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Class Covenant

I covenant with my fellow group members to:

- **Be There and Be On Time**
I will do my best to come prepared—Scripture read, verses memorized and study completed.
- **Be Accepting**
I will love you as a brother/sister in Christ, accepting you for who you are and where you are in your spiritual journey—but encouraging you to grow.
- **Be Confidential**
I will keep whatever is shared here confidential.
- **Be Accountable**
I give permission to the other group members to hold me accountable to the commitments I've made.
- **Be Honest**
I will be candid, vulnerable, and transparent.
- **Be Praying**
I commit to praying for the individuals in my group.
- **Be Ready**
I will anticipate a time of accelerated spiritual growth and transformation during this period of discipleship.

I commit to this covenant:

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Character Traits of a Follower of Jesus

Primary Objective: To consider the relationship between faith, obedience, character, and love.

- 1.) Warm-up:
 - a.) What does it mean have the character and priorities of Jesus?
 - b.) What contemporary person would you like to emulate? Why?

- 2.) God is to be loved and sought after with one's whole heart, body, mind, and soul. Read Jeremiah 29:11-14a and Deuteronomy 6:4-6; 10:12-13—and comment. What personal applications can you make for practical, daily living?

- 3.) People are to be loved because God loves people. Loving others is the second greatest commandment (Matthew 22:36-38).
 - a.) How does a godly person demonstrate compassion for others?
 - b.) Read the following passages and write down some principles for treating others with compassion: Romans 13:9b-10, Philippians 2:3-5.

- 4.) God is to be believed and obeyed.
 - a.) What links faith and obedience in a godly person's life? How have you demonstrated faith and obedience recently? Give several examples.
 - b.) Read the following passages and comment on the relationship of faith and obedience in living a godly life: Ecclesiastes 12:13, Hebrews 11:1-6, James 2:19.

- 5.) Humility is necessary for godliness.
 - a.) Why is humility an essential character quality for a godly person? Can you think of a great person who is/was also humble? How does/did his life demonstrate humility?
 - b.) Read Philippians 2:5-11 and I Peter 5:6-7—and comment on the importance of humility and how it should manifest itself in your life.

- 6.) Wisdom is crucial for discernment in matters of faith, love, obedience, and humility. What are the lessons of Proverbs 1:20-33?

God, the Father

Primary Objective: To improve our “theology”—our understanding of God.

- 1.) Warm-up:
 - a.) How do you imagine God? What things have influenced your understanding of God the Father? In particular, how has your relationship with your father affected your view of God?
 - b.) Identify a characteristic or name of God, beginning with each letter of the alphabet.
- 2.) Read the following passages and identify the picture of God given there. What is striking about each of these pictures?
 - a.) I John 3:1; Ephesians 1:5
 - b.) Isaiah 33:22
 - c.) Jeremiah 3:20, II Corinthians 11:2, Revelation 19:7-8
 - d.) Exodus 34:6-7
 - e.) II Samuel 22:2-3
- 3.) God reveals Himself through a variety of means. Read the following passages and describe how God revealed Himself through...
 - a.) history—Exodus 3:6,14; Deuteronomy 4:7-8
 - b.) creation/nature—Genesis 1:1, Job 12:7-9, Psalm 19:1-4a, Acts 17:24-28, Romans 1:18-20
 - c.) conscience—Romans 2:14-15
 - d.) Christ & His word (more later!)
- 4.) Let’s wrestle with some common religious terms.
 - a.) Define “holiness”.
 - b.) Identify as many categories of sin as you can. List a few notable examples in each category.
 - c.) Define salvation. In what ways does God “save” us?
- 5.) Read the following verses and comment.
 - a.) on God’s salvation—Romans 4:2-5, 5:8; John 1:12-13; Ephesians 2:8-9
 - b.) on our response to God’s offer—Hebrews 11:6, 4:14-16, Ephesians 2:10
 - c.) on the Old & New covenants—Hebrews 8:6-13
- 6.) Now having a better understanding of God the Father, how will this impact your daily life?

God, the Son

Primary Objective: To develop a greater understanding of the ministry of Christ

- 1.) Warm-up:
 - a.) What comes to mind when you think of Jesus? His “ministry”? His impact on your life?
 - b.) Jesus Christ was both fully human and fully divine. Why does that matter?
- 2.) Read the following verses and comment on the implications.
 - a.) John 14:6-11, Hebrews 1:1-3a
 - b.) Luke 7:48-49, Hebrews 7:23-27
 - c.) Philippians 2:5-8, Hebrews 2:10
- 3.) What did Jesus Christ accomplish for us? Read the following verses and comment.
 - a.) with respect to justification—John 14:6, Romans 5:1,8
 - b.) with respect to the Law—Matthew 5:17
 - c.) with respect to abundant life—John 10:10, Romans 5:10,17, 6:4-13
- 4.) On your own, compare and contrast the first and second comings of Christ. Then read the following passages to supplement your answer: II Thessalonians 1:6-9, II Peter 3:9-13, Revelation 19:11-21.
- 5.) After focusing on the person of Jesus Christ this week, in what ways will you more readily depend on and follow Him on a daily basis?

