to Christ; second, by warning their spiritual friend, in love, of the consequences of sinful actions; and third, by leading that brother or sister to make consistent progress in the ongoing process of biblical change in order that he or she, too, may become a spiritually reproductive, disciple-maker. This definition describes the aim of biblical discipleship and supports the underlying principles of this book. Biblical counseling is helping one another, with the body of Christ, to grow to maturity in Him.¹⁶⁰

Joel James in *Counsel with Confidence*

Biblical counseling can be defined as *using the Bible in wise and appropriate ways to bring God-glorifying change to God's people*. It applies the theological truths, commands, and promises of the Bible to the problems of daily life, so that people change more and more into conformity to the character of Jesus Christ, living more and more for His glory in biblical wisdom, righteousness, peace, stability, and strength.

¹⁶⁰ Paul Tautges, *Counseling One Another* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd, 2016), 20.

Wayne Mack divides counseling into the following eight intermingled, but distinct stages...:

1. *Involvement* – building a relationship with a person that facilitates change
2. *Inspiration* – inspiring counselees with biblical hope
3. *Investigation* – gathering information about the person and his situation
4. *Interpretation* – interpreting that information biblically
5. *Instruction* – providing biblical teaching for the purpose of change
6. *Inducement* – encouraging the counselee to change
7. *Implementation* – working change into the person’s daily life
8. *Integration* – making sure that new biblical habits stick over time

Broken down into its most basic components, counseling involves helping a believer in Jesus Christ...

- stop the *suppression* of sin by repenting and asking forgiveness (Prov. 28:13)
- discipline his *imagination* or engage in minute-by-minute thinking (Ps. 95:10)
- replace sinful *actions* with their godly opposites (Rom. 12:21)
- wisely limit exposure to tempting *situations* (Rom. 13:14b)
- grow in a vibrant, daily *devotion* to Jesus Christ (Rom. 13:14a).¹⁶¹

Jeremy Pierre and Deepak Reju in *The Pastor and Counseling*

You do need to have some framework for directing a counseling conversation. We have done our best to boil it down to its most necessary elements so you can have a clear sense of what you’re doing. We laid out the three main goals of counseling; to address the problem, to display the relevance of the gospel, and to help people grow in Christlikeness. If you have these goals clearly in mind, you will have a much greater chance of saying something beneficial.

Pastors know they need to do more than simply find a more compassionate way of saying, “Stop it,” or hand a person two verses and say, “Let me know how those work for you.” Pastoral counseling involves at least three core elements: listening, considering, and then speaking. Pastors actively utilize these three aspects of counseling in order to uncover, weigh, and offer redemptive insights for the troubles in their people’s lives.

If the goals of counseling are like construction drawings, then the method is like the implementation plan for the phases of construction. You start with the foundation, move through structural framing, and end with the finish work.

Pastoral counseling follows a similar trajectory – you move from listening to considering to speaking.

161 Joel James, *Counsel with Confidence* (Wapwallopen, PA, 2018), 30–31.

- **You listen to the problem** – to understand the context of the person’s life and troubles (Prov. 18:2, 13; James 1:19).
 - **You consider heart responses** – how the person’s heart is responding to God, to self, to others, and to circumstances (Prov. 20:5).
 - **You speak truth in love** – in order to teach, comfort, warn, encourage, advise, and admonish as appropriate (2 Corinthians 1; Col. 3:16; 1 Thess. 5:14).¹⁶²
- Write a summary or outline of your answer to the questions, “What is biblical counseling? What are the key components of a biblical counseling relationship/meeting(s)?”

2. WHAT IS THE BIBLICAL PROCESS FOR CHANGE FOR A BELIEVER WHO IS STRUGGLING WITH A SINFUL HABIT?

- **Key passages to consider:**
- Proverbs 4:23
 - 2 Corinthians 5:17
 - Ephesians 4:22–24
 - Philippians 2:12–13
 - Colossians 3:8–14
- **Key terms to include:**
- Repentance
 - Heart
 - Put off
 - Renew
 - Put on

¹⁶² Jeremy Pierre and Deepak Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling: The Basics of Shepherding Members in Need* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 48–49.

○ **What biblical counselors say:**

Joel James in *Counsel with Confidence*

All counseling must be determinatively shaped by the following truths or it is not biblical.

1. *The gospel of Jesus Christ is the foundation of biblical change* (2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 5:1; 6:16–18; 8:13). The gospel brings spiritual new birth, and it orients, guides, empowers, and dominates all of the Christian life following regeneration (Col. 2:6).
2. *Change is always possible for believers in Jesus Christ* (Phil. 1:6; Rom. 6:17–18). No Christian is so entrenched in sin, so dominated by his past, genetics or anything else, that he cannot be changed by the work of the Holy Spirit.
3. *The Word of God applied by the Spirit of God is the primary tool for change* (John 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:16–17; Ps. 119:1, 24, 133). Living and active, inerrant, God-revealed, Christ-commended, Spirit-empowered – when it comes to changing people, there is nothing like the Bible.
4. *The heart is the place where real, long-lasting change takes place* (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 10:5; Prov. 4:23; Mark 7:21–23; Matt. 12:34). The *heart* is where a person thinks, considers, analyzes, evaluates, feels, decides, and chooses – the mission control center of life, the real person on the inside, the inner man. Counseling is about changing a person’s heart or moment-by-moment thinking....
5. *God’s plan for practical daily change is: put off / be renewed / put on* (Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:8–14). That plan includes the following components:

Put off:

- Use the Bible to identify sin (Ps. 19:10–11; 119:9).
- Acknowledge personal responsibility for that sin, and ask forgiveness for it (James 1:14; 1 John 1:9).
- Be willing to change (Ps. 119:10, 30–32).
- By God’s grace, stop doing the sin (1 Peter 4:1–3)
- Organize life to make it hard to do the sin again (Rom. 13:14)

Be renewed in your mind:

- Pursue a thorough biblical reorientation of your thinking by studying God’s Word. (Deut. 5:29; Ps. 95:10; Prov. 4:23; Rom. 12:1–2).

Put on:

- Replace sinful thoughts, words, and actions with their godly opposites (Rom. 12:21; Eph. 4:25–32; Col. 3:10–17).

6. *Sanctification is a joint, divine-human effort* (Phil. 2:12–13; 1 Cor. 15:10). While regeneration, justification, conversion, and glorification are completely the work of God, sanctification is a God-empowered joint effort. Understanding that, biblical counseling avoids the extremes of mystical passivity, on one hand, and legalistic self-reliance on the other.

7. *Sanctification is a corporate project, requiring church life and input from other believers* (Rom. 15:14; Gal. 6:1; Eph. 4:15–16; Heb. 10:24–25; Prov. 12:15). True change does not take place in the counseling room, but in the church, as a person is actively involved in both serving and being served by the body of Christ.¹⁶³

Paul Tautges in *Counseling One Another*

Authentic biblical counseling recognizes God’s holy calling for the believer and the disciple’s personal responsibility for self-discipline, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to live in a manner worthy of his or her high position as a new creature in Christ. God’s vision of discipleship, moreover, requires recognition of the war that rages within the believer as indwelling sin fights to maintain the dominance it once enjoyed prior to conversion. Therefore, we must recognize that the transformation targeted discipleship aims to accomplish involves the renewing of the mind by the Word of truth, the repenting of inner desires by the Spirit’s power, and the replacing of sinful habits by the practice of godliness. In a nutshell, a return to the apostolic pattern of maintaining a connection between sound doctrine and the discipline of godly living is indispensable to the ongoing process of sanctification.¹⁶⁴

- Write a summary or outline of your answer to the question, “What is the biblical process for change for a believer who is struggling with a sinful habit?”

¹⁶³ James, *Counsel with Confidence*, 21–22.

¹⁶⁴ Tautges, *Counseling One Another*, 67.

3. WHAT SCRIPTURE AND BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES MIGHT YOU USE TO HELP A BELIEVER WHO IS SUFFERING DURING DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES?

○ **Key passages to consider:**

- Psalm 23
- Romans 8:28–30
- 1 Peter 1:3–9
- James 1:2–18

○ **Key terms to include:**

- Trust
- Sovereignty
- Goodness
- Wisdom

○ **What biblical counselors say:**

Heath Lambert in *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*

Living in a sinful world brings pain. Whether we suffer because of our own sin, the direct sin of others, the sins of the world, the pain of others, the operations of the Devil, our own confusions, or the slow decline of our bodies toward death, we suffer. This brings many people to seek help from biblical counselors. We need to know how to help them respond. We have seen that the biblical response to the personal sin of the counselee is repentance, and the biblical response when a counselee is sinned against is forgiveness. In this chapter we learn that the biblical counseling response to experiencing the sin of Adam in a fallen world is to trust God.

One passage that lays a biblical foundation for the trust we are to have in God is Psalm 119:68: “You are good and do good; teach me your statutes.” This passage makes an assertion and an appeal. The assertion is twofold and says first that God is good. The good character of God is the foundation for all the help we have to offer as we counsel those in pain....

