

# ANSWERS

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to life's most important questions

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# WELCOME!

## Why are we here?

- To understand the amazing grace of God through Jesus, our Savior
- To rejoice in the certainty of knowing our sins are forgiven and heaven is ours
- To see what God has done, continues to do, and promises to do for us

## What should you expect?

- You should expect a study of the Christian faith—what the Bible says about you, eternity, and your life here and now
- You should expect that we will use the Bible as our source of information
- You should expect your questions to be taken seriously and answered honestly, to the best ability of your teacher

## What is expected of you?

- We hope that you will feel comfortable enough to participate in the questions, answers, and discussions
- We hope that you will choose a level of participation that suits you best
- We hope that you are able to find time to do the extra study at home for each lesson

## What happens at the end of this course?

- There is no obligation, but if you are interested, completing all these lessons would allow you to become a member of our church
- The bottom line: we are here to study the Bible with *no hidden agendas*

## What are the class “rules”?

- Relax...and be yourself!
- Ask questions! Participate as you feel comfortable!
- Feel free to grab a drink or take a break whenever you need one!
- Arrive and depart whenever you need to!



# LIVING SHEPHERD

Pastor Adam Lambrecht | [pastor@livingshepherd.com](mailto:pastor@livingshepherd.com) | 307-331-3861





# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

**1. What's wrong with the world and my life?**

*Sin and God's plan of salvation*

**2. Is there anybody in control of all this?**

*The Triune God of the inspired, inerrant Scriptures*

**3. Where did this world come from?**

*Creation and evolution, God's providence*

**4. Who is Jesus, and why does he matter?**

*The God-man, his substitutionary work, his humiliation and exaltation*

**5. How do I overcome my doubts and fears?**

*The work of the Holy Spirit, the gift of faith, the assurance of salvation*

**6. How can I simply get through my week?**

*The importance of Bible study and worship*

**7. Can I get a fresh start in my life?**

*God's gift of Holy Baptism and the power for daily living*

**8. How can I be sure that God really forgives my sins?**

*God's gift of Holy Communion and the assurance of forgiveness in the body and blood of Christ*

**9. How can I have a better life here on this earth?**

*Sanctification, the Ten Commandments*

**10. Why am I here?**

*Serving God and each other, using spiritual gifts, evangelism*

**11. What about the stuff I need for this life?**

*The use and stewardship of God's physical blessings*

**12. Does anyone care? Is anyone listening?**

*God's gift of prayer and the Christian's use of it*

**13. How can I have a happy home life?**

*God's institution of marriage, his instructions for parents and children*

**14. What will happen when I die or this world comes to an end?**

*Facing death, Heaven and hell, the Last Day*

**15. What benefit is there in being connected with a church?**

*Visible church and invisible church, fellowship, worship*



### *What's wrong with the world and my life?*

#### LESSON 1

Violence. Wars. Hatred. Anger. Lying. Inequality. Racism. What's wrong with this world? Why is it so messed up? Broken relationships. Pain. Sickness. Sadness. Accidents. Financial difficulties. Worry. What's wrong with my life? Why do I have so much trouble and difficulty?

The source of every single problem in our world and our lives is one simple thing: sin. In this lesson, we will talk about sin—where it came from, what it is, and how it affects our life and our eternity.

But we will also see how God has provided a solution to our problem of sin. Because of his solution, we have a different view of the problems we face in this life. And even more importantly, we'll see how God's solution to our sin affects our eternity.

#### FROM PARADISE TO CORRUPTION

Things weren't always this way. There was a time when there was no violence, no pain, no sadness, not even death. Considering what we experience every day, it's hard to believe, isn't it?

In the beginning, everything God made was *perfect*, untainted by sin—the world and all who lived in it, even the first man and woman. Can you imagine a perfect world?! That's the way God created it and intended it to be. But that all changed very quickly.

*We will look closer at creation in Lesson 3*

**SIN** = literally, "missing the mark," disobeying God

#### GENESIS 2:16-17

**<sup>16</sup>And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; <sup>17</sup>but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."**

✧ What was the only restriction God placed on Adam and Eve in this perfect world?

✧ Why do you think God created a tree from which he didn't want them to eat?

#### GENESIS 3:1-13

**<sup>1</sup>Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'"**

**<sup>2</sup>The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, <sup>3</sup>but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"**

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<sup>4</sup> "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. <sup>5</sup> "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

<sup>6</sup> When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. <sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. <sup>8</sup> Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup> But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

<sup>10</sup> He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

<sup>11</sup> And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

<sup>12</sup> The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." <sup>13</sup> Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

*NOTE: Satan completely contradicts what God said in Genesis 2:16-17!*

*Adam is right there with Eve. This first sin is referred to in the New Testament as Adam's sin (see Romans 5:12), because he did not carry out his role as head of his home.*

- ✧ This serpent is no ordinary serpent. Revelation 20:12 tells us the serpent is the devil, Satan. What did Satan do to get Eve to eat the forbidden fruit?
  
- ✧ Whom do Adam and Eve blame for their disobedience?
  
- ✧ What parallels do you see between this temptation and the tricks Satan uses today? What parallels do you see in how people react when they are guilty?

### THE DETRIMENTAL EFFECT

Adam and Eve's disobedience had great consequences. This is what the Bible says is the result of their disobedience.

#### **ROMANS 5:12**

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man [Adam], and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.

- ✧ Because Adam and Eve sinned, we all \_\_\_\_\_ and we all have to face \_\_\_\_\_.

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### **PSALM 51:5**

**<sup>5</sup> Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.**

- ◇ Because all people are sinful, all children are \_\_\_\_\_ even from conception.

**ORIGINAL SIN =** the sin that is passed on to us at birth because we have sinful parents; also called inherited sin.

### **GENESIS 3:16-18**

**<sup>16</sup> To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." <sup>17</sup> To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. <sup>18</sup> It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field."**

- ◇ Describe what is meant by the consequences of sin that God mentions:

*Pain:*

*Desire will be for your husband:*

*He will rule over you:*

*Cursed is the ground:*

*Painful toil:*

### **ROMANS 8:20-22**

**<sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. <sup>22</sup> We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.**

*The apostle Paul wrote this letter to the Christians in Rome.*

- ◇ Can you name some specific ways that you can see how the world itself has been marred by sin?

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### **2 TIMOTHY 3:1-5**

<sup>1</sup>But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. <sup>2</sup>People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, <sup>3</sup>without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, <sup>4</sup>treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—<sup>5</sup>having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.

*The apostle Paul wrote this letter to Timothy, a fellow pastor.*

✧ Does this sound like it is describing the world in which we live? How so?

### **GETTING PERSONAL**

We can definitely see the effects of sin in the world and in the lives of the people around us, can't we? But what about our own lives? What does God see? What does God demand? What is the result?

### **MATTHEW 22:37, 39**

<sup>37</sup>Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind... <sup>39</sup>...Love your neighbor as yourself.

*These words were spoken by Jesus when someone asked him about what God commands.*

✧ God demands that we love \_\_\_\_\_ and that we love our \_\_\_\_\_.

✧ What does it mean to "love"?

ἔρωσ

φίλος

ἀγάπη

### **MATTHEW 15:19**

<sup>19</sup>For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.

*These words were spoken by Jesus in response to people who thought sin was only outward action.*

✧ What God gets from us is...

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- ◇ "Sin" is not just the words we say or the things we do, but it originates in the \_\_\_\_\_.

### **ROMANS 3:23**

**<sup>23</sup>...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...**

- ◇ Who is sinful and falls short of the glory (perfection) that God demands?
- ◇ So...how do you compare to Adolf Hitler? Or Osama bin Laden? Or a pastor? Or a sweet old lady who is always helping others? Or a newborn baby?

*Imagine having to make a jump from one building top to another. What's the difference between a 3 foot jump and a 15 foot jump?*

### **ROMANS 6:23a**

**<sup>23</sup>For the wages of sin is death...**

- ◇ What payment do we deserve for our sin?

### **ISAIAH 59:2**

**<sup>2</sup>But your iniquities [sins] have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you.**

- ◇ What effect does our sin have on our relationship with God?

**INIQUITY** = inequality with God; he is holy (without sin) and we are not.

*This teaching of the Bible is called the **LAW**. The law shows us our sinfulness before a holy God.*

## **OUR PROBLEM, GOD'S SOLUTION**

The reason we experience sadness, pain, difficulty, and death in this life is because of our sin. But God has taken action in order to make things right. God has provided a solution to our biggest problem.

### **GENESIS 3:15**

**<sup>15</sup>And I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.**

- ◇ These are God's words to Satan after he deceives Adam and Eve and leads them into sin. What is God saying here?

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*I will put enmity between you and the woman:*

*Between your offspring and hers:*

*He will crush your head:*

*You will strike his heel:*

- ✧ Think for a moment about what this must have meant to Adam and Eve as they stood and listened, feeling ashamed. Think of what it means for us! This is the very first promise of a \_\_\_\_\_!

### **ROMANS 5:8,15**

**<sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. <sup>15</sup> But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!**

- ✧ *WHY* does God provide a solution to our problem of sin?

### **2 CORINTHIANS 5:21**

**<sup>21</sup> God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**

### **JOHN 3:16**

**<sup>16</sup> "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."**

- ✧ *HOW* did God provide the solution to our sin?

### **2 TIMOTHY 1:9-10**

**<sup>9</sup> This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.**

### **ROMANS 6:23b**

**<sup>23</sup> ...but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

**TRESPASS** = crossing a line; going where you should not go; God tells us not to do things and we do them anyway.

**GRACE** = God's undeserved love for sinners

**RIGHTEOUSNESS** = the holiness we need to belong to God, have a relationship with him, and live forever in heaven with him.

Lesson 4 will focus intently on the work of Jesus for us.

This teaching of the Bible is called the **GOSPEL**. The word gospel means "good news." The good news is that we have forgiveness, new life, and eternal life through the work of Jesus!



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### **ROMANS 8:1**

**<sup>1</sup>Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...**

✧ *WHAT* are the results of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection for...

*Our eternity:*

*Our life right now (even as we struggle with our own sin in a sinful world):*

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### FOR STUDY AT HOME

1. Complete the *Search the Scriptures*, *True/False*, and *Discussion Questions* below.

2. Memorize the following passages from this lesson:

**ROMANS 6:23** – *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

**2 CORINTHIANS 5:21** – *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

3. Read the following chapters of Romans. Write down any big “ah-hahs” you might have, as well as any questions.

**DAY ONE** – *Read Romans 1 & 2*

**DAY THREE** – *Read Romans 3 & 4*

**DAY FIVE** – *Read Romans 5 & 6*

### SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

Read Romans 3:19-26 and answer the questions below.

1. What is the world's relationship with God (v. 19)?
2. “The law” means the commandments of God. How is it impossible to be declared righteous before God (v. 20)?
3. To live with God forever we need righteousness (holiness), and we've seen that we cannot achieve that even by trying our best to obey the law. We must be perfect, without sin. Where does the righteousness we need come from (v. 22)?
4. What is the common plight of all human beings (v. 23)?

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5. How does God justify us (declare us “not guilty” of our sin) (v. 24)?
6. Who took our place under God’s punishment (v. 25)?
7. How did Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross satisfy the requirements of God’s justice and also illustrate his mercy?

### TRUE/FALSE

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Throughout history, there have been a few people besides Jesus who were born without sin.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. You inherited your natural inclination to sin from your parents.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Human beings deserve from God a miserable existence on earth and his wrath for all eternity.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. When God created the world, death was a natural part of creation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. The fact that babies die is proof that we are born with a sinful nature.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. In Christ, God provides for the forgiveness of sins of all people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. God gives grace and forgiveness freely to all who believe, with no conditions or strings attached.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. If we believe in Jesus, we should no longer have any trouble in this life.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. If we try our best God will let us into heaven.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. The reason we desire to live for God is not so that he *will* love us, but because he *already* loves us in Jesus.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. If I am saved by Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross and salvation is a free gift from God, then I can do anything I want, trusting that God will always forgive my sins for Jesus’ sake. (See Galatians 5:16-18, Romans 6:1-4, and John 14:15).

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2. If only repentance and faith in Jesus are required for eternal life, then even the worst sinners like Joseph Stalin, Jeffrey Dahmer, and Adolf Hitler can be saved by simply trusting in Jesus. (See 1 Timothy 1:15 and Romans 2:23-24).
3. God demands that for us to enter heaven we must be entirely perfect, holy, and without sin. Yet we know it is impossible for us to be perfect as God demands. Is God unfair in demanding the impossible of us? (See Psalm 5:4-6 and Romans 3:21).