God, the Holy Spirit

Primary Objective: To more fully understand the Spirit and His ability to help us live the Christian life.

- 1.) Warm-up:
 - a.) How do you picture the Holy Spirit?
- 2.) Define “sanctification”. Read II Corinthians 3:18, Phil 2:12b-13, and I Timothy 4:15 to supplement your answer.
- 3.) Most everything in the Christian life is accomplished through God’s provision and our participation.
 - a.) What are the implications of this partnership (recall Ephesians 2:10)?
 - b.) What are the tensions in relying too much on either part of this combination?
 - c.) Read the following verses and comment on how you balance the combination: I Corinthians 15:10, Galatians 3:2-3, Philippians 4:13, Colossians 1:29.
- 4.)
 - a.) Would you rather have Jesus ministering to you as he did to the disciples—or would you rather have the Holy Spirit living within you? By analogy, would you prefer 20 golf lessons from Tiger Woods (assuming he’s as good of a teacher as he is a golfer)—or for Tiger to play golf from within you? Why?
 - b.) What did Jesus say on this topic? Read John 14:16-20, 16:5-15—and comment.
 - c.) Read Romans 8:1-17. Comment on what Paul said about the Spirit-filled life.
 - d.) What are the implications of the Spirit living in us? Read the following verses and comment: John 7:37-39, Acts 1:7-8, Romans 8:26-27, 14:17-18, I Corinthians 2:9-16, 6:19-20, 12:13, Galatians 5:16-26, Ephesians 1:13-14, II Timothy 1:7.
- 5.) How can we limit the Spirit? Read Ephesians 5:18, 4:30 and I Thessalonians 5:19 to supplement your answer.
- 6.) What truths about the Holy Spirit have impacted you the most? How will they affect your daily life?

Truth

Application

Practical

- A.) _____
- B.) _____
- C.) _____

Bible I: Intro/Overview of Scripture

Primary Objective: To learn methods & tools for understanding & learning the word of God.

- 1.) Warm-up:
 - a.) What are some of the purposes that the Bible serves?
 - b.) Why is the accuracy/reliability of the Bible important?
 - c.) What are some of the barriers you face in reading and studying the Bible?
- 2.) How do we know that the Bible is reliable? Read the following verses to supplement your answer: Matthew 12:40, I Thessalonians 2:13, II Timothy 2:15, 3:16a.
- 3a.) Read Psalm 119:9-16, 33-40, 89-96, 97-105, and write down some of the phrases that note the intrinsic value of Scripture.
- b.) Scripture is an exceptionally useful tool for guiding our lives. Read the following verses and comment: Deuteronomy 6:6-9, Psalm 1:1-3, Acts 17:11, II Timothy 3:14-17, Hebrews 5:11-6:3, James 1:22-25.
- c.) Scripture—as the written Word of God—possesses an intrinsic power. Read the following verses and comment: Isaiah 55:10-11, Jeremiah 23:29, Matthew 22:29, Ephesians 6:17, Hebrews 4:12-13.
- d.) The written Word reveals the living Word—the Son of God. What is an important implication that comes from Luke 24:27,32?
- e.) What are the limits/dangers of using the written word? Supplement your answer by commenting on John 5:39-40 and I Corinthians 8:1b.
- 4.) Compare Matthew 11:28-30 with Matthew 16:21-24—both the tone and the substance of the requirements. What is noteworthy about the difference in the audiences to whom Jesus was speaking (11:7, 16:24)?
- 5.) Are you a daily/frequent student of God’s word? If not, why not?

How to read/study the Bible

Tools: prayer/Spirit, translation/paraphrases, study Bibles, concordances, commentaries

Methods: read vs. study; underline and write notes in the margin

Within study: using observation, interrogation, interpretation, and application

- a.) Watch context and literary style.
- b.) Watch for verb tenses (e.g., Eph 1:3) and signal words (e.g., “therefore”; Eph 4:1).
- c.) Imagine what could have been different: What was (not) said/done?
- d.) Look for insights into God’s character and life applications.

Whatever you do, just do it (James 1:22)! Remember that many of the saints of old couldn’t read and didn’t have Bibles or sophisticated study tools. The far larger issue is studying to enhance your love for God, your devotion to Christ, the empowering of the Spirit, and your ability to love and serve others. Without that, you’re wasting your time!

Bible II: Old Testament—Law, History, Poetry, Prophecy

Primary Objective: To study these forms of Biblical literature in general and a number of Biblical passages in particular.