When suffering strikes, we need to be reminded in the simplest of terms of the character of the God we serve. In the Bible, God shows us how to combine an understanding of his strength and his care in ways that are profound, accessible, and decidedly untechnical. Psalm 23 is one famous example of combining God’s strength and care in a way that ministers tender mercy to people in trouble:

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no

evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

This passage is full of strength and care. The Lord exerts his power for our good to keep us from want, to make us lie down in green pastures, to restore our soul, to make us righteous, to protect us from evil, and to ensure that goodness and mercy follow us all the days of our life. Psalm 23 is like the rest of the Bible in talking about God's character in a way that assumes he is trustworthy and so beckons us simply to trust him.

That is what we do in counseling. We point counselees to the strong and loving character of God and plead with them to trust him. We appeal to them to believe that when bad things happen, we can trust that he loves us in his care and is able to use his power in good ways that may not be understandable to us.¹⁶⁵

Joel James in *Counsel with Confidence*

When a person has been sinned against or is facing painful trials, we should express compassion. However, we must also understand that his or her *response* is either sinful or righteous. Being shouted at by one's husband and contracting cancer are not sin: but how one *responds* to them might be. As a counselor, when dealing with sins of response, you must walk a difficult line. You must express compassion and patience, *and* gently point out ungodly responses (Rom. 12:15; Gal. 6:1-2).¹⁶⁶

- Write a summary or outline of your answer to the question, "What Scriptures and biblical principles might you use to help a believer who is suffering during difficult circumstances?"

¹⁶⁵ Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 255; 260-61.

¹⁶⁶ James, *Counsel with Confidence*, 37.

4. WHAT IS THE ELDER'S ROLE WHEN ASKED QUESTIONS WITH MEDICAL IMPLICATIONS? WITH LEGAL IMPLICATIONS?

- **Key passages to consider:**

- 2 Peter 1:3–4
- 2 Timothy 3:16–4:2

- **Key terms to include:**

- Legal Reporting Requirements
- Sufficiency of Scripture
- Doctor
- Attorney

- **What biblical counselors say:**

The Association of Certified Biblical Counselors

The Bible is clear that God created human beings to consist of both a body and soul. To be a human being is to exist in these two constituent parts, which are separable only at death. Even after death, Christians confess that the bodies and souls of human beings will be restored at the Last Day. This biblical truth points to the high honor and regard that God gives to both the physical and spiritual realities of humanity. (Genesis 2:7; Matthew 10:28; 1 Corinthians 7:34; 2 Corinthians 5:1; 1 Timothy 4:8)

A theological reality like this one requires Christians to honor both body and soul as crucial to human existence. Christians, therefore, should respect medical interventions as a fully legitimate form of care for those struggling in this fallen world. Examinations by medical professionals are crucial adjuncts to a biblical counseling ministry as they discover and treat, or rule out, physical problems which lead many to seek counseling help.

Another example of this biblical wisdom is the teaching in Scripture on the dynamic nature of problems that we experience in a fallen world. Human beings have difficulties, which always carry physical and spiritual implications. Both aspects need to be addressed in an appropriate fashion. Human beings experience problems with spiritual implications for which they are morally culpable and must repent. Human beings experience other physical and spiritual problems, which are not a consequence of their sins, are not their fault, but which are painful realities that attend life in a fallen world. (Matthew 5:8; 26:38; 2 Corinthians 7:9–11; 1 Thessalonians 5:14)

This theological reality requires Christians to approach problems in a complex way, rather than a simplistic one. Christians understand that some spiritual realities will require a rebuke, but others will require encouragement in the midst of pain. Still others will require help in the midst of weakness....

In light of these realities...

1. Biblical counselors must acknowledge that human beings struggle with physical and spiritual problems.
2. Biblical counselors shall encourage the use of physical examinations and testing by physicians for diagnosis of medical problems, the treatment of these problems, and the relief of symptoms, which might cause, contribute to, or complicate counseling issues.
3. Biblical counselors shall help their counsees respond biblically to physical problems, but deny that spiritual interventions are the only proper response to problems with a medical element. They reject any teaching which excludes the importance of the body and the goodness of God, which leads to the blessing of medical care.
4. Biblical counselors reject the notion that medical interventions solve spiritual problems. They embrace the use of medicine for cure and symptom relief, but deny that medical care is sufficient for spiritual problems, which require Christ and his gospel for ultimate relief and lasting change.
5. Biblical counselors shall be committed to counseling those with medical problems, but should not attempt to practice medicine without the formal qualifications and licensing to do so. When they have questions or concerns of a medical nature they should refer their counselee to a competent medical professional for diagnosis and treatment.
6. Biblical counselors shall nurture a spirit of humility, understanding many issues at the nexus of body and soul defy simplicity. They recognize that many problems are combinations of physical and spiritual issues. Others are problems, which are not easily identified as one, the other, or both....¹⁶⁷

Jeremy Pierre and Deepak Reju in *The Pastor and Counseling*

Counseling is an important part of the pastor's labor for his people. When Jesus called you to shepherd his people, he called you to walk with them through complex and sometimes ugly problems. But we also know that pastors have limitations, both in time and in experience with the complexities of human trouble. Here are some indicators it may be time to seek outside help....

- ***You sense the need for further medical help.*** While you should have counsees seek regular medical advice from the beginning, sometimes people display bizarre behavior, intrusive thought patterns, or extreme emotional responses that seem uncontrollable. These may be indicators that their physiology needs further attention from a doctor.

¹⁶⁷ "Mental Illness and Medicine," Association of Certified Biblical Counselors, accessed December 18, 2021, <https://biblicalcounseling.com/about/beliefs/statements-from-the-board/mental-illness-and-medicine/>.

- *You must disclose information that protects people from abuse or deadly harm.* When a person threatens suicide, homicide, or any abuse of children, elderly folks, or dependent persons, you must immediately report to authorities. If you have reasonable suspicion or direct admission from your counselee that such abuse has occurred already, you must report this as well. Get to know your state's laws as well as whatever child-protective services it offers. The folks you see for counseling should know that you are required to disclose such things when they first start the process with you. Reporting to authorities does not mean you are being an untrustworthy pastor, and you can explain this with two simple facts: First, you are not permitted by law to determine guilt or innocence on your own authority. Second, you will remain committed to shepherding their spiritual needs through whatever may come.¹⁶⁸

- Write a summary or outline of your answer to the questions, “Explain the elder’s role when asked questions with medical implications? With legal implications?”

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~20–30 MINUTES):

1. Briefly discuss any questions you have about biblical counseling and the specific questions you answered in this chapter.
2. Practice answering the following questions using only a Bible for reference:
 - What is biblical counseling? What are the key components of a biblical counseling relationship/meeting(s)?
 - What is the biblical process for change for a believer who is struggling with a sinful habit?
 - What Scriptures and biblical principles might you use to help a believer who is suffering during difficult circumstances?
 - What is the elder’s role when asked questions with medical implications? With legal implications?

3. Briefly review any of the following theology questions that would be helpful:

- How can God be known?
- Defend trinitarianism.
- How would you respond to someone who says, “If God is love, then why do bad things happen to good people?”
- How can you prove the deity of Jesus Christ?
- Describe the incarnation and its significance.
- What does the resurrection of Christ signify for the believer?
- What Scriptures would you use to demonstrate the deity of the Holy Spirit?
- What is the role of the Holy Spirit in conversion?
- What does it mean to be baptized by the Holy Spirit?
- What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit?
- How would you respond to someone who argues that the charismatic/miraculous gifts are still active today?
- On what basis do you believe the Bible to be a supernatural document?
- Why do you believe the Bible to be closed, in that nothing should be added to the current sixty-six books?
- Define the sufficiency of Scripture. What are the implications of this doctrine for everyday life?
- Explain and defend the historical/grammatical method of hermeneutics.
- What does it mean when the Bible says that man was created in the image of God? What differentiates man from animals?
- Does man have a free will? Explain.
- How would you defend the doctrine of inherited sin – that men are sinful not only in their actions but also in their nature?
- Explain the concept of the flesh or the old nature. How is the Christian’s relationship to the old man explained in Scripture?
- What must a person do to be saved? How is the Lordship of Christ tied to this discussion? Is repentance essential to conversion?
- Define and defend the doctrine of election.
- Define and defend the doctrine of the atonement.
- Define and defend the doctrine of regeneration.
- Define and defend the doctrine of justification.
- Define and defend the doctrine of sanctification.
- Define and defend the doctrine of preservation or perseverance.
- Define and defend the doctrine of glorification.
- What is the difference between elders and deacons?
- What is the proper process for church discipline? What circumstances or situations warrant beginning this process?
- What are the primary goals or purposes of the local church?

- What are the ordinances prescribed in the New Testament to the church? What is the proper way for administering these ordinances?
- Discuss the various rapture views: pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation, pre-wrath, and post-tribulation. Which view best fits the biblical data? Why?
- Give a general timeline of end-time events. Where are each of these events discussed in Scripture?
- Discuss the various millennial views: amillennialism, postmillennialism, premillennialism. Which view best fits the biblical data? Why?
- Define and defend the doctrines of heaven and hell, including the new heavens, the new earth, and the lake of fire.