### IN OUR WORSHIP

Nearly every one of our worship services includes what's called a **Confession of Sins** and an **Absolution**. Near the beginning of our service, we make a point of confessing our sins to God (honestly admitting the sins we remember *and* the sins we don't). We then hear the promise that we are absolved (forgiven) of our sins for the sake of Jesus. This leads us to a new desire to live for him. Here is a sample Confession of Sins and Absolution from our worship (from *Christian Worship*, the Service of the Word, p. 38):

**Leader:** God invites us to come into his presence and worship him with humble and penitent hearts. Therefore, let us acknowledge our sinfulness and ask him to forgive us.

**People:** **Holy and merciful Father, I confess that I am by nature sinful, and that I have disobeyed you in my thoughts, words, and actions. I have done what is evil and failed to do what is good. For this I deserve your punishment both now and in eternity. But I am truly sorry for my sins, and trusting in my Savior Jesus Christ, I pray: Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner.**

**Leader:** God, our heavenly Father, has been merciful to us and has given his only Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Therefore, as a servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**People:** **Amen!**

### *Is there anybody in control of all this?*

#### LESSON 2

This world certainly seems to be in chaos, doesn't it? Violence, wars, hunger—how can there be a God in control of all of this? Life doesn't seem fair, does it? Often it seems that evil overcomes good, Christians get trampled on, and unbelievers are the ones who get ahead in this life. If there is a loving God, why would he let these things happen to his people?

*Is there anybody in control of all this?*

In this lesson we are going to take a look at how we know there is a God and what he is like. These truths will comfort and assure us that yes, there is someone in control of all this. He loves us dearly, and he has nothing but our best interests in mind.

#### **HOW WE KNOW THERE IS A GOD**

It's true, you can't prove there's a God by seeing him with your eyes. But the truth is, you can't prove there *isn't* a God because you can't see him. That would be like saying, "I don't believe in oxygen because I can't see it—therefore, it is not real."

Research shows that 95% of the world's population believes that there is a higher power. There are many views as to who or what that higher power is, but there's good reason most people conclude that there is one.

*We will have a thorough study of creation in Lesson 3.*

#### **PSALM 19:1-3**

**<sup>1</sup>The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. <sup>2</sup>Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. <sup>3</sup>There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard.**

◇ How do people know there is a higher power?

Not only does the created world around us prove there is a God, but God even gives every person a personal proof that he exists.

#### **ROMANS 2:14-15**

**<sup>14</sup>Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, <sup>15</sup>since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.**

**GENTILES** – people who were not Jewish, who did not receive the written law from God

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## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

- ◇ How does having a conscience prove to every human being that there is a God?

### **PSALM 14:3**

**<sup>3</sup>The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."**

- ◇ After looking at the evidence that there is a God, what must we conclude about atheists (those who believe there is no God)?

*The fact that all people know there is a God from the natural world and their conscience is called the **NATURAL KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.***

While observing the wisdom and order we see in the created world and recognizing that we have a conscience both are proofs of a higher power, neither give us a completely satisfying view of God. Neither tell us about his love, his forgiveness, our eternity, or his plan of salvation. So what's the one reliable, foolproof way to know there is a God?

### **2 TIMOTHY 3:15**

**<sup>15</sup>...and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.**

- ◇ It's the \_\_\_\_\_ that make us \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_.
- ◇ So the most reliable way to know there is a God and the most important things we need to know about him are found in the \_\_\_\_\_.

**SCRIPTURES** = literally, "the writings"; in the New Testament it often refers to the Old Testament; see the end of this lesson for more information about the Old and New Testaments.

## **HOW GOD DESCRIBES HIMSELF**

While the Bible may not tell us everything we *want* to know, God does reveal everything we *need* to know about him.

### **DEUTERONOMY 6:4**

**<sup>4</sup>Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one.**

### **ISAIAH 45:5**

**<sup>5</sup>I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God.**

*What we learn about God in the Bible is called the **REVEALED KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.***

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### 1 CORINTHIANS 8:4

<sup>4</sup>We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one.

- ✧ According to the Bible, how many Gods are there?

It's easy to see that there is just one God. And yet, the Bible describes God in an amazing (and miraculous) way.

### GENESIS 1:26

<sup>26</sup>Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness..."

### ISAIAH 6:8

<sup>8</sup>Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"

- ✧ What is grammatically peculiar about those Bible passages?
- ✧ The reason that the pronouns in those verses do not seem to be correct is that they are trying to describe the indescribable—our Almighty, Holy God. So, while there is only one God, he consists of three different and distinct persons. So we call God *triune*.

**TRIUNE** = three-in-one

**TRINITY** = the word coined by the church to indicate that he is one God, three persons.

### MATTHEW 28:19

<sup>19</sup>"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..."

### 2 CORINTHIANS 13:14

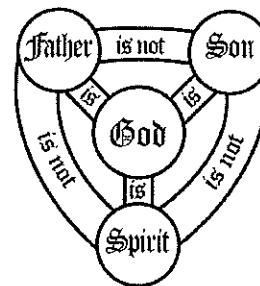
<sup>14</sup>May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

- ✧ The three persons of the Trinity are:

God the \_\_\_\_\_

God the \_\_\_\_\_

God the \_\_\_\_\_



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- ✧ A common misconception people have about God is that he is distant and impersonal, not really interested in having a relationship with anyone. How does the doctrine of the Trinity help correct that misconception?

### OUR GOD'S QUALITIES

We can't begin to study *all* the qualities of our amazing God in one class, much less a whole year of classes! But it's worth our time to consider some of the qualities God reveals to us and what they mean for our daily lives.

#### **DEUTERONOMY 33:27**

<sup>27</sup> **The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.**

- ✧ God is \_\_\_\_\_ (no beginning and no end).
- ✧ What this means for me:

*No one can fully understand the doctrine of the Trinity, and many of God's characteristics are beyond our complete comprehension. Christians readily acknowledge this, but still find tremendous value in them. We take comfort in knowing that God is much greater, much wiser, and more powerful than we are.*

#### **GENESIS 17:1**

<sup>1</sup> **When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless."**

- ✧ God is \_\_\_\_\_ (omnipotent).
- ✧ What this means for me:

#### **PSALM 139:4**

<sup>4</sup> **Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD.**

- ✧ God is \_\_\_\_\_ (omniscient).
- ✧ What this means for me:

#### **JEREMIAH 23:24**

<sup>24</sup> **"Do not I fill heaven and earth?" declares the LORD.**

- ✧ God is \_\_\_\_\_ (omnipresent).



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- ✧ What this means for me:

### **LEVITICUS 19:2**

**<sup>2</sup>“Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.”**

- ✧ God is \_\_\_\_\_ (perfect, sinless).
- ✧ What this means for me:

### **DEUTERONOMY 32:4**

**<sup>4</sup>...a faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.**

- ✧ God is \_\_\_\_\_ (keeps his word).
- ✧ What this means for me:

### **EXODUS 34:6-7**

**<sup>6</sup>And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, <sup>7</sup>maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished...”**

- ✧ Underline all of God’s qualities in these verses.
- ✧ What this means for me:

## **WHAT IS GOD DOING?**

If God really is in control of all this, and he really is all-powerful and loving, why would he let people suffer? Maybe you’ve heard someone say that before, and maybe you’ve even thought it yourself.

God has his reasons for why he allows bad things to happen. He says through the prophet Isaiah, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways” (Isaiah 55:8). God, in his infinite wisdom and love, may allow certain things to happen even to his children. But it’s always for a good reason (even if we don’t know exactly what that good reason is).

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### **HEBREWS 12:7-11**

<sup>7</sup> Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? <sup>8</sup> If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. <sup>9</sup> Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! <sup>10</sup> Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. <sup>11</sup> No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

- ✧ Suffering and hardship are the result of \_\_\_\_\_ (recall Lesson 1).
- ✧ God can use suffering and hardship in our lives for \_\_\_\_\_.
- ✧ "Discipline" is related to the word "disciple," which means \_\_\_\_\_.
- ✧ The purpose of God's discipline is to make us into followers of \_\_\_\_\_.

*NOTE: When bad things happen in our lives, God is not punishing us for our sins. Jesus was punished on the cross for our sins. There's a difference between punishment and discipline. The purpose of discipline is to correct, teach, and lead us to him.*

### **PSALM 50:15**

<sup>15</sup> ...and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me.

- ✧ Suffering and hardship in this life lead us to \_\_\_\_\_ that God is the only who can help and deliver us.

*We will discuss God's gift of prayer in Lesson 11.*

### **COLOSSIANS 3:1-2**

<sup>1</sup> Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

- ✧ God uses hardship in our lives to "set our hearts" on \_\_\_\_\_.

## **HOW DO WE KNOW WE CAN TRUST WHAT'S IN THE BIBLE?**

The Bible has many wonderful, comforting things to say about God, who he is, and what he's done for us. But how do we know we can trust it? How do we know the Bible is really God's Word?

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### 2 PETER 1:20-21

<sup>20</sup> Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. <sup>21</sup> For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

**BIBLE** = comes from the Latin "biblia," meaning "book."

### 2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

- ✧ In Greek, the word for "breath" is the same as the word for "spirit" (πνευμα).
- ✧ According to the two passages above, how were the Scriptures written?
- ✧ The true author of Scripture, then, is \_\_\_\_\_.

**VERBAL INSPIRATION** = the miracle by which God "breathed" into the writers of the Bible what he wanted them to write.

### NUMBERS 23:19

<sup>19</sup> "God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?"

### 2 CORINTHIANS 4:2

<sup>2</sup> Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

- ✧ How do we know we can trust God and what he says in his Word?
- ✧ How does the fact that the Bible is God's Word make it different than every other book?
- ✧ What comfort is there in the fact that the Bible is truly the words of God?

## **WHY IS THE BIBLE SO IMPORTANT?**

We are blessed to have the Bible so readily available to us! But it's an even greater blessing when we use it. Reading the Bible, learning more about it in a Bible study, hearing it read and explained in worship—these are all critically important! Because the Bible has implications for our life here and in eternity.

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### **ROMANS 10:17**

<sup>17</sup> Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

- ✧ God's Word is important because it's the way he creates and strengthens our \_\_\_\_\_.

*Specifically, God the Holy Spirit works through the Gospel, the good news about Jesus our Savior, to create and strengthen faith. We will study this more in Lesson 6.*

### **1 PETER 2:2-3**

<sup>2</sup> Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, <sup>3</sup> now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

- ✧ For believers, God's Word is important because it causes us to \_\_\_\_\_ in faith.

### **PSALM 119:105**

<sup>105</sup> Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

- ✧ God's Word is important because it \_\_\_\_\_ us in life.

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### FOR STUDY AT HOME

1. Complete the *Search the Scriptures*, *True/False*, and *Discussion Questions* below.
2. Memorize the following passages from this lesson:

**PSALM 19:1** – *The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.*

**2 TIMOTHY 3:15** – *...and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*

3. Read the following chapters of John. Write down any big “ah-hahs” you might have, as well as any questions.

**DAY ONE** – *Read John 1 & 2*

**DAY THREE** – *Read John 3 & 4*

**DAY FIVE** – *Read John 5*

### SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

Read Isaiah 55 and answer the questions below.

1. What invitation does God extend (v. 1-2)?
2. How much does food for the soul cost (v. 1)?
3. How do we feed our souls (v. 2)?
4. Why is our use of God’s Word a pressing, urgent need (v. 6)?
5. How does God want us to respond to his Word (v. 7)?
6. How does our understanding compare to God’s (v. 8-9)?

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

7. To what does God compare his Word (v. 10-11)?
8. What will God's Word always accomplish (v. 10-11)?
9. What effect does God's Word have on us (v. 12)?
10. Describe the effect of God's Word upon you, your life, and your soul.

### TRUE/FALSE

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The Bible is only one of several divinely-inspired "holy books" in circulation today.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The Bible is "inspired" just like other literature is inspirational and well-written.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. God reveals himself as three persons in one God.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Without the revealed knowledge of the Bible, people cannot know God.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Nature and conscience tell us that there is a God, but they cannot teach us how to be saved.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Contemplating the beauty of nature will help me strengthen my faith in Jesus.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. My faith is strengthened when God speaks to me through his Word, the Bible.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. If I neglect the Word of God, I deprive my soul of nourishment and I could starve spiritually.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. If I just listen to my conscience, I will have a good guide for making decisions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. The Bible has mistakes and errors, so we can't really be sure it is the Word of God.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. If people don't read the Bible, understand the Bible, and know what the Bible says, from where do they get their guidance for living?