- 1.) Warm-up:
 - a.) If we are “free from the law”, why do we care about the Law (e.g., the Ten Commandments)?
 - b.) Why does the Old Testament contain so many “stories” and why did Christ use parables so often when he taught?
 - c.) What is prophecy? Why is it important that prophecy is accurate?
 - d.) Why did God include “wisdom literature” and poetry in the Bible?

- 2a.) In light of God’s grace through Christ, what purpose does the Law serve today? Read Matthew 22:36-40, Romans 3:20, and Galatians 3:24 to supplement your answer.
- b.) On the use of history and stories to communicate truths, read the following verses and comment: Romans 15:4 and I Corinthians 10:11.
- c.) What roles did/do prophets serve? Read the following verses to supplement your answer: Isaiah 6:8-13, Amos 3:7, II Peter 1:20-21.

- 3.) “Cities of refuge” are one interesting feature of the Law.
 - a.) Read Joshua 20 for background and Deuteronomy 19:4-7, 11-13 to distinguish between the sorts of acts for which these cities were set aside. Write down key points.
 - b.) What do cities of refuge tell us about the character of God? Read the following verses and use them to supplement your answer: Genesis 9:6, Exodus 21:12-14, Isaiah 40:10-11.
 - c.) In what ways do cities of refuge point to the person of Christ? Read the following verses and use them to supplement your answer: Romans 8:1, Acts 4:12, I Timothy 2:5, Psalm 46:1, Hebrews 10:11-12.

- 4.) Read chapters 1-3 and 11 in Hosea.
 - a.) What does God’s direction for Hosea’s ministry in chapter 1 tell us about His character?
 - b.) What does 2:1-13 say about the way God views our (persistent) sin?
 - c.) What does the rest of the reading say about the character of God?

- 5.) Write out a personalized version of Psalm 23. (For example, one might open by re-phrasing it “The Lord is my leader and my guide.”)

Bible III: New Testament—Gospel, Acts, Apocalyptic

Primary Objective: To gain an understanding of the composition of the New Testament.

- 1.) Warm-up:
 - a.) Why are there four gospels?
 - b.) What is the purpose of the gospels and Acts? What is the purpose of the epistles? What is the purpose of Revelation?
- 2.) Acts 15 relates what is arguably the most important event in church history—the Council at Jerusalem around 50 AD. Read it and answer the following questions:
 - a.) What is the key issue according to 15:1-2? What all was at stake here?
 - b.) What is important about the details in 15:3-18? In particular, who does Luke quote and discuss in this passage—and why?
 - c.) What is noteworthy about their decision (substance) and the execution of that decision (style) in 15:19-31? In particular, why did they choose those prohibitions? And why not drop all the prohibitions or why not add a few more?
 - d.) Are these prohibitions relevant today? What principles could you apply—and what assumptions could you make—to answer that question?
 - e.) What are some of the many reasons why “the people were glad for its encouraging message” (15:31)?
- 3.) The book of Philemon—a short letter written by Paul—is one of the Bible’s “postcards”. Read it before answering the following questions:
 - a.) What is the substance of Paul’s argument/letter?
 - b.) Find and note as many interesting style considerations as you can. In other words, in what ways is Paul strategic and even delicate in writing the letter? What are the applications for us?
 - c.) How might Philemon feel, think and respond after reading the letter? How desirable would Paul find those outcomes?
 - d.) Why is this book in the Bible?
- 4.) Revelation is the NT’s primary example of apocalyptic literature (see: Isaiah 34:2-7 for an OT example). As a sample, read Revelation 13 and answer the following:
 - a.) In broad terms, along a spectrum, what is the difference between reading this chapter as literal vs. more figurative?
 - b.) Assuming a somewhat figurative reading, describe some of the characteristics of the key players and nominate some candidates for each role.
 - c.) How would John’s readers have interpreted this? How would other audiences, since then, have interpreted all this? Why is that interesting and important?

Biblical Fellowship, Unity, Managing Conflict

Primary Objective: To define the elements of biblical fellowship and identify methods to accomplish it; to define biblical unity and describe the character traits and actions which promote unity; to identify strategies for identifying, avoiding and resolving conflict.

1.) Warm-up:

- a.) Define biblical fellowship. What traits are needed to engage in effective fellowship?
- b.) What are some counterfeits of Biblical fellowship? What are some barriers to fellowship?
- c.) Define unity. How is it different from unanimity? Is unity always good? Are there times to pursue disunity?
- d.) What are the potential outcomes for conflict and confrontation? What characteristics allow success in conflict and confrontation?

2.) Acts 2:42-47 (4:32-37) describes fellowship in the early church.