ELDER ORIENTATION

PART #1: LEADING WITH A PLURALITY OF ELDERS ***SPIRITUALLY PROTECTING THE FLOCK***

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Elders are to protect the flock that God has entrusted to their care. Paul gave the Ephesian elders a sobering reminder of the importance of this when he gave them this charge prior to his arrest in Jerusalem:

Acts 20:28–31 Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore, be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.

Paul warned that wolves would come in among the sheep, and some would even arise from among themselves! It is a sobering reality to think that one of the reasons for a plurality of leadership in the local church is the possibility of needing to protect the church from one of its own leaders who shows himself to be a wolf, devouring and deceiving the flock.

This does not mean that elders should be suspicious or critical of one another. Nor does it mean that any one elder can or should provide accountability for every other elder's life or teaching. But it does require that elders be vigilant. Each one must be on the alert and on guard. Every elder must watch his own life and doctrine carefully (1 Timothy 4:16) and must pay attention to that of others who have influence within the church.

GUARDING AGAINST FALSE TEACHERS

Nearly every New Testament book contains some direct or indirect instruction about false teachers. Some books, such as 2 Peter and Jude, are almost entirely devoted to this theme. Others, like Galatians, were written to confront the false doctrine peddled by such teachers. In the pastoral epistles, perhaps no theme is more prominent than guarding sound doctrine from false teachers and error.

Read 2 Peter and Jude.

- What are some characteristics of false teachers? How can they be identified?
- Why is false teaching so dangerous?
- How should elders guard against false teachers infiltrating the church?
- How should elders respond to false teachers in the church? How is this different than how elders should respond to those who are simply untaught or immature?

GUARDING AGAINST DRIFT

Elders must not only be vigilant about false teaching, but they must also guard against more subtle drift. So many churches and denominations throughout history have ended up embracing false teaching not through a major obvious shift, but rather through a series of small theological or moral compromises. While personal vigilance among elders is vital to avoiding such drift, a healthy church and church leadership will seek to instill other safeguards as well. One of the best safeguards is a well-taught, biblically committed congregation that won't tolerate compromise. But in addition to having committed current leadership and members, it is also important to have clear governing documents, likely including a constitution, by-laws, and doctrinal statement, to protect from future drift as well.

- A couple struggling with communication

- A couple dealing with conflict

- Someone with a pattern of anger

- Someone battling pornography

- Someone threatening suicide

- Someone struggling with depression

- Someone who is anxious or worried

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~15–20 MINUTES):

1. Discuss any questions you have from the Individual Preparation.

2. What opportunities do you have for engaging in the lives of individuals in the church?

3. When should you seek help from another elder or pastor when aware of or working with an individual on a difficult issue in their life?

4. Discuss any opportunities you have had to observe or participate in discipleship counseling. What did you learn from those interactions? What additional opportunities could you have in the coming months?

ELDER ORIENTATION

PART #3: DISPLAYING THE CHARACTER OF AN ELDER

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Consider the following biblical qualifications of an elder:

- **Loving what is good**

Titus 1:7–8 For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward...loving what is good...

- Define this qualification in your own words.
- Why is this quality necessary for leadership?
- Do you believe you currently meet this qualification? Why or why not?

- **Just**

Titus 1:7–8 For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward...just...

- Define this qualification in your own words.
- Why is this quality necessary for leadership?
- Do you believe you currently meet this qualification? Why or why not?

○ **Devout**

Titus 1:7–8 For the overseer must be above reproach as God’s steward...devout...

- Define this qualification in your own words.

- Why is this quality necessary for leadership?

- Do you believe you currently meet this qualification? Why or why not?

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~15–20 MINUTES):

1. Discuss the questions from the Individual Preparation.

2. How will an elder “loving what is good” and being “devout” affect his personal life?

3. How can an elder demonstrate a commitment to being just:
 - In his personal interactions?

 - In his work?

 - In the church?

CHAPTER 11

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

- **James:** The Effects of True Saving Faith
- **1 Peter:** Standing Firm through Suffering
- **2 Peter:** Genuine and False Christianity
- **1 John:** Tests of Eternal Life
- **2 John:** Christian Hospitality and False Teachers
- **3 John:** Christian Hospitality and Faithful Ministers
- **Jude:** Beware of the Pretenders
- **Revelation:** Revelation of Jesus Christ

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY: APOLOGETICS

- Explain the different methods of doing apologetics.
Defend the presuppositional approach.
- What are some of the primary ways cults and false religions stray from biblical truth regarding God, divine revelation, Christ, and how one is made right with God? What Scriptures would you use to address these issues?
- How are these common errors manifested in the theology and practice of Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Catholicism, Hinduism, and Islam? What resource(s) would you use to learn more about these or other cults and false religions?

ELDER ORIENTATION

- PART #1: LEADING WITH A PLURALITY OF ELDERS
Physically Protecting the Flock
- PART #2: FULFILLING THE ROLE OF AN ELDER
Caring for Widows
- PART #3: DEMONSTRATING THE CHARACTER OF AN ELDER
Able to Teach

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Review the overview and key information of each book. Memorize key information as desired or required for your church elder process.

JAMES

Faith without works cannot be called faith. It is dead, and a dead faith is worse than no faith at all. Faith must work; it must produce; it must be visible. Verbal faith is not enough; mental faith is insufficient. Faith must move into action. Throughout his epistle to Jewish believers, James integrates true faith and everyday practical experience by stressing that true faith “works.” It endures trials; it obeys God’s Word; it produces doers; it harbors no prejudice; it controls the tongue; it acts wisely; it provides the power to resist the devil; it waits patiently for the coming of the Lord.¹⁶⁹

THEME: The Effects of True Saving Faith

OUTLINE:

- | | | |
|------|--------------------------|-----|
| I. | Trials and Temptations | (1) |
| II. | Favoritism and Faith | (2) |
| III. | Tongue and Truth | (3) |
| IV. | Conflict and Confidence | (4) |
| V. | Riches and Righteousness | (5) |

KEY PASSAGES:

- | | |
|---------|-----------------|
| 1:2 | Joy in trials |
| 2:14–26 | Faith and Works |

¹⁶⁹ Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 462.

1 PETER

Since the believers addressed were suffering escalating persecution...the purpose of this letter was to teach them how to live victoriously in the midst of that hostility... Christians, though most greatly privileged, should also know that the world will treat them unjustly. Their citizenship is in heaven and they are strangers in a hostile, Satan-energized world. Thus the Christian life can be summed up as a call to victory and glory through the path of suffering. So, the basic question that Peter answers in this epistle is: How are Christians to deal with animosity? The answer features practical truths and focuses on Jesus Christ as the model of one who maintained a triumphant attitude in the midst of hostility.¹⁷⁰

THEME: Standing Firm through Suffering

OUTLINE:

- | | | |
|------|----------------------------|-------------|
| I. | Salvation of the Believer | (1:1–2:12) |
| II. | Submission of the Believer | (2:13–3:12) |
| III. | Suffering of the Believer | (3:13–5:14) |

KEY PASSAGES:

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 1:23 | “Born again through the living and abiding word of God...” |
| 2:2 | “Long for the pure milk of the Word” |
| 2:18–25 | Example of Christ’s submission in death |
| 3:7–9 | Husbands, be understanding to your wives...let all be harmonious |
| 5:1–3 | A shepherd’s heart: voluntary, eager, an example |
| 5:7 | “Cast all your anxiety on Him...” |

¹⁷⁰ MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, 1937.

2 PETER

2 Peter deals with opposition attacking the inside of the church, via false teaching. It seeks to meet, rebut, and repel these false teachers who deny Christ and seek to exploit the church through covetousness. 2 Peter underlines the facts supporting the truth of the Christian gospel and how this truth should be worked out in a growing lifestyle of purity, integrity and loyalty. This is altogether different from the corrupt and immoral example of the false teachers, whose lifestyle reflects their erroneous teaching.¹⁷¹

THEME: Genuine and False Christianity

OUTLINE:

- I. Holiness (1)
- II. Heresy (2)
- III. Hope (3)

KEY PASSAGES:

- 1:3-4 He has given us everything for life and godliness
1:20-21 Inspiration of Scripture; the Spirit of God “moved” the writers

¹⁷¹ Chrispin, *The Bible Panorama*, 546-47.

1 JOHN

Going back to fundamentals, I John combats [false teaching]....the answer to the attacks is both objective and subjective. It is found in the objective truths of Jesus Christ and the gospel message. It is manifested, too, in the genuine personal experience of Christ that enables the Christian convert to know he has been raised from death to life.... How does a person know that he knows Christ? By obeying God, loving Christian brethren, resisting worldliness, practicing righteousness, living a pure life, and not living for sin. These are tests given in the letter. The truth that, once a person is saved, he (or she) will always be saved is put in the context of testing oneself to see if the evidence of salvation is there. This gives deep assurance, without shallow presumption, to the one trusting Christ.¹⁷²

THEME: Tests of Eternal Life

OUTLINE:

- | | | |
|------|-----------------------------------|-----|
| I. | Salvation; Word of Life | (1) |
| II. | Sin; Love of the World | (2) |
| III. | Sanctification; Pursuit of Truth | (3) |
| IV. | Spirit; Submission to Spirit | (4) |
| V. | Certainty; Assurance of Salvation | (5) |

KEY PASSAGES:

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 1:5-10 | The basis for true fellowship with God |
| 2:15-17 | Do not love the world |
| 5:16-17 | Sin leading to death |

¹⁷² Ibid., 549.