2. Why is ignorance of the Bible such a dangerous thing? (See Ephesians 4:17-24 and Romans 4:8-14).
3. List some practical ways that you can become more acquainted with the Bible and provide regular nourishment for your soul. (See Hebrews 10:23-25, Psalm 1:1-3, and Acts 17:11).

### IN OUR WORSHIP

All of our worship services include one of the three creeds of the Christian faith. The word **creed** comes from the Latin word, *credo*, which means “I believe.” So the creeds are statements of faith—clear, concise statements of what the Bible teaches and what we believe. These three creeds are not unique to Living Shepherd or even to the Lutheran church in general. They are Christian. They have been used in the Christian church for over 1,500 years.

#### **The Apostles’ Creed** (from *Christian Worship*, p. 19 or p. 41)

This is the earliest confession of faith in the Christian Church. The Apostles’ Creed developed during the first few centuries of the church’s history as a statement of faith made by new converts at their baptism. It is titled the Apostles’ Creed because it faithfully reflects the teachings of the Scriptures, the apostles, the early church, and our Lord Jesus.

*I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.*

*I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.*

*I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.*

#### **The Nicene Creed** (from *Christian Worship*, p. 18 or p. 31)

The first general council of the Christian church met in Nicea (Greece) in 325 AD to deal with the false teachings of Arius, a man who denied that Jesus was truly God. This council produced an “official statement” regarding the true biblical teaching about Jesus by expanding and adapting the Apostles’ Creed to include a more thorough confession about the Second Person of the Trinity. The Nicene Creed was further modified and finalized by later church councils at Constantinople (381 AD) and Chalcedon (451 AD). In the ninth century, the phrase “and the Son” was added after the words “who proceeds from the Father,” in the final portion of the Creed which speaks about the Holy Spirit. This addition resulted in a controversy between the Eastern and Western Churches and was a factor in their separation two centuries later.

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

*We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.*

*We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and became fully human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.*

*We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.*

### **The Athanasian Creed** (from *Christian Worship*, p. 132-133)

This confession of faith is named after Athanasius, an early church leader from Egypt and a staunch defender of the Christian faith during the fourth century. Although it is named after him, it is certain that Athanasius did not write the creed that bears his name. The Athanasian Creed was written to defend the Church against two false teachings that had arisen. One error denied that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are of one being or Godhead with the Father. The other error denied that Jesus Christ was both God and man in one person. In many Christian churches today, the Athanasian Creed is recited annually in worship services on "Trinity Sunday" (eight weeks after Easter Sunday). The Apostles' and Nicene Creeds are used much more regularly in worship.



### ABOUT THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

The word "testament" means *covenant*, or *agreement*. A common mistake people make is in thinking that there is a vast difference between the Old and New Testaments. People even talk as though there were two different Gods! They think that the God of the Old Testament is full of anger and wrath, while the God of the New Testament is more compassionate and forgiving. This is incorrect.

Indeed, there are differences between the two testaments. The Old Testament is longer, containing 39 books to the New Testament's 27 books. The Old Testament was written over a longer span of time, from approximately 1450 BC to 450 BC. The New Testament was written in the last half of the first century. The Old Testament was written almost entirely in Hebrew, the New Testament entirely in Greek. However, the Old and New Testament contain the same basic message of Law and Gospel. As a way of reviewing the main message of the Bible, let's look at an assortment of passages from both the Old and New Testaments.

#### **PROVERBS 20:9**

**<sup>9</sup>Who can say, "I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin"?**

#### **1 JOHN 1:8**

**<sup>8</sup>If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.**

✧ What similar message do we find in these passages?

#### **ISAIAH 66:24**

**<sup>24</sup>...their [i.e. unbelievers'] worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind.**

#### **LUKE 16:23-24**

**<sup>23</sup> "In hell, where he [the rich man] was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. <sup>24</sup> So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'"**

✧ What do these two passages tell us about the eternal punishment for sin?

#### **EZEKIEL 33:11**

**<sup>11</sup>"As surely as I live," declares the Sovereign LORD, "I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live."**

#### **1 TIMOTHY 2:3-4**

**<sup>3</sup>...God our Savior, <sup>4</sup> who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.**

✧ What do these two passages tell us that God desires for all people?

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### ISAIAH 53:5-6

<sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. <sup>6</sup> We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

### 2 CORINTHIANS 5:21

<sup>21</sup> God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- ✧ Both of these passages describe an awesome trade that occurred between Jesus Christ and the world. What was that trade?

### JOB 19:25-27

<sup>25</sup> I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. <sup>26</sup> And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; <sup>27</sup> I myself will see him with my own eyes — I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

### 1 CORINTHIANS 15:42-43

<sup>42</sup> So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; <sup>43</sup> it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.

- ✧ What do both of these passages promise us?

Hopefully this illustrates that the Old and New Testament contain the same message — Law and Gospel. But they focus on the Savior from two different perspectives. The Old Testament points forward to what Christ would do. The New Testament points backwards to what Christ has done.

	# BOOKS	DATE	AUTHORS	LANGUAGE	PURPOSE
Old Testament	39	1500-500 BC	Moses, kings, prophets	Hebrew	Points ahead to Christ
New Testament	27	50-100 AD	Apostles, evangelists	Greek	Points back to Christ

### ORIGINAL LANGUAGES

The Bible is written in two languages. The Old Testament is written almost entirely in Hebrew (parts of the book of Daniel are written in Aramaic). Besides the interesting characters, a distinctive feature of Hebrew is that it is read from right to left.

The New Testament was written in Greek. This language was used throughout the Roman Empire, which at the time of Jesus incorporated three continents. This made it ideal to share the Gospel with many nations and cultures.

Throughout history, there have been numerous translations of the Bible. Some of the more famous:

#### **The Septuagint**

This translation was begun about three centuries before Christ. The Old Testament Hebrew was translated into the more widely known Greek language. The name "Septuagint" means *seventy*. It is derived from the legend that the translation was completed by seventy-two scholars in seventy-two days.

#### **The Vulgate**

This early fifth century translation is largely the work of one man, a priest and Latin scholar named Jerome. Latin was the language of the educated: scientists, physicians, lawyers, authors, etc. The Vulgate is still consulted by Bible scholars today.

#### **Luther's Bible**

Most people in Martin Luther's day were unable to read the Latin Bible. Thus, they were unable to see through the false teachings the Roman Catholic Church was spreading at that time. While sequestered in the Wartburg Castle, Martin Luther began translating the Bible into the German language. Both testaments were published in 1534. Luther's German Bible not only allowed the common man to understand the Scriptures, it unified Germany, which had been divided by dialects, under a common tongue.

#### **The King James Version**

This translation was ordered by King James I. A joint effort of forty-seven scholars, the King James translation was completed in 1611. It became the standard translation for English-speaking Protestants. Its flowing language had an influence on literature for the next three hundred years.

The United Bible Society claims that the Bible has been translated into over 430 languages.

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### PSALM 23:1-3

1 רסחא אל יער הוהי דודל רומזמ  
2 ינציברי אשד תואנב<sup>a</sup>: ינלהני תוחנמ ימ־לע  
3 ומשןעמל קדצ־ילגעמב ינחני בבושי ישפנ

### JOHN 3:16

<sup>16</sup> Οὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν  
κόσμον, ὥστε τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ  
ἔδωκεν, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν μὴ  
ἀπόληται ἀλλ' ἔχη ζωὴν αἰώνιον.

### *Where did this world come from?*

#### LESSON 3

Honestly, it hardly seems like much of a debate anymore. The origin of the universe as explained by Evolution is widely accepted as fact. A Gallup poll a few years back found that more than 60% of Americans believe the universe and everything in it came about by a big explosion and has evolved over billions of years.

Are Christians who believe in Creation (that a God created the entire universe in six twenty-four hour days) old-fashioned, anti-science, and maybe even a little delusional?

In this lesson we are going to take a look at how the Bible says the universe and everything in it came to be. We'll also take a look at the facts, and realize that maybe Creation isn't so far-fetched as some want us to believe. We will also see that what you believe about the origins of the universe is incredibly important, because it affects your reason for living and your view of eternity.

#### **WHAT DOES EVOLUTION SAY?**

Simply and briefly put, here is a summary of how those who believe in evolution say the universe and everything in it came to be:

- Some time between twelve and twenty-three billion years ago, all the matter in the universe was contained in a very small space.
- Suddenly all the matter in the universe exploded (the "Big Bang") and sent the material hurtling out into space.
- Gradually (over billions of years) gravity came into existence and this cosmic matter collected and formed planets and stars.
- One such planet (Earth), by chance, formed and settled at precisely the right distance from the sun to provide a favorable temperature to give life a chance to form.
- Billions of years later on this lifeless planet, life in the form of a one-celled bacteria suddenly began.
- Over the course of millions of years, this one-celled bacteria reproduced, and based on slight variations in temperature, etc., formed into different strains of bacteria.
- Over the course of millions of years, this one-celled bacteria changed itself into different kinds of one-celled organisms, and eventually into two-celled, four-celled, six-celled, and eight-celled organisms, etc.

*Keep in mind that this is simply a summary of some of evolution's claims. It can be difficult to adequately describe all the parts of evolution's frequently changing theory.*

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## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

- Over the course of millions of years, these simple organisms gradually turned into different kinds of sea creatures.
- Over the course of millions of years, these sea creatures developed the ability to live on land and breathe air.
- Over the course of millions of years, these simple land creatures changed, or "evolved" into thousands of different kinds of prehistoric land animals, birds, dinosaurs, etc.
- After many more millions of years, one species of prehistoric animal, resembling modern gorillas, adapted to its environment and gradually learned to walk and use tools.
- After many more millions of years, this prehistoric gorilla evolved into modern men and women.

To believe in evolution, you must believe that the complex world in which we live came to be out of absolutely nothing all by itself. That's no small matter, considering the complexity and wisdom we observe in our world:

- *Milky Way Galaxy*
  - 100 billion stars
  - It would take 3000 years to count the stars in our galaxy
  - It would take 100,000 years to travel from one end to the other at 186,273 mps
- *The Human Heart*
  - 72 beats per minute
  - 100,000 beats per day
  - 35 million beats per year
  - 2.5 billion beats per lifetime
  - 11,000 quarts of blood per day
  - 265 million quarts per lifetime
- *The Human Brain*
  - Processes 15 trillion bits of info by the age of 70
  - 13 billion neurons
  - Brain fibers unraveled and placed end to end would reach the moon and back

Could all of this really evolved out of nothing all by itself? Would you ever believe that a tornado could go through a junkyard and assemble a fully operational Boeing 747 jet that could fly all by itself? No? It's even less likely that the complex world we see around us came to be all by itself. At least with the tornado and junkyard scenario there's some raw material with which to start. Evolution claims the world evolved out of nothing all on its own.

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

The Bible offers an alternative explanation to how the universe and everything in it came to be.

### WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

The Bible records the origins of the world and the universe. God's creation of the world is presented in a way that provides a general overview of each day of Creation.

#### GENESIS 1:1-5

<sup>1</sup>In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup>Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. <sup>3</sup>And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. <sup>4</sup>God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup>God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

✧ Day One: \_\_\_\_\_

- ✧ The work of creation is attributed to God the Father throughout the Bible, but notice that all three persons of the Triune God are all involved: God the Son (see John 1:2-3) and God the Holy (Genesis 1:2).
- ✧ Notice, too, how the Bible describes the world before it came to be: formless, empty, dark, and deep.
- ✧ Finally, notice that "evening" and "morning" are the familiar ways used to describe a normal, ordinary day.

#### GENESIS 1:6-8

<sup>6</sup>And God said, "Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water." <sup>7</sup>So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it. And it was so. <sup>8</sup>God called the expanse "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.

✧ Day Two: \_\_\_\_\_

#### GENESIS 1:9-13

<sup>9</sup>And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. <sup>10</sup>God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good. <sup>11</sup>Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. <sup>12</sup>The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. <sup>13</sup> And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.