- a.) To what activities were the believers “devoted”? What is important about each aspect?
- b.) The “one anothers” of Scripture are numerous. List the “one anothers” of Romans 12:10,16a, Galatians 6:2, Ephesians 4:2, 4:32, 5:21, and I Thessalonians 4:18.
- c.) What does Paul say will develop vs. kill fellowship in Philippians 2:1-4, I Corinthians 3:2-3?

3.) Among other reasons, we know that unity is important because it was the last thing Christ prayed about for the disciples and the first thing Paul discusses in the application portion of his letter to the Ephesians (after his opening charge to them in Ephesians 4:1).

- a.) Why is *proper* unity so important? Read John 17:20-23, Psalm 133, Ecclesiastes 4:8-12, and Philippians 2:1-2—and comment.
- b.) What are the attitudes (and implied actions) required for pursuing appropriate unity in Ephesians 4:2-3? Why? How are these effective? Read Romans 12:18, Philippians 2:3-8, Colossians 3:12-17 to supplement your answer.

4a.) What does it mean to judge someone or something? What does Matthew 7:1-6 mean?

- b.) What does it mean to practice tolerance? Should Christians have different levels of tolerance for fellow believers vs. non-Christians? Read I Corinthians 5:9-13 and comment.
- c.) In this context, what constitutes “true friendship”? Read Proverbs 17:17, 27:5-6, 27:17, 28:23, John 15:13, Luke 7:34 and comment.
- d.) In this context, what constitutes good parenting? Read Proverbs 23:13-14 Ephesians 6:4, Hebrews 12:5-11 and comment.

5a.) What character traits and strategies are important for managing conflict well? Read Matthew 5:23-24, 18:15-17, Romans 12:17-21, Galatians 6:1-2, II Timothy 4:2 and comment on the relevant details.

- b.) Read Judges 6:25-35 which occurs after God calls Gideon, but before he takes on the Midianites. Among other things, explain why God wanted Gideon to do this; what made the task so difficult; and what is amazing—but perhaps not so surprising—about his father’s response. What are the applications for us?
 - c.) In what areas do you need to confront someone? Where should you stay silent?
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The Tongue: Life/Death Words

Primary Objective: To consider the power of the tongue—for good and for evil—and to develop strategies for harnessing it.

1.) Warm up:

- a.) Do you have more trouble with speech sins of omission (not saying things you should say) or commission (saying things you shouldn't)? In what specific areas do you fall short?
- b.) What are (have been) your strategies for mastering the tongue?

2a.) Words related to the tongue appear often in Proverbs, a book of practical wisdom—"words" (34x in the NIV), "lips" (37x), "mouth" (35x), and "tongue" (23x). Read Proverbs 10:11,19, 12:18, 15:1, 18:21, 20:15 to comment on the different aspects & outcomes of a good/bad tongue.

b.) Read Matthew 12:33-37. What is the connection between the mouth and the heart? To what extent is this not true?

3.) James 3:1-12 teaches us much about the tongue.

- a.) What is the connection between leadership and the tongue in 3:1?
- b.) What word pictures does James use to describe the power of the tongue in verses 3-8? What do we learn about the tongue from these examples?
- c.) In verses 9-12, James begins with a new group of illustrations to describe the duplicity of the tongue. What are his points? How do you see these principles in the lives of others? In your own life?

4a.) As one component of Paul's illustrations of Ephesians 4:22-24's old/new self, he speaks to the tongue in 4:29. What two categories of speech sin does Paul address? Why is the last half of the verse so important?

b.) What are the implications of Ephesians 4:26 for the heart and the tongue? (Among other things, is anger always sinful?)

c.) Read Ephesians 5:4. From this verse, in your own words, what things are not allowed to come out of our mouths? What are the tensions in interpreting and applying this verse?

5a.) What is the 9th Commandment? How is that different from lying? What is the difference between a "lying tongue" and any given lie? Read Exodus 1:15-21, Joshua 2:1-7, Proverbs 6:16-19, John 8:44 to supplement your answer.

b.) How does lying connect to exaggeration (recall Acts 5:1-11) and failing to follow through on commitments? What's the difference between flattery (see: Proverbs 29:5, 28:23) and encouragement (recall Ephesians 4:29)?

c.) Define "gossip." In particular, how is gossip distinguished from merely talking about someone else? In what ways is gossip damaging? In addition, read Proverbs 26:20-22 and I Timothy 5:13 and comment.

d.) Matthew Henry has said that with God, His word and action are one — but with us, they are often unrelated. How do you do with keeping the commitments you've made?

Evangelism: Living and Sharing the Gospel

Primary Objective: To identify different means of “sharing the good news”—whether by word or deed; to equip DC’ers with the passion and the tools for sharing the good news verbally.

1.) Warm up:

- a.) What is “the Gospel”?
- b.) What are your strategies for verbally sharing the Gospel?
- c.) What is the difference between verbal evangelism and lifestyle evangelism? Which one is more important? Why?