2 JOHN

2 John mirrors, in briefer treatment and addressed to a family, the question of false teaching in I John, Gnosticism, and how to deal with it and its many false teachers.... This involves the question of Christian hospitality. Should a Christian give hospitality to someone who comes specifically to peddle error and specifically to deny the person of the Lord Jesus Christ as God who has come in the flesh? The answer is 'no', and the reasons are given. Clear Christian teaching and holiness are the bases for true fellowship of believers in Christ. Thus truth is the touchstone. Real love discerns against identification with error that will eternally condemn the lost.¹⁷³

THEME: Christian Hospitality and False Teachers

OUTLINE:

- I. Abide in God's Commandments (vs 1–6)
- II. Abide Not with False Teachers (vs 7–13)

3 JOHN

In First John the apostle discusses fellowship with God; in Second John he forbids fellowship with false teachers; and in Third John he encourages fellowship with Christian brothers. Following his expression of love for Gaius, John voices his joy that Gaius is persistently walking in the truth and showing hospitality to the messengers of the gospel. But John cannot commend certain others in the assembly. Diotrephes, for example, has allowed pride to replace love in his life, even rejecting the disciplining words of John. Everything that Gaius is, Diotrephes is not! John uses this negative example as an opportunity to encourage Gaius. Godly character and loyalty to the truth are never easy, but they bring God's richest commendation—and John's as well!¹⁷⁴

THEME: Christian Hospitality and Faithful Ministers

OUTLINE:

- I. Servanthood – Gaius (vs 1–8)
- II. Selfishness – Diotrephes (vs 9–14)

KEY PEOPLE:

Diotrephes Loved the preeminence

¹⁷³ Chrispin, *The Bible Panorama*, 553.

¹⁷⁴ Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 495.

JUDE

Jude is the only NT book devoted exclusively to confronting “apostasy,” meaning defection from the true, biblical faith.... He wrote to condemn the apostates and to urge believers to contend for the faith. He called for discernment on the part of the church and a rigorous defense of biblical truth.... While Jude never commented on the specific content of their false teaching, it was enough to demonstrate that their degenerate personal lives and fruitless ministries betrayed their attempts to teach error as though it were truth. This emphasis on character repeats the constant theme regarding false teachers—their personal corruption. While their teaching is clever, subtle, deceptive, enticing, and delivered in myriads of forms, the common way to recognize them is to look behind their false spiritual fronts and see their wicked lives.¹⁷⁵

THEME: Beware of the Pretenders

OUTLINE:

- I. Purpose of Epistle (vs 1–3)
- II. Path of Apostates (vs 4–16)
- III. Practice of Believers (vs 17–25)

¹⁷⁵ MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, 1983–84.

REVELATION

Unlike most books of the Bible, Revelation contains its own title: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ” (1:1)... What this book reveals or unveils is Jesus Christ in glory.... Revelation begins with John, the last surviving apostle and an old man, in exile on the small, barren island of Patmos. While on Patmos, John received a series of visions that laid out the future history of the world. When he was arrested, John was in Ephesus, ministering to the church there and in the surrounding cities.... To those churches, Revelation provided a message of hope: God is in sovereign control of all the events of human history, and though evil often seems pervasive and wicked men all powerful, their ultimate doom is certain. Christ will come in glory to judge and rule.¹⁷⁶

THEME: Revelation of Jesus Christ

OUTLINE:

- I. The Glory of Christ (1)
- II. The Church of Christ (2–3)
- III. The Future Plans of Christ (4–22)

KEY CHAPTERS:

- 1 The glory of Christ
- 2–3 Messages to 7 churches
- 4–5 God’s throne
- 8–9, 11 Trumpets
- 12 Description of last 3 ½ years of tribulation; persecution of Jews
- 16 Bowls
- 17–18 Babylon
- 19 Return of Christ and Armageddon
- 20 Millennium and Great White Throne
- 21–22 Eternal state

KEY PASSAGES:

- 2:4 Left first love
- 3:10 A promise that believers will be delivered from the great tribulation that will come upon the entire earth
- 12:1–4 “A woman” – representative of Israel
- 20:4 The martyrs of the tribulation who will share the joys of the millennium kingdom

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 1989–90.

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~10–20 MINUTES):

1. Briefly discuss any questions you have about the books covered in this section of Bible Knowledge.

2. Review the information in this section of Bible Knowledge by asking questions such as:
 - What is the theme of 1 Peter?
 - What is found in 2 Peter 1:3–4?
 - What is the theme of Jude?
 - Where are the messages to the 7 churches?

3. Review any required memorized content from Genesis to Hebrews.

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Read and consider the key texts, terms, provided theological writings, and other additional resources as desired. Write out an answer or outline for each question.

APOLOGETICS

1. EXPLAIN THE DIFFERENT METHODS OF DOING APOLOGETICS. DEFEND THE PRESUPPOSITIONAL APPROACH TO DOING APOLOGETICS.

○ **Key passages to consider:**

- Genesis 1:1
- Psalm 19
- Romans 1:18–21

○ **Key terms to include:**

- Classical apologetics
- Evidential apologetics
- Presuppositional apologetics

○ **What theologians and apologists say:**

Norman Geisler in *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*

There are differing kinds of apologetics systems, and no universally-acknowledged way to categorize them. Divergent approaches seem to be determined by the perspective of the one categorizing them. Nonetheless, there are some generally understood terms one can employ to view in a meaningful way the distinctives among more popular approaches....

Classical Apologetics...stresses arguments for the existence of God...as well as the historical evidence supporting the truth of Christianity. Classical apologetics is characterized by two basic steps: theistic and evidential arguments.

Theistic arguments are used to establish the truth of theism apart from an appeal to special revelation (e.g., the Bible). Classical apologetics accepts the validity of traditional theistic proofs for God, though some stress one over another....

Evidential Apologetics...stresses the need for evidence in support of the Christian truth claims. The evidence can be rational, historical, archaeological, and even experiential....

For the evidentialists there are certain events, such as, the healings of Jesus, raisings from the dead, and fulfilled prophecy, which in themselves, apart from prior presupposition or proof that God exists, substantiate the truth of Christianity. Since the facts “speak for themselves” there is no need, according to evidentialists, to provide an independent reason for believing in God’s existence. By contrast, both classical and presuppositional apologetics insist that historical events can only be interpreted in the light of the framework of the worldview of which they are a part....

Presuppositional Apologetics... affirms that one must defend Christianity from the foundation of certain basic presuppositions. Usually, a presuppositionalist presupposes the basic truth of Christianity and then proceeds to show (in any of several ways) that Christianity alone is true.¹⁷⁷

Alan Cairns in *Dictionary of Theological Terms*

Basically there are two methods employed by apologists. The first, adopted by both Roman Catholic and evangelical Protestant apologists, approaches an unbeliever on the ground that we all possess a common pool of facts and that, on the basis of these facts, a reasonable use of reason will lead to the acceptance of Christianity....

The second method is that...which denies that fallen man can employ reason rightly, or that as a creature he has the right to sit in judgment upon the facts of God’s revelation, or that he can rightly know any fact apart from God, since all of God’s creation reveals Him.

The first approach is possible only on the basis of deficient views of revelation, creation, and the fall. It accepts that man has the ability to see the truth if only he is made to look in the right direction. All he needs is a sufficient amount of information and the reasonable use of reason. But this is false and leads to apologetic failure.¹⁷⁸

Van Til...denied the ability of the human mind to approach the facts of the universe without a religious bias. The relationship that God created between man and his Creator ensures that this must be so. God has stamped the revelation of Himself on every man’s heart (Rom. 1:19–20). Man cannot think of anything aright apart from God his Creator. All unbelief proceeds, therefore, on the willful and sinful suppression of man’s innate knowledge of God (Rom. 1:18). To “presuppose” God is not to make an unverifiable assumption. Nor is it to accept His existence as a working hypothesis. Rather it is to recognize that our creaturehood demands that we recognize our Creator. The biblical presupposition for which Van Til contended is that all human rationality must be based on the self-consciousness of the God of Scripture.

177 Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 41–44.

178 Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 34–35.

This approach accords with that of the Bible, which never sets out to “prove” the truth of God’s existence or of the gospel by human reason. Rather, it presupposes God (Gen. 1:1; Heb. 11:6). The God of the Bible is the absolute, eternal, ontological Trinity, who has revealed Himself in His word, the Bible, the focus of which is His final personal self-expression in the self-attesting Christ (Heb. 1:1–3). Thus, God is not a fact of the universe or the mere force behind the universe. He is not something whose existence may be questioned or denied while we yet come to true conclusions about the facts of the universe. The God of the Bible is necessary to the existence of all the facts of the universe. He created them and only in Him can they have their true meaning. It is by Christ that all things cohere (Col. 1:17).

This is what a Christian presupposes in all his reasoning about God, truth, causality, factuality, and man. Conversely, this is what every non-Christian tends to deny in his reasoning. In other words, it is impossible to approach any of these subjects apart from a presuppositional bias....