✧ Day Three: \_\_\_\_\_

### **GENESIS 1:14-19**

<sup>14</sup> And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, <sup>15</sup> and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth.” And it was so. <sup>16</sup> God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. <sup>17</sup> God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth, <sup>18</sup> to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup> And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.

✧ Day Four: \_\_\_\_\_

- ✧ The Hebrew language distinguishes between the source of light and the light itself. God himself worked with that distinction in creation.
- ✧ Notice the indications of a universe created with age: stars that are light-years away from the earth are nevertheless visible at creation. God creates a *mature* universe!

### **GENESIS 1:20-23**

<sup>20</sup> And God said, “Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky.” <sup>21</sup> So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup> God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.” <sup>23</sup> And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.

✧ Day Five: \_\_\_\_\_

### **GENESIS 1:24-31**

<sup>24</sup> And God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals, each according to its kind.” And it was so. <sup>25</sup> God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. <sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds



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of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.<sup>28</sup> God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”<sup>29</sup> Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.”<sup>30</sup> And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.<sup>31</sup> God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

*The IMAGE OF GOD means, in part, that man and woman were created to be holy (sinless).*

✧ Day Six: \_\_\_\_\_

### GENESIS 2:1-3

<sup>1</sup>Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. <sup>2</sup>By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. <sup>3</sup>And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

✧ The Hebrew word for “rest” also means to “cease,” or to “end.” Why is it important to remember the difference between “resting” and “ceasing”?

The Bible also has another account of Creation. Genesis 1 lays out the story in a systematic, orderly way, describing what happens on each day of creation. Genesis 2 retells the story, filling in some of the gaps by focusing on specific details that are worth noting. We could compare these two sections to the way a reporter writes a newspaper story about a certain event. The first part of the article may contain a chronological description of what happened, while the second part of the article may concentrate on specific details of the bigger story. The Creation account in the first two chapters of Genesis is recorded in a similar way.

### GENESIS 2:4-25

<sup>4</sup>This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created. When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens—<sup>5</sup>and no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no man to work the ground,<sup>6</sup> but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground—<sup>7</sup>the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.<sup>8</sup> Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed.<sup>9</sup> And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. <sup>10</sup> A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. <sup>11</sup> The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. <sup>12</sup> (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.) <sup>13</sup> The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush. <sup>14</sup> The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Asshur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. <sup>15</sup> The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. <sup>16</sup> And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; <sup>17</sup> but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." <sup>18</sup> The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." <sup>19</sup> Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup> So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. <sup>21</sup> So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. <sup>22</sup> Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. <sup>23</sup> The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." <sup>24</sup> For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. <sup>25</sup> The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

- ✧ v. 5-6: The world seemed to have a natural irrigation system at creation.
- ✧ v. 9-10, 16-17: The two trees mentioned here become especially significant in Genesis 3.
- ✧ v. 18: "Not good"—compare this to the "good" refrain recorded at the end of every day in Genesis 1.
- ✧ v. 23: Consider Adam's statement in light of the task he had just completed.
- ✧ v. 24: God established marriage and family when he brought Eve to Adam.
- ✧ v. 25: "No shame"—Adam and Eve had complete control of their thoughts as God's sinless creation. They did not even think about something that was sinful or inappropriate.

*Some of these topics will be studied in later lessons (some have already been discussed in previous lessons). For example, marriage will be studied in Lesson 13.*

### CAN CREATION AND EVOLUTION BE RECONCILED?

Some have suggested that the creation account and the theory of evolution are compatible with each other. *Theistic evolution* is proposed as a way to harmonize the two perspectives. This theory states that God used the "Big Bang" and the process of evolution to create the universe and our world. According to this theory, the "days" in Genesis 1 are actually extended periods of time, marked by the major life forms that evolved during that period.

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

Is the Biblical account of Creation compatible with modern science's theory of evolution? Or are they in conflict with one another? Remember that both are "theories" from a worldly, scientific standpoint; neither can be absolutely proven with science. However, there is a great deal of scientific evidence available that supports the Bible's Creation account—evidence that unfortunately is often unreported and not discussed. Before we dismiss or accept the Biblical account of Creation, let's look at the evidence. Below is a sample of evidence and data that actually supports the Biblical account.

- Four Laws of Science
  - *First Law of Thermodynamics*: energy cannot be created or destroyed
  - *Second Law of Thermodynamics*: the usefulness of energy is constantly decreasing
  - *Law of Biogenesis*: life comes from life
  - *Law of Genetics*: life is propagated within the boundary of "kinds"
- Fossil Record: Although there is talk of a "missing link," there has *never* been a discovery of a transitional fossil between vertebrates and invertebrates, between fish and amphibians, or between primates and man. If one creature evolved into another over millions of years, there should be hundreds—even thousands—of transitional fossils. Moreover, we should see examples of these transitional forms of life in our world today.
- DNA Evidence: A 1995 report in *U.S. News and World Report* describes genetic studies conducted eight years earlier in which it was discovered that all human beings descended from one woman. An Associated Press story in November of the same year reported another study in which we learned that every man can trace his Y chromosome to one male. The same study also reported evidence that human beings arose in one place on the world rather than in several locations or continents.
- Immediate Biblical Context: The continuous refrain in Genesis chapter one: "There was evening and there was morning..." Although the word "day" (Hebrew: *yom*) can be used in other senses, the context defines its use here. Additionally, the word "day" is never used to express thousands, millions, or billions of years.
- Larger Biblical Context: Other passages interpret the "days" in the Creation account in the same manner in which the Creation took place. Some examples: Exodus 20:11, Mark 10:6-7, Hebrews 11:3.
- A World with Age: How old were the trees God created? How old were the animals? How old were Adam and Eve? How could the stars be visible already if they were millions of light-years away from the earth? The creation account points to a God who created a *mature* universe!

Although it is often left unreported and ignored, the scientific evidence for the Biblical account of Creation is substantial. It is unfortunate that society and academia, which often has an agenda against Scripture, does not acknowledge the clear data in support of Creation. Science does not contradict our belief in the Biblical account of Creation, but the basis for our faith in Creation is God's clearly revealed Word.

### **2 PETER 3:3-5**

<sup>3</sup>First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. <sup>4</sup>They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." <sup>5</sup>But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's Word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water.

✧ What does this passage have to say about those who deny Creation?

### **WHY DOES IT MATTER?**

The conflict between the Bible and evolution is not limited to explanations of the universe's origin. If the Evolutionist's theory was correct, then there never were two human beings who began the human race, since man emerged gradually from animal ancestry. Then there was no disobedience in the Garden of Eden, no sin as defined by the Bible. What the Bible calls "sin" would really be no more than a remnant of our bestial nature—times when we unfortunately don't act as highly evolved creatures. And if there is no sin, then there is no need for a Savior. According to Evolution, mankind is not sinful by nature but is getting better and better as we evolve. Christ's work, then, is unnecessary. He is only a martyr, not a Redeemer. The doctrine of salvation by grace through the work of Christ *cannot* be harmonized to Evolution.

Moreover, the rest of the Bible states an emphatic agreement to Genesis. Jesus Christ himself referred to the Creation account as historical fact. Therefore, if Evolution is accepted as fact, the Bible must be nothing more than superstitious ranting.

Biblical Creationism is a faith that rests solely on the Biblical account. In the final analysis, we must conclude that if we are to know anything about creation—its date, process, order, or duration—then the Creator must tell us. The writer to the Hebrews explains it best. "*By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible*" (Hebrews 11:3). This does not mean that Creationism is incompatible with science, or that it rejects science. But as stated earlier, the Christian places his belief in science below, or beneath, his faith in God's Word, not vice-versa.

And so, the Christian can celebrate some of the conclusions of science, for in them the Christian sees the beauty and order of God's creation. But the Christian also ultimately understands that God is not bound to the laws of science. He called the universe into existence by his Word. He formed everything out of nothing at all. That is *scientifically* impossible! But it is nothing to our God!

The conflict comes down to this: There are two faiths—Creationism and Evolutionism. They cannot be reconciled. In the end, choices must be made. Either there is a God...or there is not. Either the human race is composed of creatures subject to their Creator...or they are sophisticated animals who are subject only to themselves. Either we are sinners in need of a Savior...or we are only occasional beasts who simply need more evolutionary improvement to survive. Either Genesis is God's Word...or it is myth. Either Scripture can be trusted...or it can't.

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

QUESTION	BIBLE PASSAGE	THE BIBLE'S ANSWER	EVOLUTION'S ANSWER
<i>How did the world get here?</i>	Genesis 1:1	God create all from nothing.	The world came into being by itself.
<i>How long did it take to make the world?</i>	Exodus 20:11	Six normal, 24-hour days	Billions of years
<i>What brought the world into existence?</i>	Genesis 1:3	God's powerful Word	Chance
<i>What does it mean to be a human being?</i>	Genesis 1:27	The crown of God's creation	A highly developed animal
<i>What is a human being's purpose?</i>	Psalms 100	Praise God	Nothing
<i>To whom is a human being accountable?</i>	2 Corinthians 5:10	God, the Creator	No one

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### FOR STUDY AT HOME

1. Complete the *Search the Scriptures*, *True/False*, and *Discussion Questions* below.
2. Read the following chapters of Genesis. Write down any big “ah-hahs” you might have, as well as any questions.

**DAY ONE** – Read *Genesis 1-5*

**DAY THREE** – Read *Genesis 6-9*

**DAY FIVE** – Read *Genesis 10-11*

### SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

Read Psalm 103 and answer the questions below.

1. How do we respond to God’s goodness (v. 1-2)?
2. What does God continue to do for us (v. 3-8)?
3. What does God do with our sins (v. 9-12)?
4. What are human beings like (v. 14-16)?
5. How does God compare with fickle, frail human beings (v. 17-18)?
6. How can you describe the greatness of God’s kingdom (v. 19-22)?

### TRUE/FALSE

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. We can say with certainty that the world is thousands—not millions—of years old.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Each “day” of creation could represent a longer period of time.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Human beings and dinosaurs existed at the same time on earth.

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. When God created the world it was perfect.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Public schools that teach evolution are really teaching a religious philosophy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The early chapters of the Bible are ancient mythology and should not be taken literally.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Theistic evolution downplays God's almighty power.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Jesus considered the book of Genesis to be literally true.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. The only way we can accept any philosophy about the origin of the universe is by faith.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. The first humans enjoyed a good steak now and then.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The purpose of the Bible is religious, not scientific. Does this mean that we shouldn't worry about *all* the details of how the world came into existence? Does this mean that it's not really important whether people believe in the creation account of Genesis or not? (See 1 Timothy 3:16-17 and John 10:35).
2. Assume for a moment that evolution is true, that a human being is only a clever, highly developed animal whose sole purpose on earth is to look out for itself, to advance, and to survive. According to this theory, then, what is morally wrong with a dictator trying to create a "master race" and killing off anyone who doesn't measure up? What is morally wrong with a disgruntled high school student taking a weapon to school and eliminating people he doesn't like?

### IN OUR WORSHIP

In the last lesson, it was noted that all of our worship services include one of the three creeds of the Christian faith. The word **creed** comes from the Latin word, *credo*, which means "I believe." So the creeds are statements of faith—clear, concise statements of what the Bible teaches and what we believe. These three creeds are not unique to Living Shepherd or even to the Lutheran church in general. They are Christian. They have been used in the Christian church for over 1,500 years.

The creeds that are used most frequently in our worship services (the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed) allow us to confess regularly our belief in the Biblical account of Creation. Read through the words of the creeds below and underline the portions that highlight this confession in the Biblical account of Creation.

### **The Apostles' Creed** (from *Christian Worship*, p. 19 or p. 41)

*I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.*

*I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.*

*I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.*

### **The Nicene Creed** (from *Christian Worship*, p. 18 or p. 31)

*We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.*

*We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and became fully human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.*

*We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.*



### *Who is Jesus and why does he matter?*

#### LESSON 4

A good person who lived long ago. A man who helped others and taught many good things. A good example for us to follow.

There are many thoughts on who Jesus is, and many of them are wrong. If Jesus is just a good man, just an example for us to follow, then he's just like many other people who have lived here on earth.

Jesus once asked his disciples, "Who do people say I am?" (Mark 8:27). The disciples reported that there were many opinions, and most of them were wrong. Then Jesus asked this follow-up question: "But what about you? Who do you say I am?" (Mark 8:29). Clearly, Jesus is concerned that we understand who he is—because who he is changes the way we live and it changes our eternal destiny. We don't need an example. We need a Savior. And that's who we'll see Jesus is: our Savior from sin.