2a.) What is one key to sharing our faith according to Luke 19:10, Romans 9:3, 10:1?

- b.) What are the principles and limits of I Corinthians 9:19-22 for evangelism? Name some specific applications for your own life and witness.
- c.) Read Psalm 23:6, Matthew 5:13-16, Acts 4:13-17, Colossians 4:5-6, I Peter 2:11-12 and comment.

3a.) According to I Corinthians 15:1-11, what is the Gospel?

- b.) What are some other aspects of “the good news”? Read John 10:10, 15:11, 16:13 to stir up some ideas.

4a.) What is one of the keys to sharing our faith according to Jeremiah 20:9, Luke 19:39-40, Acts 4:18-20?

- b.) What are the implications of Romans 1:20, Romans 2:14-15 and Ecclesiastes 3:11 for evangelism?

5.) It has been said that Isaiah was largely called to a “hardening ministry”. Read Isaiah 6:6-10 and define that term. How does it relate to us?

6a.) Write out your testimony about how you were “saved”—your life before Christ, how you came to Christ, and your life since Christ.

- b.) What are two or three other aspects of your testimony that have been critical to your walk with Christ and may be useful in relating aspects of the Gospel to Christians &/or non-Christians?

Work/Career: Priorities and Perspective

Primary Objective: To discuss our “career goals”—in particular, what God would have for our work; to develop the proper priority with our work—and to find ways to redeem our work for the Kingdom of God.

1.) Warm-up:

a.) What is your dream occupation? Why?

b.) Two errors we can make with our work are to over-emphasize it or to overemphasize it. Which do you struggle with more?

2a.) What can we infer from the fact that God gave Adam work before the Fall (Genesis 2:15)? What did the Fall do to work (Genesis 3:17-19)?

b.) What can we infer about work from the fact that we are created in the image of a Creator God (Genesis 1:26,28)?

c.) In addition to the above, we know that work is commanded, and thus, is in our best interests. In what ways is work good for us and others? What is the connection between work ethic and spiritual health? Read I Thessalonians 4:11-12 to supplement your answer.

d.) Paul was passionate about combining “tent-making” with his ministry. Why? What are the advantages today in our tent-making?

3a.) Why do Christians under-emphasize work? What problems does this cause? How much do you struggle with laziness and procrastination? Read Proverbs 6:9-11, 10:4, 18:9 and comment.

b.) What are the causes of an over-emphasis on work? What are the problems that result? In addition, compare and contrast Ecclesiastes 2:17-23,26b vs. 2:24-26a.

4a.) What attitudes should we have in the workplace?

b.) What actions and character traits should we display in the workplace?

Personal Finances and Biblical Stewardship

Primary Objective: To briefly some of the key principles for effective personal finances and biblical stewardship—to effectively use our time, talent and treasure to serve God and love others.

1.) Warm up:

- a.) Do you know someone who has a lot of stuff but is not content? Do you know someone who has little, but is content? How would your life and attitude change if your household income was one-third lower?
- b.) Define biblical stewardship.
- c.) In what ways does your faith influence your stewardship?

2.) Read 1 Timothy 6:6-11

- a.) In what ways does 6:6's "godliness with contentment" bring great gain to our lives?
- b.) What is the point of 6:7-8? How does this mindset help Job (Job 1:20-22)?
- c.) Describe some of the temptations/traps, ruin/destruction, and griefs implied in 6:9-10.
- d.) On one hand, 6:10a is often misquoted and misunderstood; on the other hand, we don't want to ignore this vital observation. Analyze it in detail and share some of your insights.
- e.) Why does Paul wrap up his thoughts here with 6:11-12?

3a.) What are the implications of Proverbs 6:6-11, 10:4, 12:24, 13:4, 15:19, 22:13? In practical terms, what all is at stake?

b.) What are the implications of Proverbs 22:7? What are the causes and consequences of this state?

4a.) As opposed to the dangers of wealth earlier in the chapter, what does Paul say about the opportunities for wealth in I Timothy 6:17-19?

b.) Three times in I Timothy 5, Paul uses the phrase "really in need" (5:3,5,16). What are the implications of this phrase? How does one reconcile this with Matthew 25:31-46? In what ways do we see these principles implicitly at work in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)?

c.) What are the key principles identified in Psalm 24:1 and II Corinthians 9:7? Why are these so important?

Dealing with temptation: Who's the enemy? What's the plan?

Primary Objective: To identify our “enemies” and their methods for impeding our walk with Christ; to wrestle with both carnal and spiritual sin and to discuss the ways in which we can be victorious over temptation, especially by “putting on the armor of God”.

1.) Warm-up:

- a.) Which one causes you more trouble—your “sin nature”, the devil, or “the world”?
- b.) What problems do we face when we over-estimate the devil? Under-estimate him?
- c.) What are some examples of “carnal” sin and spiritual sin? Which are more dangerous?