Sinners willfully suppress the witness to God that is all around them and within them (Rom. 1:18–20; 2:15). Their problem is not factual but spiritual. They naturally seek truth somewhere outside of God.... Despite this, sinners can and do know much truth. This may be traced to the common grace that God bestows on all men, which restrains the full expression of their depravity, including their intellectual depravity. But even when sinners come to know some truth, they are basically wrong in their evaluation of it, in that until they are regenerated men never see any fact in its true relations. Rather, they naturally put it to an illegitimate use to support a system at variance with the revealed truth of God....

...The power of the gospel is not in rational proofs but in the self-attestation of the One who is the truth.¹⁷⁹

- Write a summary or outline of your explanation of the different methods of doing apologetics and your defense of the presuppositional approach.

- For further discussion or study:
 - Can the existence of God be proven?
 - What is the value of the philosophical proofs for the existence of God? (i.e., the ontological proof, the teleological proof, the cosmological proof).

2. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE PRIMARY WAYS CULTS AND FALSE RELIGIONS STRAY FROM BIBLICAL TRUTH REGARDING GOD, DIVINE REVELATION, CHRIST, AND HOW ONE IS MADE RIGHT WITH GOD? WHAT SCRIPTURES WOULD YOU USE TO ADDRESS THESE ISSUES?

- **What theologians and apologists say:**

Josh McDowell and Don Steward in *Handbook of Today's Religions*

New Truth

Many cults promote the false idea that God has revealed something special to them. This is usually truth that has never before been revealed and supersedes and contradicts all previous revelations....

The Mormon Church teaches that Christianity was in apostasy for some 18 centuries until God revealed new “truth” to Joseph Smith, Jr., restoring the true gospel that had been lost....

A Non-biblical Source of Authority

Some cults have sacred writings or a source of authority that supersedes the Bible....

Other groups...claim the Bible to be their final authority when in actuality their authority is the Bible as interpreted by the cult leader. Regardless of whether the Bible is superseded by other works or reinterpreted by a cult leader, a sure mark of a cult is that the final authority on spiritual matters rests on something other than the plain teaching of Holy Scripture.

Another Jesus

One characteristic that is found in all cults is false teaching about the person of Jesus Christ in the light of historical biblical Christianity....

The Bible makes it clear that Jesus was God in human flesh, second person of the Holy Trinity, who lived a sinless life on earth and died as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. Three days after His crucifixion, Jesus rose bodily from the dead. Fifty days afterward He ascended into heaven, where He now sits at the right hand of the Father, interceding on behalf of believers. He will, one day, return bodily to planet earth and judge the living and the dead while setting up His eternal Kingdom.

The Jesus of the cults is not the Jesus of the Bible.

According to the theology of the Jehovah's Witnesses, Jesus did not exist as God from all eternity but was rather the first creation of Jehovah God....

The Mormon Church does not accept the unique deity of Jesus Christ. He is, to them, one of many gods, the "first-born spirit child," spiritually conceived by a sexual union between the heavenly Father and a heavenly mother....

No matter what the particular beliefs of any cult may be, the one common denominator they all possess is a denial of the biblical teaching on the deity of Jesus Christ....

Non-biblical Teaching on the Nature of God (Trinity)

Another characteristic of all non-Christian cults is either an inadequate view or outright denial of the Holy Trinity. The biblical doctrine of the Trinity, one God in three Persons, is usually attacked as being pagan or satanic in origin....

Salvation by Works

One teaching that is totally absent from all the cults is the gospel of the grace of God. No one is taught in the cults that he can be saved from eternal damnation by simply placing his faith in Jesus Christ. It is always belief in Jesus Christ and "do this" or "follow that." All cults attach something to the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith. It might be baptism, obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel, or something else, but it is never taught that faith in Christ alone will save anyone.¹⁸⁰

Norman Geisler and Ron Rhodes in *When Cultists Ask*

There are a number of doctrinal characteristics of cults. One will typically find an emphasis on new revelation from God, a denial of the sole authority of the Bible, a denial of the Trinity, a distorted view of God and Jesus, or a denial of salvation by grace.

New Revelation. Many cult leaders claim to have a direct pipeline to God. The teachings of the cult often change and, hence, they need new "revelations" to justify such changes. Mormons, for example, once excluded African Americans from the priesthood. When social pressure was exerted against the Mormon church for this blatant form of racism, the Mormon president received a new "revelation" reversing the previous decree. Jehovah's Witnesses engaged in the same kind of change regarding the earlier Watchtower teaching that vaccinations and organ transplants were prohibited by Jehovah.

Denial of the Sole Authority of the Bible. Many cults deny the sole authority of the Bible. The Mormons, for example, believe the Book of Mormon is higher

180 Josh McDowell and Don Stewart, *Handbook of Today's Religions* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1996), 20–24.

Scripture than the Bible. Jim Jones, founder and leader of Jonestown, placed himself in authority over the Bible. Christian Scientists elevate Mary Baker Eddy's book *Science and Health* to supreme authority. Reverend Moon placed his book *The Divine Principle* in authority over all his followers. New Agers believe in many modern forms of authoritative revelation, such as *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ*.

A Distorted View of God and Jesus. Many cults set forth a distorted view of God and Jesus. The “Jesus Only” Oneness Pentecostals, for example, deny the Trinity and hold to a form of modalism, claiming that Jesus is God, and that “Father,” “Son,” and “Holy Spirit” are simply singular names for Jesus. The Jehovah's Witnesses deny both the Trinity and the absolute deity of Christ, saying that Christ is a lesser god than the Father (who is God Almighty). The Mormons say Jesus was “procreated” (by a heavenly father and a heavenly mother) at a point in time, and was the spirit-brother of Lucifer. Mormons do speak of a “Trinity,” but redefine it into Tritheism (i.e., three gods)....

Denial of Salvation by Grace. Cults typically deny salvation by grace, thus distorting the purity of the gospel. The Mormons, for example, emphasize the necessity of becoming more and more perfect in this life. The Jehovah's Witnesses emphasize the importance of distributing Watchtower literature door-to-door as a part of “working out” their salvation.¹⁸¹

- Write a summary or outline of your answer to the questions, “What are some of the primary ways cults and false religions stray from biblical truth regarding God, divine revelation, Christ, and how one is made right with God? What Scriptures would you use to address these issues?”

181 Norman L. Geisler and Ron Rhodes, *When Cultists Ask* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), 10–11.

3. HOW ARE THESE COMMON ERRORS MANIFESTED IN THE THEOLOGY AND PRACTICE OF MORMONISM, JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES, CATHOLICISM, HINDUISM, AND ISLAM? WHAT RESOURCE(S) WOULD YOU USE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THESE OR OTHER CULTS AND FALSE RELIGIONS?

○ What biblical counselors say:

Josh McDowell in *A Ready Defense*

Hinduism

Hinduism is not only one of the oldest of all religious systems, it is also one of the most complex. During its history Hinduism has spawned a variety of sects holding diverse beliefs; therefore, it is difficult to get an accurate picture of Hinduism without considering a vast array of history and commentary....

The Hindu scriptures, written through a period of 2,000 years (1400 B.C. – A.D. 500) are voluminous. They reflect the practices and beliefs which arose during the different long periods of Hindu history....

Moksha, also known as *mukti*, is the Hindu term used for the liberation of the soul from the wheel of karma. For the Hindu, the chief aim of the existence is to be freed from *samsara* (the binding life-cycle) and the wheel of karma with its endless cycle of births, deaths and rebirths. When one achieves this liberation, he enters into a state of fullness or completion.

The word *karma* literally means action and refers to a person's actions and the consequences thereof. In Hinduism, one's present state of existence is determined by his performance in previous lifetimes....

On the subject of God, Hinduism's supreme being is the undefinable, impersonal Brahman, a philosophical absolute. Christianity, on the other hand, teaches that there is a supreme being who is the infinite, personal Creator....

In Hinduism there is no sin against a Holy God. Acts of wrongdoing are not done against any God but are mainly a result of ignorance. These evils can be overcome by the following guidelines of one's caste and way of salvation. To the contrary, Christianity sees sin as a real act of rebellion against a perfect and Holy God....

Salvation in Hinduism can be attained in one of three general ways: the way of knowledge, knowing one is actually a part of the ultimate Brahman and not a separate entity; the way of devotion, which is love and obedience to a particular deity; or the way of works, or following ceremonial ritual. This salvation is from the seemingly endless cycle of birth, death and rebirth. By contrast, in Christianity salvation is from a potentially eternal separation from God and cannot be obtained by any number of good deeds, but rather is given freely by God to all who will receive it.¹⁸²

Islam

The early history of Islam revolved around one central figure, Muhammad....

The basis for Islamic doctrine is found in the Qur'an (Koran). Boa describes the central place of the Qur'an in the Islamic faith as well as the supplementary works:

The Koran is the authoritative scripture of Islam. About four-fifths the length of the New Testament, it is divided into 114 surahs (chapters). Parts were written by Mohammed, and the rest, based on his oral teaching, was written from memory by his disciples after Mohammed's death.