#### **HOW IS JESUS DESCRIBED IN THE BIBLE?**

God's Word tells us all we need to know about Jesus. And it describes him in a specific (and miraculous) way.

##### **ROMANS 9:5**

**<sup>5</sup>...and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.**

##### **1 JOHN 5:20**

**<sup>20</sup> We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true—even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.**

##### **JOHN 20:28**

**<sup>28</sup> Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"**

◇ According to the Bible, Jesus is true \_\_\_\_\_.

**CHRIST** is a title for Jesus which means "chosen one." It's the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word "Messiah."

##### **JOHN 2:7-9**

**<sup>7</sup> Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim. <sup>8</sup> Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so, <sup>9</sup> and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine.**

This was the first of many miracles Jesus performed in his ministry.

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

✧ We know Jesus is God because he is able to perform \_\_\_\_\_.

### **JOHN 11:43-44**

<sup>43</sup> When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" <sup>44</sup> The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

*Jesus performed miracles to show the people that he was who he claimed he was—the promised Savior!*

✧ We know Jesus is God because he has power over \_\_\_\_\_.

### **MARK 4:39**

<sup>39</sup> He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

✧ We know Jesus is God because he has power over \_\_\_\_\_.

### **MATTHEW 28:20**

<sup>20</sup> ...And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

✧ We know Jesus is God because he is \_\_\_\_\_ (omnipresent).

### **JOHN 21:17**

<sup>17</sup> He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

✧ We know Jesus is God because he knows \_\_\_\_\_ (omniscient).

✧ All of these passages prove that Jesus is true \_\_\_\_\_.

### **1 TIMOTHY 2:5**

<sup>5</sup> For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus...

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### ROMANS 5:15

<sup>15</sup> But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!

### HEBREWS 2:14

<sup>14</sup> Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil...

✧ According to the Bible, Jesus is not only true God, he is also at the same time true \_\_\_\_\_.

### MARK 11:12

<sup>12</sup> The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry.

✧ We know Jesus is true man because he got \_\_\_\_\_.

### JOHN 4:6

<sup>6</sup> Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well.

✧ We know Jesus is true man because he got \_\_\_\_\_.

### LUKE 24:39

<sup>39</sup> "Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

✧ We know Jesus is true man because he has a \_\_\_\_\_.

### MATTHEW 26:38

<sup>38</sup> Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."

✧ We know Jesus is true man because he has \_\_\_\_\_.

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### ROMANS 9:5

<sup>5</sup> **Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.**

### COLOSSIANS 2:9

<sup>9</sup> **For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form...**

◇ Jesus is both true \_\_\_\_\_ and true \_\_\_\_\_ in one person.

### **HOW DID JESUS TAKE ON THIS DUAL NATURE?**

We have already learned that our God is Triune and Almighty. But how exactly—and when—did Jesus take on this dual nature?

### LUKE 1:30-31, 34-35

<sup>30</sup> **But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God.**

<sup>31</sup> **You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.**

<sup>34</sup> **"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"**

<sup>35</sup> **The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God."**

*The word we use to describe this miracle is **INCARNATION**, which comes from the Latin word meaning "into flesh."*

◇ Jesus became true God and true man in one person when he was \_\_\_\_\_ by the Holy Spirit and \_\_\_\_\_ of the virgin Mary.

### **WHY DOES IT MATTER THAT JESUS IS GOD AND MAN?**

It's one thing to recognize what the Bible says about Jesus' dual nature. It teaches that he is both true God and true man. It also teaches that Jesus took on this dual nature when he was miraculously conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. And the Bible also makes one other thing especially clear: it was vital for our salvation that Jesus be both God and man.

### GALATIANS 4:4-5

<sup>4</sup> **But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, <sup>5</sup> to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.**

### MARK 10:45

<sup>45</sup> **"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."**

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

- ✧ Jesus needed to be true man so that he could \_\_\_\_\_ under God's law.
- ✧ Jesus needed to be true man so that he could \_\_\_\_\_ as the ransom price that paid for our sins.

### **HEBREWS 4:15**

<sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.

### **PSALM 49:7-9**

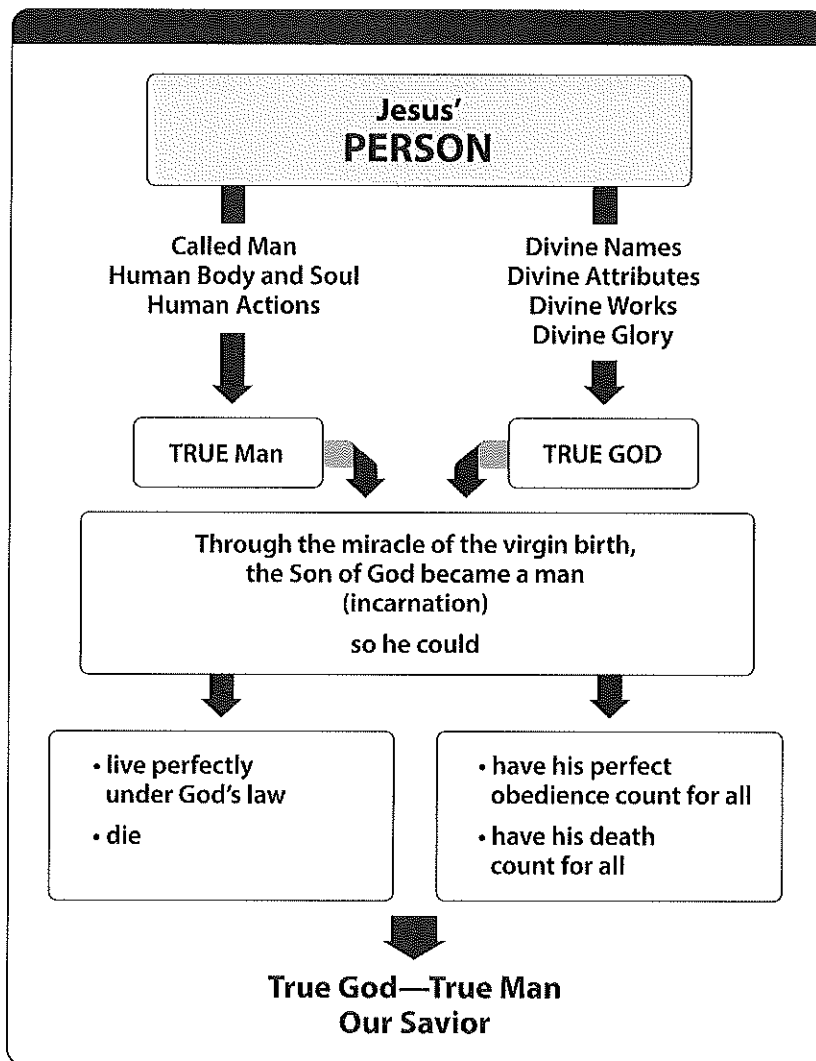
<sup>7</sup> No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him—<sup>8</sup> the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough—<sup>9</sup> that he should live on forever and not see decay.

### **HEBREWS 2:14-15**

<sup>14</sup> Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—<sup>15</sup> and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

- ✧ Jesus needed to be true God because another man would not be able to live the law \_\_\_\_\_.
- ✧ Jesus needed to be true God because no man by himself could successfully pay the price of death for \_\_\_\_\_ sin.

If Jesus is just a good man or an example for us to follow, then he doesn't really meet our greatest need. But because he is both true God and true man in one person, he perfectly met all of God's requirements for our salvation. And he is exactly what we need most—our Savior and Substitute in life and in death; our promise of forgiveness and our hope of eternal life!



### THE CROSS WAS NOT THE END

Thankfully, his death on the cross was not the end for Jesus. Otherwise, we would still be in our sins. Let's look at some of the words of the second article of the Apostles' Creed to outline the "rest of the story" for Jesus...and for us!

- **"He descended into hell..."**

Some teach and believe that Jesus descended into hell to suffer. While it's true that Jesus did suffer hell on the cross for our sins as he was forsaken (left alone to die by the Father), his descent into hell had a different purpose.

*See the end of this lesson for a more thorough look at the work of Christ in the second article of the Apostles' Creed.*

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### 1 PETER 3:18-20

<sup>18</sup> For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, <sup>19</sup> through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison <sup>20</sup> who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built.

*These are the only two passages about Jesus' descent into hell. We believe that Jesus descended to hell in his physical body after his resurrection but before his appearance to people.*

### COLOSSIANS 2:15

<sup>15</sup> And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

✧ Jesus descended into hell to proclaim his \_\_\_\_\_ over Satan.

✧ What comfort does Jesus' descent into hell give you as you face the temptations of Satan?

### • **"On the third day, he rose again..."**

Many people heard reports of the resurrection, but dismissed them out of hand as an impossible fairy tale. It's sad, and such a dismissal has important ramifications. Let's look at God's Word and see just how important, how wonderful, and how comforting the resurrection is for us!

### MATTHEW 28:5-6

<sup>5</sup> The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. <sup>6</sup> He is not here; he has risen, just as he said."

**JUSTIFICATION** = God's declaration that we are not guilty of our sins because of Jesus' substitutionary work on our behalf.

### ROMANS 4:25

<sup>25</sup> He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

### 1 CORINTHIANS 15:17-20

<sup>17</sup> And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. <sup>18</sup> Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. <sup>19</sup> If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. <sup>20</sup> But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

✧ The importance of Jesus' resurrection for life right now is...

✧ The importance of Jesus' resurrection for eternity is...

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

- **“He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God...”**

Forty days after his resurrection, Jesus ascended back into heaven. He was able to return to heaven because his work of saving us was completed. But even then, Jesus continues to work on our behalf from heaven as he sits at the right hand of God. Jesus uses his almighty power now and always to work on our behalf!

**INTERCEDE** = to go between; Jesus goes between us and the holy God to continually assure us that we are now right with God.

### **ROMANS 8:34**

<sup>34</sup> Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

✧ Jesus is \_\_\_\_\_ for us with our heavenly Father.

### **JOHN 14:1-3**

<sup>1</sup>“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. <sup>2</sup>In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

Jesus spoke these words the night before he dies on the cross. How amazing that even then his focus was on us and our peace!

✧ Jesus is \_\_\_\_\_ a place for us with our heavenly Father.

✧ Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ us that we will be with him in \_\_\_\_\_.

### **EPHESIANS 1:19-23**

<sup>19</sup>That power is like the working of his mighty strength, <sup>20</sup>which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, <sup>21</sup>far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. <sup>22</sup>And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, <sup>23</sup>which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

✧ Jesus has power over all things for the good of the \_\_\_\_\_.

✧ What comfort does this bring you as you live in this world?



# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### FOR STUDY AT HOME

1. Complete the *Search the Scriptures* below.

2. Memorize the following passages from this lesson:

**COLOSSIANS 2:9** – *For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form...*

**GALATIANS 4:4-5** – *But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.*

3. Read the following chapters of Genesis. Write down any big “ah-hahs” you might have, as well as any questions.

**DAY ONE** – *Read Genesis 12-15*

**DAY THREE** – *Read Genesis 16-20*

**DAY FIVE** – *Read Genesis 21-25*

### SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

Read Matthew 26-27 and answer the questions below.

1. What plan did the Jewish leaders hatch (26:1-5)?
2. How did the woman in Bethany show her love for Jesus (26:6-13)?
3. Which disciple offered to betray Jesus (26:14-16)?
4. What was the agreed-upon price (26:15)?
5. What startling statement did Jesus make to his disciples (26:17-25)?
6. How did Jesus expose his betrayer (26:23-25)?

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

7. What did Jesus give his disciples (26:26-30)?
8. What warning did Jesus give to Peter and the others (26:31-35)?
9. What garden did Jesus and his disciples go to (26:36-46)?
10. What did Jesus do in the garden (26:36)?
11. What did the disciples do in the garden (26:40)?
12. How did Judas identify Jesus to those who came to arrest him (26:47-50)?
13. What did one of Jesus' disciples do to defend him (26:51-56)?
14. When Jesus was arrested, what did all the disciples do (26:56)?
15. On what grounds did the Sanhedrin find Jesus worthy of death (26:57-68)?
16. What did Peter do in the courtyard of the high priest (26:69-75)?
17. How did Judas react when he saw that Jesus was condemned (27:1-10)?
18. Who was the Roman governor who held a trial for Jesus (27:11-26)?
19. What did the Roman governor want to do with Jesus (27:14-23)?
20. Whom did the governor release instead of Jesus (27:26)?
21. Who assumed responsibility for Jesus' blood (27:25)?