2a.) What is temptation? Is temptation a form of sin—yes, no, or depends on the context? Compare/contrast temptation, testing and trials.

- b.) Read Psalm 139:23-24, I Timothy 6:9, Hebrews 4:15, James 1:13-15 and comment.
- c.) What is “sin nature”? Read Romans 7:14-25, Galatians 5:16-21 to supplement your answer.
- d.) Complete a word study on “the world” (“kozmos” in the Greek). Identify the three different meanings of the word” and categorize its use” in I Peter, II Peter, and I John.
- e.) In what senses is “the world” both a problem and an opportunity for Christians? Read Philippians 2:14-16, I Peter 2:11-12 and comment.

3a.) What/who is the devil? Read Revelation 12:7-9 (Isaiah 14:12-15, Ezekiel 28:11-19) about his early history, Revelation 12:10 (Job 2:3-5, Zechariah 3:1-2) for one of his strategies, and Genesis 3:1-5 for another of his strategies. In addition, read John 8:44, II Corinthians 4:3-4, and I Peter 5:8 to supplement your answer.

- b.) What animals are used to depict him in Scripture? Why were these animals chosen?
- c.) How does the devil rely on our “sin nature” and “the world” to further his agenda? Read John 17:15, Ephesians 4:26-27, 6:11, I John 2:15-17, 5:19 to add to your answer. How is this evidenced in the stories in Genesis 3:1-7, Matthew 4:1-11, and Matthew 13:3-9,18-23?

4a.) In terms of our relationship with God, what should we do after we sin? How should we view ourselves after we have sinned, etc.? Read Psalm 32:1-7, I Jn 1:9 to supplement your answer.

- b.) Proverbs 4:14-15, I Corinthians 6:18-20 and I Timothy 6:11-12 underline one strategy for dealing with sin and temptation. Describe its merits and limitations.
- c.) What is the role of “fences” in dealing with sin and temptation? What are their limits?
- d.) What is the role of “a good offense” in playing good defense? Recall the story in II Samuel 11; remember Galatians 5:16; and read Ephesians 4:22-32 to supplement your answer.
- e.) In Ephesians 6:11-14, as opposed to “fleeing” sin, Paul uses the word “stand” four times in describing the optimal approach to spiritual warfare. What does “stand” imply? How should this principle color the way we view our battles?

5a.) Paul addresses “the armor of God” in Ephesians 6:10-20. He opens by twice exhorting the Ephesians to “put on the full armor of God”. How can you “put on” this armor?

- b.) What is interesting about the verb tenses attached to the first three elements of the armor, especially in contrast to the verbs that follow?
 - c.) Examine each piece of the armor and share thoughts about the seven pieces of armor.
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Dating/Courtship, Sexual Morality, and Marriage

Primary Objective: To discuss Biblical principles with respect to marriage and preparation for marriage; to establish a biblical vision for the glorious marriages to which God has called His church.

1.) Warm-up:

- a.) What are the keys to a successful marriage?
- b.) What are the goals of dating and courtship? What are the differences in the methods?
- c.) Avoiding sexual immorality (Matthew 15:19, Ephesians 5:3) requires good theology and self-discipline. What could one believe about God to assist in this goal? What strategies would you recommend to assist in this goal?

2a.) What two points are addressed in Hebrews 11:6—on the theology required to walk with God?

- b.) Look back through your answers to last week's question 2 and find the most relevant principles and verses to deal with sexual temptation.
- c.) Look back through your answers to last week's question 4 and find the most relevant strategies and verses to deal with sexual temptation.
- d.) Look back through your answers to last week's question 5 and find the most relevant components of the armor of God to deal with sexual temptation.

3a.) Sometimes, people will ask whether they should tithe from their gross income or their net (after-tax) income. In one sense, that's a good sense. But in another sense, it's "the wrong question". In the context of sexual activity outside of marriage, people will sometimes ask "how far can I go"? Why is that "the wrong question"?

- b.) What is the connection between thoughts and actions in this realm? Read Matthew 5:27-30 and James 1:13-15 and comment.
- c.) What do Ephesians 5:3 and Job 31:1 add to the picture?

4a.) Read Ephesians 5:21 and define "submit". Read Philippians 2:3-8 to supplement your answer.

- b.) Read Ephesians 5:22-25 and define/describe "head".
 - c.) What does headship/leadership say about the dignity of those being led? Read Galatians 3:28, I Corinthians 11:3 to supplement your answer.
 - d.) What are the two general types of poor leadership? What does inappropriate/ineffective leadership look like—in marriage or elsewhere?
 - e.) What behaviors should result from good leadership? What are the responsibilities of those being led?
 - f.) How can one lead and submit at the same time? What could that look like within marriage?
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An Overview of Key Themes in Genesis 1-3

Primary Objective: To look at the foundational passage of the Bible and what it says about God, Creation, mankind, choice, sin, grace, relationships, etc.