Over the years a number of additional sayings of Mohammed and his early disciples were compiled. These comprise the *hadith* ("tradition"), the sayings of which are called *sunna* ("custom"). The Hadith supplements the Koran much as the Talmud supplements the Law in Judaism.

Islam teaches the unity of God's essence and personality, explicitly excluding the Trinity as taught in the Bible....

In Islam the person and work of Jesus Christ are not seen in the same way as in Christianity. For the Christian the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the incarnate Son of God is the vital cornerstone of faith, yet the Muslim does not hold either of these truths – that Christ is the Son of God or that He rose from the dead....

The Muslim operates under a legalistic system and must earn his salvation. He holds to the *Articles of Faith* and follows the *Pillars of Faith*....

Historical roots tie Islam to Christianity, yet this is where the similarity ends. Islam rejects the key doctrines of the Christian faith – the Trinity, the deity of Christ, Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, and the sin nature of man and his salvation by grace alone through faith in Christ. They also reject the Bible as the only authoritative book on which to base all matters of doctrine, faith, and practice.¹⁸³

Jehovah's Witnesses

Officially known as the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, the Jehovah's Witnesses are a product of the life work of Charles Taze Russell, born February 16, 1852, near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania....

Jehovah's Witnesses...claim to accept the Bible as their only authority. However, their theology denies every cardinal belief of historic Christianity including the Trinity, the divinity of Jesus Christ, His bodily resurrection, salvation by grace through faith, and eternal punishment of the wicked....

Although the Watchtower contends that the Scriptures are their final authority, we find they constantly misuse the Scriptures to establish their own peculiar beliefs.

183 Ibid., 303-13.

This is accomplished chiefly by quoting texts out of context while omitting other passages relevant to the subject. For all practical purposes their publications take precedence over the Scripture.¹⁸⁴

Mormonism

Joseph Smith, Jr., the founder of Mormonism, or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, was born on December 23, 1805, in Sharon, Vermont....

In 1820 Joseph allegedly received a vision that became the basis for the founding of the Mormon Church....

The Mormons claim they are the restoration of the true church established by Jesus Christ. It is not Protestant or Catholic, but claims, rather, to be the only true church....

The Mormon Church has four accepted sacred works: the Bible, the *Book of Mormon*, *Doctrine and Covenants*, and *The Pearl of Great Price*. The present prophet's words are also a source of authority....

The Mormon doctrine of God is contradictory to what the Bible teaches. The Mormons believe in many gods and teach that God himself was once a man. Moreover, Mormon males have the possibility of attaining godhood....

The Mormon church teaches that Jesus Christ was a pre-existent spirit like the rest of us. Even though we are all literally brothers and sisters of Jesus, He is set apart from the rest of us by being the firstborn of God's spirit-children.¹⁸⁵

Robert Lightner in *The God of the Bible and Other Gods*

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormonism)

Mormons claim the Bible, *The Book of Mormon* (the translation of the golden plates found by Smith), *Doctrines and Covenants*, and *The Pearl of Great Price* as sources of authority....

Mankind. Humans have the potential to become gods, for as humans are, God once was.

Salvation. Salvation is the process of achieving godhood. The biblical doctrine of sin is denied by Mormons. Humans are born innately good; children, however, are said to sin (i.e., make wrong judgments) and become accountable for their sins.

Baptism by immersion into the Mormon Church is absolutely essential for salvation.¹⁸⁶

184 McDowell, *A Ready Defense*, 332-334.

185 Ibid., 341-47.

186 Robert P. Lightner, *The God of the Bible and Other Gods* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998), 184.

Hinduism

[The major books of Hindu scripture] may be broken down into a revealed canon, the *Sruti*, and a semicanonical body of tradition writings, the *Smriti*....

Hinduism teaches that each person lives a succession of lives in which it is possible to gain salvation. The “saved” person is one who has broken out of the cycle of reincarnations. In such a works-oriented salvation, there is a weak view of sin. In fact, in Hinduism there is no sin against God. Wrong actions are simply the result of ignorance, not violations of God’s laws.¹⁸⁷

Islam

The basis for all belief and behavior in Islam lies in the *Qur’an*, the *Hadith*, or Muslim body of recorded folk traditions, and the *Sunnah*, or customs of Muslim life.

Muslims hold the *Qur’an* in a high level of regard, as Christians do the Bible, though their conception is somewhat different from that of evangelical Protestants.... Muslims believe that Muhammad recorded by dictation the exact wording of an eternal document that exists in heaven. Thus only the Arabic is the true *Qur’an*....

Five articles of faith. Five articles form the major platform of belief for Islam.

1. **God:** The only true god is Allah. He alone is all-knowing and all-powerful. He is the sovereign judge. Muslims call Allah a god of grace, but in the works-righteousness of Islam, he acts most clearly as a god of judgment. All good or evil proceeds from Allah’s will.
2. **Angels:** Muslims believe the angel Gabriel dictated the revelation to Muhammad. There is a devil in Islamic belief and spirit beings (neither angels nor humans) that can be good or evil.
3. **Scripture:** The *Qur’an* supersedes the biblical Torah of Moses, the Psalms, and the Gospels.
4. **Prophets:** God has spoken through prophets in the past, including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. Muhammad, however, is the greatest of all.
5. **Last days:** “The last day will be a time of resurrection and judgment. Those who follow and obey Allah and Muhammad will go to the Islamic Paradise, a place of pleasure. Those who oppose them will be tormented in hell.”

187 Ibid., 186.

Five pillars of faith. The five pillars are observances that are basic to Islam and therefore are duties every Muslim is bound to observe.

1. *The creed:* “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah.”
2. *Prayer:* There are daily rituals at set times during which Muslims pray as one with all other Muslims everywhere.
3. *Almsgiving:* Muslims are required to give one-fortieth of their income for the destitute.
4. *Fasting:* During the holy month of Ramadan, faithful Muslims fast all day.
5. *Pilgrimage:* At least once in their lifetime, all Muslims, particularly men, must make a pilgrimage to Mecca. This is vital to gaining salvation.¹⁸⁸

Jehovah’s Witness

Authority. The source of authority for Jehovah’s Witnesses comes from their various publications rather than a formal doctrinal statement. They claim the Bible as their ultimate source of authority.

The Trinity. The biblical doctrine of the Trinity is denied and is believed to be a satanic effort to distract the lost from the truth about Jehovah and His Son Christ Jesus. Christ was a “god,” but not the Almighty God who is Jehovah. Christ the man is forever dead. He was a perfect human being.

The Holy Spirit is not a part of the godhead. Both the personality and deity of the Holy Spirit are denied.

Salvation. Salvation is by works. Sinners not only have to show their worthiness to have everlasting life, but they must also live a life of obedience. Jehovah’s Witnesses deny conscious eternal punishment for the unregenerate, but believe in a painless extinction for those not qualified for heaven.¹⁸⁹

188 Lightner, *The God of the Bible and Other Gods*, 188–89.

189 *Ibid.*, 190–91.

Alan Cairns in *Dictionary of Theological Terms*

Roman Catholic theology is the theological system of the Roman Catholic church, as set forth in her official creedal documents. Of these the *Decrees of the Council of Trent* and the *Documents of the Second Vatican Council* are the most influential.

Rome's theology revolves around her view of the magisterial power of the pope and the bishops. She makes the church the vehicle and judge of divine revelation. She has adopted a system of sacramental grace that necessitates the recognition of a special priestly hierarchy—i.e., grace can reach sinners through the sacraments which only consecrated priests have the power to administer. Rome's priesthood is a sacrificing priesthood, and the central act of her worship is the mass in which she claims to offer a true propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead. Along with this sacramentalism, Rome propounds a theory of synergism in which she has a highly developed theory of human merit. The effect of this is to produce a gospel of works, though Rome maintains that she teaches salvation by grace.

Central to the entire system of Roman Catholic theology is her view of authority. She claims to accept the entirety of Scripture, but to it she adds two things that effectively negate that claim:

First, she adds church tradition, which she claims to be apostolic but for which there is no support in the known words or actions of the apostles.

Second, she adds the church's authority to interpret Scripture so that it means what she determines it means. The result of all this is to establish Roman Catholic dogma on papal tradition and authority.

On such a basis almost anything except gospel purity is possible. Rome's departures from Bible Christianity are legion: her elevation of Mary to be co-Redemptrix and co-Mediatrix; her invocation of a multitude of saints (some of whom she now admits never existed); her blasphemous dogma of the mass; her teaching of transubstantiation; her rejection of justification by faith alone; her sacerdotalism; her theory of sacramental grace conferred *opus operatum*; her dogmas of human merit, works of supererogation; indulgences; and purgatory, as well as the entire system of the papacy—these are just some of the marks of her apostasy...

Roman Catholic theology is the antithesis of evangelical Protestantism. Rome rejects or seriously modifies every aspect of Biblical revelation evangelicals hold to be essential to the gospel. When we see Rome's departure from the faith on such fundamental matters as authority, the atonement of Christ, and man's acceptance with God, we can only conclude that her theology is not Christian, or even sub-Christian, but anti-Christian.¹⁹⁰

190 Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 387.