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

22. What did the soldiers do to Jesus (27:27-31)?
23. Who carried Jesus' cross for him (27:32-44)?
24. What notice was placed above Jesus' head (27:37)?
25. What happened in the land during Jesus' crucifixion (27:45-56)?
26. What did Jesus cry out to God (27:46)?
27. What happened in the temple when Jesus died (27:51)?
28. What confession did the Roman centurion make (27:54)?

### THE WHOLE BIBLE IS ABOUT JESUS

The Old Testament records the history of the ancient Israelites, but its primary purpose is to point forward to the Savior. In Lesson 1, we looked at the first promise of the Savior in Genesis 3:15. We learned that the Savior would be a future descendent of Eve and would crush the devil's power. As we look at the following verses from the Old Testament, we will discover even more truths about Jesus, the Savior who was promised to come. Some of these Bible verses may seem a bit unclear when we read them out of context. With the benefit of the entire Bible, though, we can see how these verses tell us something about the promised Savior.

TIME IN HISTORY	BIBLE VERSE	WHAT WE LEARN ABOUT JESUS
@ 2000 B.C.	<b>Genesis 12:2-3</b> <sup>2</sup> "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."	Abraham was not only the "father" of the nation of Israel, but he promised Savior would be one of his descendants. Through this Savior...

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

<p>@ 1500 B.C.</p>	<p><b>Exodus 12:3, 5-8, 12-13</b></p> <p><sup>3</sup>Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household.</p> <p><sup>5</sup>The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. <sup>6</sup>Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. <sup>7</sup>Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs. <sup>8</sup>That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast.</p> <p><sup>12</sup>"On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn—both men and animals—and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. <sup>13</sup>The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.</p>	<p>The Old Testament Passover celebration recalled how God delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt, but it also predicted certain truths about the coming Savior.</p> <p>The one year old male lamb without defects pictured...</p> <p>The blood on the doorposts of the homes spared the Israelites from death during the Passover. This blood pictured...</p>
<p>@ 1500 B.C.</p>	<p><b>Deuteronomy 18:15</b></p> <p><sup>15</sup>The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.</p>	<p>Moses compared the work of the coming Savior to that of a...</p>
<p>@ 1000 B.C.</p>	<p><b>Psalm 22:1, 6-7, 18</b></p> <p><sup>1</sup> My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning?</p> <p><sup>6</sup> But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people.</p> <p><sup>7</sup> All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads:</p> <p><sup>18</sup> They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.</p>	<p>This psalm, written by King David, predicted...</p>
<p>@ 1000 B.C.</p>	<p><b>Psalm 16:10</b></p> <p><sup>10</sup> ...because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.</p>	<p>After the Savior's suffering and death, he would...</p>
<p>@ 700 B.C.</p>	<p><b>Isaiah 7:14</b></p> <p><sup>14</sup>Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.</p>	<p>The name "Immanuel" means "God with us." This helps us understand that Jesus is both...</p>

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

<p>@ 700 B.C.</p>	<p><b>Isaiah 53:4-6, 11</b></p> <p><sup>4</sup> Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. <sup>6</sup> We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.</p> <p><sup>11</sup> After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.</p>	<p>Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12 contains an amazingly accurate picture of the Savior's suffering. Jesus would suffer and die in order to...</p> <p>After his suffering, Jesus would...</p>
<p>@ 700 B.C.</p>	<p><b>Isaiah 9:6</b></p> <p><sup>6</sup> For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.</p>	<p>The coming Savior would be...</p> <p>The coming Savior would be called...</p>
<p>@ 700 B.C.</p>	<p><b>Micah 5:2</b></p> <p><sup>2</sup> "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."</p>	<p>The Savior would be born in...</p>

### IN OUR WORSHIP

The second article of the Apostles' Creed provides an excellent summary of Christ's work. It describes what we sometimes call Christ's *humiliation* and *exaltation*. While there are numerous examples of events and details in Jesus' life that indicate both of these, the second article gives us a good, overall picture of what Jesus' *humiliation* and *exaltation* are.

**Humiliation:** *The part of Jesus' ministry when he usually chose not to make full use of his heavenly power and glory so that he might live and die in a lowly way.*

**Exaltation:** *The part of Jesus' ministry when he made full and constant use of his heavenly power and glory.*

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

- **I Believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord...**
  - ✧ This statement is a confession of who Christ is: God's only Son, and our Lord.
  - ✧ **Matthew 26:63-64** - <sup>63</sup> But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." <sup>64</sup> "Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."
- **...who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary...**
  - ✧ It is important to note that Christ's conception and birth are not, in themselves, part of Christ's humiliation. Becoming human didn't limit his power or his glory. If that were the case, Christ would not have kept his body after his resurrection. But when he came into this world, Christ willingly laid aside his power and glory. His humiliation, therefore, begins with the *manner* in which he was born. The King of the Universe became the son of a relatively poor family. The Son of God was born in a stable.
  - ✧ **2 Corinthians 8:9** - <sup>9</sup> For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.
- **...suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.**
  - ✧ While Christ's entire humble life was part of his humiliation, his crucifixion and death was the culmination, because on the cross, Christ endured the essence of hell: separation from God the Father. It is important to note that throughout Christ's humiliation, nothing happened to him that he didn't allow to happen. When Judas came to betray Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus knocked seasoned soldiers over with just his word, but then submitted willingly to the arrest (see John 18:4-11). Even his death itself came on Christ's timeframe. Christ's humiliation means he gave up his power, but it does not mean he was powerless!
  - ✧ **Matthew 27:46** - <sup>46</sup> About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*"—which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"
- **He descended into hell.**
  - ✧ This is perhaps the most misunderstood phrase in the second article. It is often assumed that Christ went to hell to suffer for our sins. That is incorrect. Christ's descent marks the beginning of his proclamation that he was victorious in battle over Satan, sin, and death. It just so happens that the demons were the first to hear this message.

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

- ◇ **1 Peter 3:18-19** - <sup>18</sup>For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, <sup>19</sup>through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison...
  
- **The third day he rose again from the dead.**
  - ◇ At this time, Jesus began to announce his resurrection to his followers by making a series of appearances. These numerous appearances illustrate that the doctrine of Christ's resurrection is crucial. Jesus wanted many witnesses so that there could be no doubt that he did indeed rise. Without the resurrection, God's plan of salvation is a sham.
  
  - ◇ **1 Corinthians 15:5-8, 17** - <sup>3</sup>For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup>that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup>and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. <sup>6</sup>After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. <sup>7</sup>Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, <sup>8</sup>and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.  
<sup>17</sup>And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.
  
- **He ascended into heaven...**
  - ◇ Christ's ascension is another crucial event for our faith. The ascension proves that Jesus' saving work is complete. Otherwise, he wouldn't have left.
  
  - ◇ **John 14:2-3** - <sup>2</sup>"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. <sup>2</sup>In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.
  
- **...and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.**
  - ◇ From this position of authority, Christ is ruling over all things for our eternal good.
  
  - ◇ **Acts 2:33** - <sup>33</sup>Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

- **From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.**
  - ✧ At this time—Judgment Day—no one will be able to deny that Jesus is Lord. As children of God, we long for this day to come, that we might go to our true home: heaven!
  - ✧ **2 Peter 3:13** - <sup>13</sup> But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.



### *How do I overcome my doubts and fears?*

#### LESSON 5

Does God still love me even when I continue to do what is wrong? How do I know God really forgives my sins? How can I know for sure that I am going to heaven when I die? If I'm a Christian, why do I continue to sin? What if I'm really *not* a Christian?

We have many doubts and fears in life, but the questions above are some of the most difficult questions with which we might have to deal. That's because they cause us to wonder about God's love for us, our salvation, and our eternity with him. These questions are not just ones that you have—*every single Christian* asks these questions at times.

So, how can we overcome our doubts and fears and know for sure that we are loved, forgiven, and saved—even when we continue to sin? In this lesson, we'll learn how God reassures us of his love.

#### **HOW DO WE KNOW WE ARE SAVED?**

One of the greatest comforts of God's Word is that our salvation does not depend on us. It depends only on God's unshakeable love for us in Christ.

##### **TITUS 3:4-5**

<sup>4</sup> But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, <sup>5</sup> he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.

##### **EPHESIANS 2:8**

<sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God...

##### **GALATIANS 5:4**

<sup>4</sup> You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

**MERCY** = not being treated like you deserve

**GRACE** = being treated like you don't deserve

**JUSTIFIED** = declared not guilty of our sins by God

- ✧ Is our salvation something we have to earn or something we deserve?
- ✧ What does the Bible say happens when you attempt to earn your salvation through works of the Law?
- ✧ So how do we know we are saved?

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### HOW DO WE KNOW THAT GOD'S GRACE AND MERCY ARE OURS?

God declares unequivocally that our salvation is entirely the gift of his grace. We do nothing to earn or deserve it. But this also raises a question: how does God's gift of salvation come to us? How do we know that it belongs to us?

#### **JOHN 3:18**

**<sup>18</sup>Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.**

#### **MARK 16:16**

**<sup>16</sup>Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.**

#### **ROMANS 3:21-22**

**<sup>21</sup>But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. <sup>22</sup>This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.**

**RIGHTEOUSNESS**  
*is the holiness we need to belong to a holy God and live with him forever.*

✧ We know God's salvation is ours because we have \_\_\_\_\_ in Jesus as our Savior.

✧ Through faith in Jesus, we receive \_\_\_\_\_ from God.

### WHERE DOES FAITH COME FROM?

It might seem like a strange question. But it's an important one. Because if this faith comes from our own minds and our own efforts, it only returns us to the despair of our initial doubts and fears. Thankfully, God also assures us that the faith to believe in Jesus doesn't come from us.

#### **EPHESIANS 2:1**

**<sup>1</sup>As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins...**

#### **EPHESIANS 2:8**

**<sup>8</sup>For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God...**

#### **1 CORINTHIANS 12:3**

**<sup>3</sup>Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.**

*Faith is not "head knowledge," but it's "heart knowledge." It's not just knowing the facts, it's believing they are true!*

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

- ✧ What are we by nature?
- ✧ Is faith something that we create in ourselves or something we choose to do?

### **ROMANS 10:17**

**<sup>17</sup> Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.**

### **2 TIMOTHY 3:15**

**<sup>15</sup> ...and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.**

### **2 THESSALONIANS 2:13-14**

**<sup>13</sup> But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.**

**<sup>14</sup> He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

- ✧ To give us the gift of faith, the Holy Spirit works through the \_\_\_\_\_ (the Bible).
- ✧ The good news of Jesus that creates faith in our hearts is called the \_\_\_\_\_.

### **ROMANS 2:8**

**<sup>8</sup> But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.**

- ✧ We do not have the power to bring ourselves to faith—it's a gift from the Holy Spirit. But what terrible power do we have?

This is the comforting truth we have as we face doubts and fears about God's love for us: our salvation is 100% God's doing! God the Father planned it. God the Son carried it out. God the Holy Spirit enables us to believe it. Not of it depends on us! God says that we are loved—and so, we are loved. God says that we are forgiven for the sake of Jesus—and so, we are forgiven. God says that we have the gift of eternal life—and so, we are going to heaven. And he even gives us the faith to believe it's all true.

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### **BUT I CONTINUE TO SIN...**

I'm saved by God's grace. I'm forgiven. I'm an heir of eternal life. I believe all this through the gift of faith. But why, then, do I continue to sin? Where's my peace and comfort when I continue to fail in living a Christian life? What do I do?

#### **ROMANS 7:15-20**

**<sup>15</sup> I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. <sup>16</sup> And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. <sup>17</sup> As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. <sup>18</sup> I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. <sup>19</sup> For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. <sup>20</sup> Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.**

- ✧ What does Paul say is the constant struggle of the Christian life?
- ✧ Paul says in verse 16 that the law is good. Remember, the law is the part of God's Word that shows us our sinfulness. How is the law good?
- ✧ How long will this struggle against sin last?
- ✧ Even though Paul continues to sin, what is the evidence that the Holy Spirit is still at work inside of Paul?