- 1a.) It's been said that if you can believe Genesis 1:1, it's easy to believe the rest of the Scriptures. Why is this verse so huge?
 - b.) For a comprehensive explanation of the origins and the development of life without a Creator God one must make three (very) difficult assumptions about: how everything got started; how life began; and how life developed. What do you know about what materialists/atheists say about these three? Which is the easiest/toughest to believe?
 - c.) How does 1:2-3 serve as an analogy to God's activity with people and the call to us to do the same? Name a biblical story that illustrates this principle.
 - d.) What is fitting about light being created out of darkness as God's first specific act of creation?
- 2.) How long was the first "day" (1:5b)? A word study of "day" (Hebrew "yom") will probably make your answer less than crystal clear. How long is the "day" of Genesis 1:5a, 2:2-3, 2:4 (not in NIV), 2:17 (not in NIV), Exodus 13:10, Joshua 10:12-14, 13:13, Isaiah 11:10-11, Ezekiel 4:9, Zechariah 14:8? (See also: 1:24-31 & 2:15-22's "busy day"; Habakkuk 3:6, II Peter 3:5.)
- 3a.) What does "make man in our image" (1:26) mean? What are some of the many implications of this?
 - b.) What does the call of 1:26,28 mean and not mean for us today?
 - c.) What is important about noting that 2:15 occurs before the Fall in chapter 3?
 - d.) Why is it important that 2:18-20 follows 2:15?
 - e.) What is the first institution arranged by God in 2:24?
- 4a.) Why did God take seven days—vs. an instant—to create everything? What are the implications?
- b.) God is called Elohim (emphasizing His power and sovereignty) in chapter 1's account and Yahweh (the personal/covenant name of God) in chapter 2's account. How is God portrayed differently in the two accounts? What are the implications?
 - c.) What is interesting about the combination of "ingredients" used to make man in 2:7?
- 5a.) Why didn't God put a fence around the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?
- b.) What are the elements of Satan's strategy in 3:1-5?
 - c.) What is the anatomy of sin in 3:6a?
 - d.) What are the candidates for "original sin"? What is the significance of "silence of Adam" in 3:6b?
 - e.) How would you have wanted the conversation to go in 3:9-13?
 - f.) What are some of the results of original sin?
 - g.) What is fitting about God's response in 3:21 to their supposed remedy in 3:7?
 - h.) How is grace evident in 3:22's new prohibition?

Liberty and Legalism

Primary Objective: To wrestle with the tension between liberty and legalism—in our relationship with God and others.

Warm-up:

1a.) What is mercy? What is grace? In what ways does God extend grace to us?
b.) Do you struggle more with libertinism (abusing grace) or legalism (ignoring grace)? Do you think libertinism or legalism is a bigger problem for the Evangelical church today? Why?

2a.) What does Romans 5:20-6:2 (Romans 6:15) tell us about how Paul’s audience might perceive the strength of the grace that Paul preached?
b.) Is it smart for a Christian to abuse grace? Would it be smart to avoid relationship with God if you knew you could have a death-bed conversion? Why? Read Psalm 119:35,45,111,130,165 and I John 5:3 to supplement your answers.

3a.) What is legalism in terms of justification? Read Romans 3:28, 6:23, and Galatians 3:10-11 to supplement your answer.

b.) What is legalism in terms of sanctification? Read Galatians 3:2-5 Colossians 2:20-23 to supplement your answer.

c.) How did legalism help get Eve into trouble in Genesis 3:3? What general principle does this illustrate? Read Proverbs 30:5-6 to supplement your answer.

4a.) How does legalism damage one’s relationship with God?

b.) How does legalism damage one’s relationship with others, in terms of evangelism to non-Christians. Read Matthew 23:13-15 and I Corinthians 9:19-22 to supplement your answer.

c.) How does legalism damage my relationship with others, in terms of fellowship with Christians? Read Matthew 23:3-5 and Galatians 2:11-14 to supplement your answer.

5. Recall/read Galatians 5:1,13.

a.) What two things are we not to do with our freedom? Read Galatians 4:9-10 and Jude 4 to supplement your answer.

b.) Adding in Romans 6:18, what are we to do with our freedom?

c.) How did each of the father’s sons fail in the Parable of the Lost/Prodigal Son (Luke 15:13,28-30)? How did each error manifest itself?

6a.) What is the issue with “stumbling blocks?” Read I Corinthians 6:12, 8:4,7-13 and Romans 14:1-3 (see also: I Corinthians 10:23-33, Romans 14:4-23) to supplement your answer. Who are the “weaker” and “stronger” brothers?

b.) Practically, how can both liberty and legalism be stumbling blocks (II Corinthians 6:3) on the same issue? In other words, how might your decision to do OR *not* to do something be a problem for different people? Discuss the issues in Acts 16:3 vs. Galatians 2:3. What are the implications of Matthew 11:16-19?