- Write a summary or outline of your answer to the questions, “How are these common errors manifested in the theology and practice of Mormonism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Catholicism, Hinduism, and Islam? What resource(s) would you use to learn more about these or other cults and false religions?”

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~20–30 MINUTES):

1. Briefly discuss any questions you have about apologetics and the specific questions you answered in this chapter.
2. Practice answering the following questions using only a Bible for reference:
 - Explain the different methods of doing apologetics. Defend the presuppositional approach.
 - What are some of the primary ways cults and false religions stray from biblical truth regarding God, divine revelation, Christ, and how one is made right with God? What Scriptures would you use to address these issues?
 - How are these common errors manifested in the theology and practice of Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Catholicism, Hinduism, and Islam? What resource(s) would you use to learn more about these or other cults and false religions?
3. Briefly review any of the following theology questions that would be helpful:
 - How can God be known?
 - Defend trinitarianism.
 - How would you respond to someone who says, "If God is love, then why do bad things happen to good people?"
 - How can you prove the deity of Jesus Christ?
 - Describe the incarnation and its significance.
 - What does the resurrection of Christ signify for the believer?
 - What Scriptures would you use to demonstrate the deity of the Holy Spirit?
 - What is the role of the Holy Spirit in conversion?
 - What does it mean to be baptized by the Holy Spirit?
 - What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit?
 - How would you respond to someone who argues that the charismatic/miraculous gifts are still active today?
 - On what basis do you believe the Bible to be a supernatural document?
 - Why do you believe the Bible to be closed, in that nothing should be added to the current sixty-six books?
 - Define the sufficiency of Scripture. What are the implications of this doctrine for everyday life?
 - Explain and defend the historical/grammatical method of hermeneutics.
 - What does it mean when the Bible says that man was created in the image of God? What differentiates man from animals?
 - Does man have a free will? Explain.
 - How would you defend the doctrine of inherited sin – that men are sinful not

only in their actions but also in their nature?

- Explain the concept of the flesh or the old nature. How is the Christian's relationship to the old man explained in Scripture?
- What must a person do to be saved? How is the Lordship of Christ tied to this discussion? Is repentance essential to conversion?
- Define and defend the doctrine of election.
- Define and defend the doctrine of the atonement.
- Define and defend the doctrine of regeneration.
- Define and defend the doctrine of justification.
- Define and defend the doctrine of sanctification.
- Define and defend the doctrine of preservation or perseverance.
- Define and defend the doctrine of glorification.
- What is the difference between elders and deacons?
- What is the proper process for church discipline? What circumstances or situations warrant beginning this process?
- What are the primary goals or purposes of the local church?
- What are the ordinances prescribed in the New Testament to the church? What is the proper way for administering these ordinances?
- Discuss the various rapture views: pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation, pre-wrath, and post-tribulation. Which view best fits the biblical data? Why?
- Give a general timeline of end-time events. Where are each of these events discussed in Scripture?
- Discuss the various millennial views: amillennialism, postmillennialism, premillennialism. Which view best fits the biblical data? Why?
- Define and defend the doctrines of heaven and hell, including the new heavens, the new earth, and the lake of fire.
- What is biblical counseling? What are the key components of a biblical counseling relationship/meeting(s)?
- What is the biblical process for change for a believer who is struggling with a sinful habit?
- What Scriptures and biblical principles might you use to help a believer who is suffering during difficult circumstances?
- What is the elder's role when asked questions with medical implications? With legal implications?

ELDER ORIENTATION

PART #1: LEADING WITH A PLURALITY OF ELDERS ***PHYSICALLY PROTECTING THE FLOCK***

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

While elders are primarily to be concerned for their congregation's spiritual health, it is also appropriate that they take steps to care for and protect their physical well-being.

The Old Testament law makes it clear that one aspect of loving others involves living in a reasonable manner so as to protect them and their property from harm (Exodus 21:12–22:15). For elders in a church context, this may involve addressing potential safety issues on the church campus or issues of accessibility for elderly or disabled people. Or it may involve being properly prepared for responding to crisis situations such as a fire or severe weather.

Paul exhorted the Ephesian elders in Acts 20 to “be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock... I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you....” Clearly, the primary focus of Paul was on protecting the flock from those infiltrating the church teaching false doctrine, but elders must be wary of and watchful for other threats as well. In the current day and age, this includes ensuring that appropriate policies and practices are in place for protecting minors and for responding to other potential threats.

PROACTIVE PROTECTION AND TRUSTING THE LORD

The Bible teaches two truths that must be kept in balance regarding protecting others.

1. Authorities have the responsibility to take reasonable steps to protect those entrusted to their care.
2. God is our ultimate protector and He, not human authorities, must be the source of our hope and confidence.

○ How do you see these truths reflected in the following verses:

- Nehemiah 4:7–23

- Psalm 127:1–2

- What happens when human authorities neglect one of these truths?

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Children are some of the most vulnerable in our wicked and fallen world. There are many ungodly people who would seek to influence them for evil and who would abuse them for their own pleasure. Such people often seek to infiltrate the church.

Parents and church leaders must actively seek to care for and protect the children God has entrusted to them. Deepak Reju writes,

“Protecting our children is a high calling given by God himself. To take this calling seriously, we must do more than just protect: we should love, cherish, and guide our children throughout their lives. This work should not be defensive or lackadaisical. At its best it will be proactive, loving, careful, and deliberate. Laziness and carelessness in shepherding of children opens the door for sexual perpetrators to take full advantage of our kids. Sexual offenders are on a quest for pleasure and don’t care about the destruction of lives they cause along the way....

Keep in mind, though, that no adult can *perfectly* protect kids from evil in this fallen world. ... A realistic perspective on life in a fallen world is not that we can perfectly protect our kids but that with wisdom, carefulness, and planning we can reduce the risk.”¹⁹¹

While elders cannot ensure the safety of minors in their church, they can actively seek to implement policies and practices to minimize risk. Such policies are typically summarized in a Child Protection Policy that includes guidelines regarding:

- who can serve with minors
- the supervision of minors
- the release of minors to parents or guardians
- the reporting of suspected abuse

¹⁹¹ Deepak Reju, *On Guard: Preventing and Responding to Child Abuse at Church* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2014), 15–16.

OTHER SAFETY THREATS

In addition to protecting minors, churches should take reasonable precautions and make plans for issues such as fire, severe weather, or threats of violence. Such precautions will certainly vary from church to church depending on size, location, and other factors. While elders may not be the primary responsible parties for developing such plans, they bear responsibility for the oversight of the church and so should actively participate in planning as needed and provide support for the implementation of such policies and practices.

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~15–20 MINUTES):

1. Discuss the questions from the Individual Preparation.
2. How should elders balance their responsibility for protecting the flock with God's sovereign control and care?
3. Discuss any policies or practices your church has in place to respond to:
 - Fire
 - Severe weather
 - Threats of violence

ELDER ORIENTATION

PART #2: FULFILLING THE ROLE OF AN ELDER

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

The primary functions of an elder are contained in the other biblical terms for that office – pastor and overseer. As pastors, elders are responsible for caring well for their flock. This includes every member of the congregation but involves special care and attention to those facing unique hardships, such as widows.

CARING FOR WIDOWS

In writing to Timothy about ministry in the church, Paul charged him to care well for widows. But his instruction included more than simply an admonition to care for them. It also included specific instructions for doing so in a manner that balances generosity with wise stewardship and the primary responsibility God has given to families to care for their own.

Read 1 Timothy 5:3–16.

- How should family members respond to the needs of a widow in their family?

- When should the church step in to provide ongoing support for a widow?

- What are some of the characteristics of a widow that are required in order to be given significant ongoing financial support?

- Besides financial support, how can a church care well for widows?

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~15–20 MINUTES):

1. Discuss the questions from the Individual Preparation.
2. Discuss any other policies, practices, or ministries your church has for caring for widows.
3. Who are some of the widows in your church? How is the church currently caring for them?

ELDER ORIENTATION

PART #3: DISPLAYING THE CHARACTER OF AN ELDER

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Consider the following biblical qualification of an elder:

- **Able to Teach**

1 Timothy 3:2 An overseer, then, must be above reproach...able to teach...

Titus 1:7-9 For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward...holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.

- Define this qualification in your own words.
- Why is this quality necessary for leadership as an elder?
- Do you believe you currently meet this qualification? Why or why not?
- How has your giftedness to teach been affirmed by others?

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~15-20 MINUTES):

1. Discuss the questions from the Individual Preparation.
2. What opportunities for teaching do you currently have?
3. How do you manage preparation for your teaching responsibilities to ensure you are faithfully teaching while not neglecting other priorities?
4. How can you continue to work to grow and develop as a teacher?

Chapter 12

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

- Review

SYSTEMATIC AND PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

- Review

ELDER ORIENTATION

- PART #1: LEADING WITH A PLURALITY OF ELDERS
Passing the Baton
- PART #2: FULFILLING THE ROLE OF AN ELDER
Review
- PART #3: DISPLAYING THE CHARACTER OF AN ELDER
Review

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Briefly review Bible Knowledge content from the previous chapters.