*This concept is called our life of **SANCTIFICATION**. This is the work of the Holy Spirit as he makes us holy by connecting us to Jesus through faith. And then he instills in us the desire to remain holy, to live God-pleasing lives.*

*Sanctification is a continual process—we will never be sinless in this life, but we do desire to sin less.*

#### **ROMANS 7:21-25**

**<sup>21</sup> So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. <sup>22</sup> For in my inner being I delight in God's law; <sup>23</sup> but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. <sup>24</sup> What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? <sup>25</sup> Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!**

- ✧ Paul describes a war that rages within every Christian. What are the two sides in that war?
- ✧ Just because sin is unavoidable doesn't mean that we should be comfortable with it. How does Paul express that in verse 24?

### FACING SIN AND TEMPTATION

As a Christian, I know I am a blood-bought soul of Jesus. I don't want to sin. So, how do I face all the temptations that are all around me—from other people, from Satan, and even from my own sinful flesh?

#### **EPHESIANS 6:10-17**

**<sup>10</sup> Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. <sup>11</sup> Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. <sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. <sup>13</sup> Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. <sup>14</sup> Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, <sup>15</sup> and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup> In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup> Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.**

✧ As we face temptation and the schemes of the devil, we are directed to be strong not in ourselves, but in the \_\_\_\_\_.

✧ We are told not to arm ourselves with grit, determination, and belief in ourselves, but with the full \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_.

✧ Describe the pieces of armor God gives us to wear as we battle with sin and temptation:

*Belt of truth –*

*Breastplate of righteousness –*

*Feet fitted with readiness from the gospel of peace –*

*Shield of faith –*

*Helmet of salvation –*

*Sword of the spirit –*

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### LET'S REVIEW

What does God teach us in his Word about how to overcome our doubts and fears?

#### **1 THESSALONIANS 5:23-24**

**<sup>23</sup> May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup> The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.**

- ◇ The plan of salvation is from \_\_\_\_\_.
- ◇ The work of salvation was carried out by \_\_\_\_\_.
- ◇ The ability to trust our salvation comes from the \_\_\_\_\_.
- ◇ The comfort we need when we fail in our Christian living comes from \_\_\_\_\_.
- ◇ The ability to live God-pleasing lives comes from \_\_\_\_\_.

Do you have doubts and fears about your forgiveness? About your failures in your Christian living? About your eternity? Take heart! You have a loving, merciful, gracious God who meets your every need in every way!

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### FOR STUDY AT HOME

1. Complete the *Search the Scriptures* below.

2. Memorize the following passages from this lesson:

**EPHESIANS 2:8** – *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God...*

**ROMANS 10:17** – *Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.*

3. Read the following chapters of Genesis. Write down any big “ah-hahs” you might have, as well as any questions.

**DAY ONE** – *Read Genesis 26-28*

**DAY THREE** – *Read Genesis 29-31*

**DAY FIVE** – *Read Genesis 32-35*

### SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

Read Acts 2:1-42 and answer the questions below.

1. What is the name of the day on which these events happened (v. 1)?
2. What were the external, visible signs that showed the Holy Spirit was coming to his disciples (v. 2-4)?
3. What is meant by “other tongues” (v. 4, 11)?
4. Which disciples preached the sermon on that day (v. 14)?
5. Whose work was spoken about in the sermon (v. 22-24)?
6. What were all the people to know and believe (v. 36)?

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

7. How did the people react to the words (v. 37)?
8. What did Peter urge the people to do (v. 38-40)?
9. How many people were baptized on that day (v. 41)?
10. After the people were converted, to what things did they devote themselves (v. 42)?
11. Which person of the Trinity was responsible for the conversions on that day (v. 38)?
12. Which tools did the Holy Spirit use to bring people to faith on that day (v. 38)?

### IN OUR WORSHIP

Usually near the end of our worship services, we include a prayer that reminds us of the comfort we have when we face doubts and fears. One of the reasons we include such a prayer at the end of our worship services is so that we remember this comfort throughout the week (when we aren't at worship). Below is a sample of several prayers like this. As you read through these prayers, think of how they point us back to the comfort that our salvation is entirely God's doing. And then think of how they ask for strength to trust this salvation and live a God-pleasing life.

...from *Christian Worship*, p. 25:

*Blessed Lord, you have given us your Holy Scriptures for our learning. May we so hear them, read, learn, and take them to heart, that being strengthened and comforted by your holy Word, we may cling to the blessed hope of everlasting life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.*

...from *Christian Worship*, p. 36:

*Hear the prayer of your people, O Lord, that the lips which have praised you here may glorify you in the world, that the eyes which have seen the coming of your Son may long for his coming again, and that all who have received in his true body and blood the pledge of your forgiveness may be restored to live a new and holy life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.*



# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

...from *Christian Worship*, p. 43:

*Almighty God, we thank you for teaching us the things you want us to believe and do. Help us by your Holy Spirit to keep your Word in pure hearts that we may be strengthened in faith, guided in holiness, and comforted in life and in death, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.*

### OUR LIFE OF SANCTIFICATION

If you turn on the stove and place a pot of water over the heat, the water will warm and eventually boil. There's no doubt about the consequences that follow. We depend on those consequences to prepare our meals or to have a cup of coffee.

A person who has heard the loving call of Jesus, who has received the forgiveness of sins won at Calvary, who trusts in Christ as his Redeemer and calls the Son of God his friend—such a person will produce the fruit of repentance and righteousness. There's no doubt about the consequences that follow from the fire of the Holy Spirit burning in a Christian's heart.

We call this *sanctification* — the good works that flow from saving faith. When the Holy Spirit creates faith in our hearts, God *justifies* us, declaring us not guilty of sin. But he also *sanctifies* us, enabling us to be set apart from the sinful world by living a life of good works.

- **Sanctification flows from justification**

In a previous lesson, we saw that one of the terms God uses to describe our salvation is *justification*. God *justifies* us when he declares us not guilty of our sin. He does this on the basis of our faith in Jesus Christ. We must always distinguish between justification and sanctification, for they are two very distinct things:

- ✧ Justification is what God *has done for us* by his grace through the merits of Christ. Sanctification is what God *continues to do in us* as he daily calls believers out of this dark world, turns us away from the temptations of the flesh, and shuts our ears to the seductions of Satan.
- ✧ Justification is a *change in our status* before God. He no longer calls us sinners, but saints. Sanctification is a Spirit-produced *change in our behavior*. We strive to act saintly, avoiding sin.
- ✧ Justification is *finished, accomplished* forever by the completed sacrifice of Jesus. Sanctification is *ongoing and incomplete*, as the Spirit continually works in believing hearts a life of devotion and thanksgiving.
- ✧ God's justification *caused* our salvation. God's sanctification is a *consequence* of our salvation, flowing naturally from our connection with Christ.

Yet, even as we must maintain the distinction between justification and sanctification, we cannot separate them, as if one can occur without the other. Sanctification cannot take place without justification, because "*without faith it is impossible to please God*" (Hebrews 11:6). Personal justification always produces sanctification, because faith without actions is dead (James 2:17). "*If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth*" (1 John 1:6).

- **Sanctification is no basis for salvation**

But wait a second here! If I look at my own heart, I find nothing there but sinful thoughts, evil desires, and rebellious attitudes. If I listen to my own lips I hear hurtful words, lies, gossip, slander, and blasphemies. Where is this sanctified life that I am to be living? If I examine myself, I find nothing in me but sin and death—which I can in no way overcome and from which I can in no way set myself free! *“For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing”* (Romans 7:19).

We must be very careful that we never look at ourselves for proof of our Christianity. Self-examination that seeks proof of salvation ends up producing self-righteous dishonesty. Or it breeds frustration and despair—a hopeless terror of having to face God to give an account for a failed and wicked life.

Remember, the proof of who we are in Christ comes from the outside. God has decreed our identity by cleansing us with Jesus' blood, clothing us with Christ in baptism, declaring us forgiven through his absolution, and joining us to himself in Holy Communion. The amazing truth is that even as we wrestle with our sins, struggle mightily against them, and frequently stumble and fall, we are still continually found righteous before God! The myriad of sins that we commit daily are not taken into account, because they were paid for centuries ago at the cross. All our efforts to serve the Lord, though they appear so feeble and inadequate, are fragrant and delightful to God, because they flow from faith in Christ.

- **Sanctification is unassuming**

Sanctification is Christ—who lived for us—now living in us and living through us. The apostle Paul says, *“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me”* (Galatians 2:20).

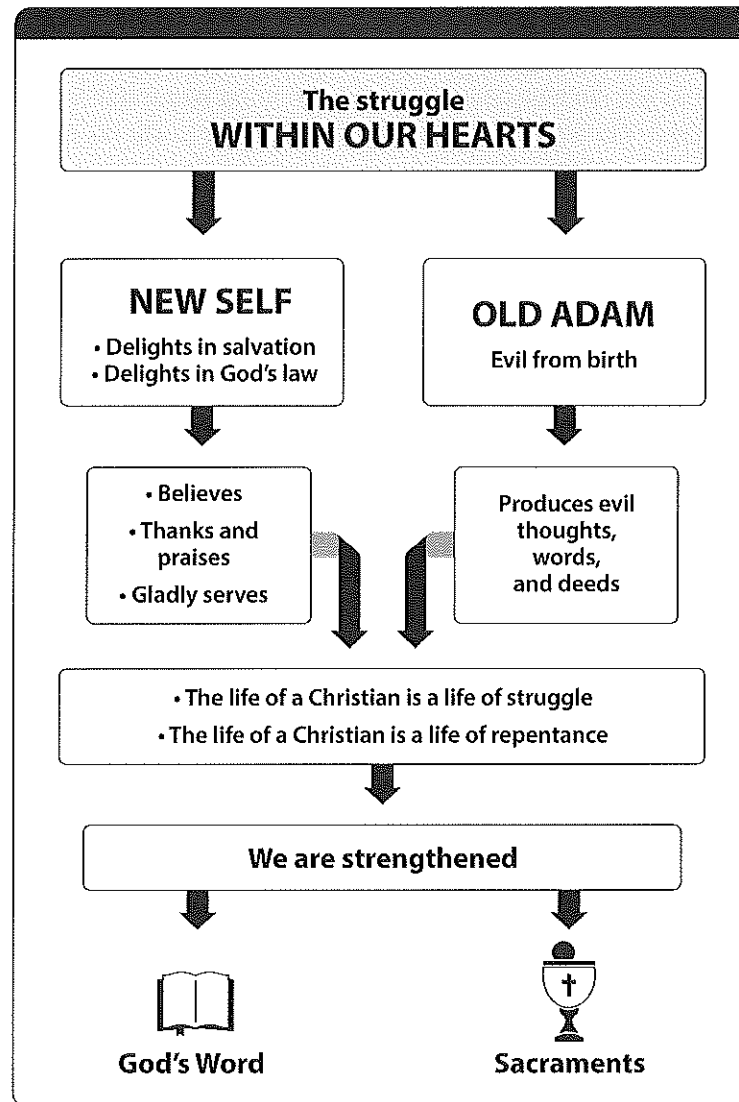
On the Last Day, Jesus will point to the sheep on his right and say to believers, *“Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in...”* Then the righteous will reply, *“Lord, when did we see you...?”* (Matthew 25:34-37). The righteous were not even conscious of the good works they had done, and they certainly didn't trust in them. They simply lived what they believed.

Good works that flow from faith are not always outstanding acts of philanthropy or highly visible demonstrations of charity. They are done by Christians, and they may go unrecognized by everyone but God himself. Sanctification is a Christian mother putting food on the dinner table. It's a Christian father helping his son comb his hair before church. It's children doing their homework, employees working faithfully, authorities governing diligently. A life of good works is the humble, unassuming Christian life.

But in the end, all who have lived in Christ and his righteousness and who have had Christ living in them, will hear the words, *“Well done, good and faithful servant! Come and share your master's happiness!”* (Matthew 25:21).

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS



### *How can I simply get through my week?*

#### LESSON 6

Life is tough and tiring. There are so many demands on your time—at home, at work, in your relationships. There's so much to do and seemingly so little time to do it all. Every day just leaves you feeling more exhausted than the next. So how do you get through it? How do you cope?

Well, you can sit down and prioritize, figuring out what's most important and focusing on those things. You can eat right, exercise, and make sure you get enough rest. You can take regular time for relaxation and mindfulness. And all these are important, but there's one thing more important than all of them—listening to Jesus' call to us: "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:25).