The Will of God

Primary Objective: To wrestle with the general and specific will of God—how to discern it and how to obey it.

1a.) What is the difference between the general will of God and the specific will of God for your life? In your opinion, how broad is “specific”? Why is one’s view on this important?
b.) In what ways can one try to determine the will of God?

2a.) How did Jesus Christ epitomize the concept of “living in the will of God”? Read Matthew 6:10, Luke 22:42, and John 6:38 to supplement your answer.

b.) Read the following verses and comment on the general will of God: Psalm 40:8, Matthew 6:33, Mark 3:31-35, Acts 20:27, Ephesians 5:17, 6:6, Colossians 4:12, I Peter 4:2, Revelation 2:26.

c.) Read the following verses and comment on the specific will of God: I Chronicles 13:2, Ezra 7:18, Romans 15:31-32.

d.) What is the difference in the level of detail provided by God in Joshua 6:1-8 vs. Joshua 8:1-8? What are the implications for us?

e.) Knowing the will of God more adequately requires knowing God more fully. What does it mean to know God? How does one “get to know” God? Read the following verses and comment: Psalm 34:8, Jeremiah 9:24, John 17:3, Galatians 4:9, I John 3:6, 4:15-18.

f.) If God has a general will and a specific will for our lives, it is reasonable to assume and expect that He will reveal some/much of it to us. How did God reveal His will in Old Testament times (for hints, as needed, see: Exodus 18:15, Leviticus 24:12, I Chronicles 17:2-3, Psalm 143:10, II Peter 1:20-21) and New Testament times (for hints, as needed, see: Acts 16:6-7, II Timothy 3:16-17)?

3.) One mechanism God uses to communicate His will is His word. John MacArthur preached an excellent message on this topic, and in standard preaching format, all of his points began with the same letter (S). Since we know that it is God’s will that we not *Steal*, we want to give MacArthur credit for the following points. For each of the following, read the given verses, decide which S-word applies, and make any other relevant comments. Directly from Scripture, it is clearly God’s will that you would...

I. be _____ Read I Timothy 2:4, II Peter 3:9, Matthew 18:10-14.

II. be _____ Read Ephesians 5:17-18.

III. be _____ Read I Thessalonians 4:3-6a, 5:23-24, Colossians 1:9, Philippians 2:12b-13.

IV. _____ to God and others Read Ephesians 5:17,21 (as the intro to 5:22-6:9, including 6:6), I Peter 2:13-15.

V. be willing to _____ Read I Peter 3:17, 4:19.

VI. _____ thanks Recall I Thessalonians 5:16-18.

VII. Summary: MacArthur concludes that the bottom line is that if you have these six categories, then God’s will is whatever you want! Read II Samuel 7:1-5, Psalm 37:4, I John 5:14-15, and comment on the truthfulness and limits of that statement.

Conclusion: An Intro to Leadership

Primary Objective: To introduce leadership issues through the initial failings of Moses—as a segue to the “next steps” God has in store for you.

1.) Warm-up:

- a.) Define leadership. Identify obvious and subtle forms of leadership.
- b.) What are your most prominent fears with respect to exercising leadership?

2a.) In Exodus 2:11-15, we’re introduced to Moses’ capacity for leadership. What is admirable about his intent and how does he fall short? How do we fall short in the former?

b.) In Exodus 3, Moses encounters God. Although these are relatively modest steps, what does Moses do that is noteworthy in 3:3-4?

c.) How do God’s goals in 3:7-10 apparently align with those of Moses—as depicted in 2:11-15? What then is ironic about Moses’ response in the verses that follow? What does this say about Moses?

3a.) In 3:11-4:17, Moses makes five different excuses. What were his rationales? What is the good/bad news of Moses’ attitude?

b.) In 3:11, Moses asks: “who am I?” Preferably, he should have been asking/saying what? What is the application for us?

c.) What is interesting about God’s responses—or more broadly, His strategy for dealing with Moses? What are the applications for us—in dealing with needlessly reluctant others?

4a.) In his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul opens our resources and identity in Christ in chapters 1-3, before moving our responsibilities and opportunities through Christ in chapters 4-6. How is the same pattern evidenced in II Peter 1:3-4a vs. 1:4b-9?

b.) Read I Timothy 4:11-16. What are the ways in which you could fall short—or excel—in these areas?

c.) What is involved in the training regimen implied by Hebrews 5:14?

d.) We hope this has helped you become more effective as one who makes disciples, who makes disciples, who makes disciples. Prayerfully consider your “next steps”. Consider those whom God has put in your path to disciple. For whom will you pray? Who will you strive to reach for the Gospel? Who will you look to disciple and mentor?