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~20–30 MINUTES):

1. Review any required memorized content from Genesis to Revelation.

SYSTEMATIC AND PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Briefly review all the questions you have answered in previous chapters, listed below. Go back and review your answer for any you still have questions about or do not feel equipped to defend or explain.

THEOLOGY PROPER

- How can God be known?
- Defend trinitarianism.
- How would you respond to someone who says, “If God is love, then why do bad things happen to good people?”

CHRISTOLOGY

- How can you prove the deity of Jesus Christ?
- Describe the incarnation and its significance.
- What does the resurrection of Christ signify for the believer?

PNEUMATOLOGY

- What Scriptures would you use to demonstrate the deity of the Holy Spirit?
- What is the role of the Holy Spirit in conversion?
- What does it mean to be baptized by the Holy Spirit?
- What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit?
- How would you respond to someone who argues that the charismatic/miraculous gifts are still active today?

BIBLIOLOGY

- On what basis do you believe the Bible to be a supernatural document?
- Why do you believe the Bible to be closed, in that nothing should be added to the current sixty-six books?
- Define the sufficiency of Scripture. What are the implications of this doctrine for everyday life?
- Explain and defend the historical/grammatical method of hermeneutics.

ANTHROPOLOGY/HAMARTIOLOGY

- What does it mean when the Bible says that man was created in the image of God? What differentiates man from animals?
- Does man have a free will? Explain.
- How would you defend the doctrine of inherited sin – that men are sinful not only in their actions but also in their nature?
- Explain the concept of the flesh or the old nature. How is the Christian's relationship to the old man explained in Scripture?

SOTERIOLOGY

- What must a person do to be saved? How is the Lordship of Christ tied to this discussion? Is repentance essential to conversion?
- Define and defend the doctrine of election.
- Define and defend the doctrine of the atonement.
- Define and defend the doctrine of regeneration.
- Define and defend the doctrine of justification.
- Define and defend the doctrine of sanctification.
- Define and defend the doctrine of preservation or perseverance.
- Define and defend the doctrine of glorification.

ECCLESIOLOGY

- What is the difference between elders and deacons?
- What is the proper process for church discipline? What circumstances or situations warrant beginning this process?
- What are the primary goals or purposes of the local church?
- What are the ordinances prescribed in the New Testament to the church? What is the proper way for administering these ordinances?

ESCHATOLOGY

- Discuss the various rapture views: pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation, pre-wrath, and post-tribulation. Which view best fits the biblical data? Why?
- Give a general timeline of end-time events. Where are each of these events discussed in Scripture?
- Discuss the various millennial views: amillennialism, postmillennialism, premillennialism. Which view best fits the biblical data? Why?
- Define and defend the doctrines of heaven and hell, including the new heavens, the new earth, and the lake of fire.

BIBLICAL COUNSELING

- What is biblical counseling? What are the key components of a biblical counseling relationship/meeting(s)?
- What is the biblical process for change for a believer who is struggling with a sinful habit?
- What Scriptures and biblical principles might you use to help a believer who is suffering during difficult circumstances?
- What is the elder's role when asked questions with medical implications? With legal implications?

APOLOGETICS

- Explain the different methods of doing apologetics. Defend the presuppositional approach.
- What are some of the primary ways cults and false religions stray from biblical truth regarding God, divine revelation, Christ, and how one is made right with God? What Scriptures would you use to address these issues?
- How are these common errors manifested in the theology and practice of Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Catholicism, Hinduism, and Islam? What resource(s) would you use to learn more about these or other cults and false religions?

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~20–30 MINUTES):

1. Practice responding to any of the above theology questions.

ELDER ORIENTATION

PART #1: LEADING WITH A PLURALITY OF ELDERS PASSING THE BATON

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION

Throughout Paul's ministry he was faithful to pour into future church leaders. Men like Timothy and Titus were equipped and encouraged by Paul. As he neared the end of his life and ministry, Paul recognized that he had faithfully passed the baton to these men, and he exhorted them to be faithful to pass it on to others. Nowhere is this clearer than in 2 Timothy 2:2, where Paul wrote, "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

Timothy had been entrusted with God's truth by Paul. This was the same truth Paul consistently taught "in the presence of many witnesses." It was not personal speculation but the authoritative revelation of God's Word. Timothy was to pass the baton, entrusting that truth to other faithful men. Faithful men who, able to teach, would in turn entrust the truth to other faithful men. And so, the baton would be passed for generations.

IDENTIFYING FAITHFUL MEN

In 2 Timothy 1:13–14, Paul charged Timothy to "retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you."

There is a standard of truth found in God's word that must be retained. There is a treasure of truth in God's word that must be guarded. Elders have a stewardship not only to protect and teach this truth, but also to intentionally pass it along to others who will continue that work long after they are gone.

What kind of person should be entrusted with such a treasure? In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul sums it up in one word: faithful. Not popular or exceptionally gifted. Not influential or having a charismatic personality. But faithful.

- Why is it critical to entrust the truth of God's word to faithful men? How can such men be identified?

Elders must be on the lookout for faithful men. Men who demonstrate consistent, Christ-like character and who are faithful to lead and shepherd their families. Men who are faithful to prioritize and serve in the church. Men who are faithful to study, meditate on, and apply God's word.

In addition to being faithful, Paul urges Timothy to entrust the truth to those who are “able to teach others also.” All men have influence and should be faithfully instructing others such as their children. So all men need to understand and treasure the truth of God's word. But, if the church is to retain sound doctrine and guard the treasure of God's word for generations, it requires gifted men to clearly and faithfully teach that truth week after week.

Therefore, elders must not only find faithful men, but must prioritize entrusting God's word to faithful men who are able to teach, whether in one-on-one discipleship, small group discussion, or more formal teaching or preaching. This also requires intentionally equipping men to teach, evaluating their giftedness, and providing opportunities for those who are faithful and able to teach to develop and grow.

- What opportunities does your church have for men to be equipped to teach and to have their giftedness to teach affirmed?

- What will happen over the long-term if a church fails to identify and equip teachers beyond those who currently regularly teach?

INVESTING IN FAITHFUL MEN

Elders have a responsibility to teach and shepherd every individual in their church. But they cannot possibly devote equal time and energy to all. Part of the job description of an elder is equipping faithful men to be future leaders, which requires a greater investment. Jesus Himself modeled this approach to ministry. He was faithful to minister to the multitudes, but he also focused on training his disciples and particularly on investing in those who would be the leaders among them.

But often, men are intentionally sent from the church for the sake of the kingdom. In Acts 13:1–3, the church at Antioch sent out Paul and Barnabas, two exceptional leaders who would be dearly missed. The church prayed for and supported them as they traveled proclaiming Christ and establishing and strengthening churches.

Sending out faithful men is costly for the church. Men who would be useful in the local congregation are sent out for the good of others. It is easy for many churches to focus simply on their own health rather than on the building up of Christ's kingdom throughout their Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and even to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

- Why might a church be hesitant to send out faithful men to minister elsewhere?

- Why is training future leaders so important if the church is to be faithful in sending men out?

- How can church leadership balance the desire to maintain healthy local church leadership within their own church with the desire to send out men to minister elsewhere?

Many trained elders will remain at your church, faithfully ministering for years or decades. But others will be sent out to other churches through job changes or for the sake of intentional church planting or strengthening in surrounding areas. And still others should be sent out to establish churches where there are none, even in areas where the gospel is not yet known. This requires a love for the universal church, not just the local one. And it requires a commitment to investing in faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. It is also one of the greatest joys of church leadership—that of seeing ministry for the sake of Christ multiplied and expanded for His glory.

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~15–20 MINUTES):

1. Discuss the questions from the Individual Preparation.
2. How do your elders identify potential future elders and other future ministry leaders (deacons, missionaries, etc.)? How do you seek to invest in and equip them?
3. How can elders balance ministry to the entire congregation with the intentional focus on training faithful men?

ELDER ORIENTATION

PART #2: FULFILLING THE ROLE OF AN ELDER

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

The primary functions of an elder are contained in the other biblical terms for that office – pastor and overseer. Elders are responsible to provide oversight to the church and to shepherd the flock. Review the following practical functions of an elder you have considered in previous chapters:

- Regularly participating in elder meetings
 - Providing ministry oversight
 - Teaching God’s Word
 - Praying for the church
 - Visiting the sick
 - Stewarding God’s resources
 - Caring for the needy
 - Confronting sin and practicing church discipline
 - Evangelism and contacting new people
 - Discipleship
 - Caring for widows
- How has your understanding of these responsibilities grown in recent months?
- What questions, if any, do you have about these responsibilities?
- What additional opportunities or training in these areas would be helpful before becoming an elder?

MENTOR DISCUSSION (~15–20 MINUTES):

1. Discuss the questions from the Individual Preparation.
2. What most excites you about potentially fulfilling the role of an elder?
3. What is most intimidating to you about potentially fulfilling the role of an elder?

ELDER ORIENTATION

PART #3: DISPLAYING THE CHARACTER OF AN ELDER

INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION:

Review the qualifications for elders in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

1 Timothy 3:1–7 It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Titus 1:5–9 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.

- Which character qualities would you and others identify as strengths in your life?



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