In this lesson, we are going to take a closer look at the importance of our time with God. As we study his Word in both worship and Bible Study, we will see the wonderful benefits it has for our lives.

#### **THE WAY GOD GIVES SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS**

God desires to give us every spiritual blessing we could ever need or want. He desires to strengthen our faith in Jesus, assure us of our forgiveness, give us hearts of peace, fill us with joy, and increase our hope for eternal life. These are the things we need more than anything as we go through this life, and God wants to give them to us in great abundance! And he chooses to give these spiritual blessings in specific ways.

##### **ROMANS 10:17**

<sup>17</sup> **Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.**

##### **JOHN 20:31**

<sup>31</sup> **But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**

##### **2 TIMOTHY 3:15**

<sup>15</sup> **...and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.**

##### **ROMANS 1:16**

<sup>16</sup> **I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes...**

**THE WORD OF CHRIST** is the gospel. The Holy Spirit creates and strengthens faith through the good news of the gospel about Christ, about what he has done, and about what he still does for us.

**SCRIPTURES** = literally, "the writings"; another term for God's Word

The Greek word for "power" in Romans 1 is related to our English word "dynamite."

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

- ✧ If we desire to strengthen our faith to trust in God's promises, we need to...

### **1 PETER 2:2**

**<sup>2</sup> Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation...**

- ✧ To what does God compare his Word?
- ✧ How does God's Word help us "grow up in our salvation"?

### **2 PETER 3:18**

**<sup>18</sup> But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.**

- ✧ What's the purpose of growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus?
- ✧ What does "grace" mean? Why is it so important to grow in this grace?

### **PSALM 1**

**<sup>1</sup> Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. <sup>2</sup> But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. <sup>3</sup> He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. <sup>4</sup> Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. <sup>5</sup> Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. <sup>6</sup> For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.**

*Often we think of the law as the 10 Commandments. But in the Bible, the word "law" can be used more generally to refer to all of God's Word. That's how it's used here in Psalm 1.*

- ✧ What blessings come from growing in God's Word according to this psalm?

## **THE SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS GOD GIVES**

Let's look more closely at just a few of the many blessings God desires to give us through his Word to aid us in this life and prepare us for eternal life.

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### PSALM 32:5

**<sup>5</sup>Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"—and you forgave the guilt of my sin.**

*Note that God doesn't just forgive our sin—he even removes our guilt from us!*

- ◇ In his Word, God assures us of our \_\_\_\_\_.
- ◇ Why do we daily need to be reminded of the full and free forgiveness we have in Jesus?

### PSALM 16:11

**<sup>11</sup>You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.**

- ◇ When we know the "path of life" (our home in heaven) we are filled with \_\_\_\_\_.
- ◇ Why is the blessing of joy so important for our daily lives?

### PHILIPPIANS 4:7

**<sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

- ◇ Even though we may not always "feel" it, God tells us that we have \_\_\_\_\_.
- ◇ What is peace? How does it guard our hearts and minds?

### ROMANS 15:4

**<sup>4</sup>For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.**

**HOPE = Biblical hope is not a wish for something; it is a confidence in something we don't yet see or have (even though it already belongs to us.**

- ◇ The Bible was written to give us endurance, encouragement, and \_\_\_\_\_.
- ◇ Why do we need these blessings in our lives?

# ANSWERS

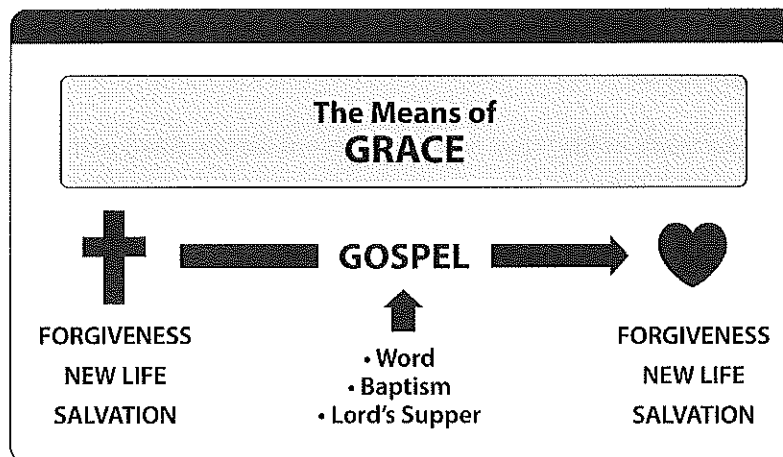
## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### HOW DOES GOD COME TO US?

God desires to give us all of these blessings: faith, forgiveness, peace, joy, hope, and so many more, to sustain us in this life and prepare us for our eternal life. He gives all these blessings fully without measure through the gospel. The way the gospel is received by us is through the Means of Grace (the way God's grace comes to us).

The Means of Grace are God's Word and the Sacraments. These are the only ways that God has promised to give these wonderful blessings, so they are vital for our spiritual life and health!

**SACRAMENTS =**  
*Holy Baptism and Holy Communion; these are extra special ways that God gives us these wonderful spiritual blessings.*



### CONNECTING OURSELVES TO THE MEANS OF GRACE

We've seen the wonderful blessings God wants us to have. We know how they come to us. And so we want to be in his Word! Reading your Bible at home is vital! Doing Bible study here at church or in your home or with friends is important! Doing devotions with your family is wonderful! (In the extra material with this lesson are some tips and tools for doing all these things.) But God also provides us with another great opportunity to receive these blessings: public worship.

#### **HEBREWS 10:25**

**<sup>25</sup> Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.**

- ✧ What is a habit? For what reasons does God want our worship to be a habit?
  
- ✧ How do we "encourage one another" in public worship?

*The Greek word used for "meeting together" means to "worship together."*



# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

- ✧ How does “the Day approaching” add a sense of urgency to the habit of worship?

### **COLOSSIANS 3:15-17**

**<sup>15</sup> Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.**

- ✧ What are some ways that believers demonstrate they are “one body” when they worship together?
- ✧ What does the word “richly” add to the meaning of verse 16?
- ✧ What’s the difference between teaching and admonishing? And how do both happen when we “sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs”?
- ✧ How many times is the idea of thanksgiving mentioned in these verses? What is obviously one of the purposes of worship?
- ✧ How does this passage help you speak to someone who doesn’t feel the need to come to worship regularly?

### **PSALM 149:1-4**

**<sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD. Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the saints. <sup>2</sup> Let Israel rejoice in their Maker; let the people of Zion be glad in their King. <sup>3</sup> Let them praise his name with dancing and make music to him with tambourine and harp. <sup>4</sup> For the LORD takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with salvation.**

*Note that there isn't just one way to worship God, but the focus must always be on Christ!*

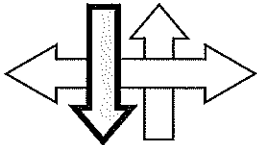
- ✧ Some people will say, “I can worship God all by myself in my own home.” This is a true statement. But where else does God ask us to worship him according to verse 1?
- ✧ What are some benefits to worshipping in a group that you cannot enjoy on your own?
- ✧ Why do we worship God (verse 4)?

# ANSWERS

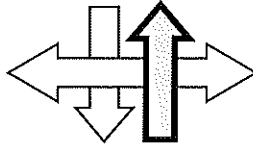
## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### THE "CONVERSATIONS" IN WORSHIP

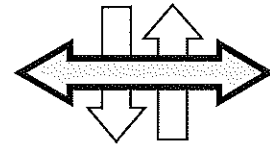
Sometimes, we describe the three "conversations" that happen in worship to help us understand the wonderful blessings of gathering regularly with other believers.



**GOD SPEAKS TO US**



**WE RESPOND TO GOD**



**WE ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER**

Even though our worship includes these three different "conversations," the *primary* direction in worship is from God to us. The "topic of conversation" each week in our worship is God's grace shown to us through his Son, Jesus Christ, revealed to us in the gospel. The gospel takes center stage in worship because it alone has the power to create and strengthen faith and pour God's spiritual blessings into our hearts and lives.

### THE "PATTERNS" IN WORSHIP

We want to be sure that our worship is focused on the gospel every single Sunday. And so, every year, we review the life and ministry of Christ in worship. Every Sunday, we review the saving work of Christ in worship. The name for the yearly repeating pattern in worship is called the *Church Year*. The name for the weekly repeating pattern in worship is called the *Liturgy*.

CHURCH YEAR SEASON	DESCRIPTION
	We prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth. As New Testament Christians, we also prepare for Jesus to return at the end of time. This season lasts 4 weeks.
	We celebrate the birth of Jesus who miraculously came into this world as the God-man to be our Savior. This season lasts 12 days.
	Jesus reveals himself as the Savior of the world in his ministry, his preaching, and his miracles. This season lasts anywhere from 5 to 8 weeks.
	This is the somber and repentant season of the year. We mourn our sins as we also see Jesus battle Satan in our place. This season lasts 6 ½ weeks.
	This is the last week of the aforementioned season. We remember special days like Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday.

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

	Jesus rises from the dead! The risen Lord appears to his disciples and proves that he has accomplished our salvation. This season lasts 7 weeks.
	In response to Jesus' saving work for us, we live God-pleasing lives through the powerful working of the Holy Spirit. This season varies in length (usually around 20 weeks).
	As the church year comes to a close, our attention is drawn to the end of the world. This season lasts 4 weeks.

Even the lessons that we use in worship follow an order. We (and many denominations) use what's called a lectionary—a set of three years' worth of lessons. You can find the lectionary we follow on pages 163-165 of our *Christian Worship* hymnal. We want to be sure that we remain focused on Christ and teach all of God's Word.

In our worship services we also follow what's called a *liturgy*. The term *liturgy* is based on an ancient Greek word that means "the service of the people." Originally the word referred to a public service project that benefited the general population. Now the term refers to the service God does for his people when Christians gather for public worship.

Notice how the general pattern of the liturgy includes the "conversations" in worship that were noted earlier in this lesson. You may want to look at one of the services in *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal* to see this pattern as it appears in an actual order of service. They can be found on pages 15-38 in the hymnal.

*Confession of Sins*

*Absolution* (announcement of forgiveness)

*Prayer and Praise*

*God's Word* (lessons and sermon)

*Creed* (confession of faith)

*Offering* (both monetary and musical)

*Prayers and Lord's Prayer*

*Holy Communion*

*Blessing*



# ANSWERS

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## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

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Public worship (or “corporate worship”) is one of the most important activities that takes place in a Christian congregation. In worship, the Lord serves us and strengthens us with the good news of Christ’s love and saving work. While we do respond to God’s grace in worship, the most important part of worship is the service that God gives to us in Word and Sacrament.

Christians have developed various patterns and forms of worship throughout history that highlight the life and work of Jesus Christ. Pastors and worship leaders strive to use forms, whether new or old, that highlight Christ’s forgiveness in the gospel as clearly and faithfully as possible. While God’s Word gives us a great degree of freedom in worship, Christian congregations desire to utilize worship forms, songs, and customs that will strengthen the faith of the worshippers by faithfully pointing them to Jesus’ saving work in every service.

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### FOR STUDY AT HOME

1. Complete the *Search the Scriptures* and the *True/False* below.
2. Memorize the following passages from this lesson:

**JOHN 20:31** – *But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

**2 PETER 3:18** – *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

### SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

Read Luke 8:4-15 and answer the questions below.

1. Jesus describes four different results when the seed is sown. What are they (v. 5-8)?
2. Jesus explains four different ways the Word of God was received. What are they (v. 11-15)?
3. What does the “seed” represent in this parable (v. 11)?
4. What kind of result does Jesus want when we hear God’s Word (v. 15)?

### TRUE/FALSE

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Singing praise songs to God is the most important part of worship.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. God would be happy if all we did was listen to his Word in worship.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. A Christian can worship God without going to church.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Hearing the gospel about Jesus Christ is the most important part of worship.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Many people who got to church are hypocrites.

### TEN SUGGESTIONS FOR BIBLE STUDY

God's Word has the power to accomplish monumental tasks — creating and strengthening faith. But there are obstacles that can get in the way of our Bible study — lack of time, difficulty in understanding the translation, etc. In the remainder of this study we will look at ten principles of reading the Bible. Some of them are found in the Bible. Some of them are simple common sense. Together these principles help to remove some of the obstacles that can stand in the way of fruitful Bible study.

**1. Begin every Bible study with prayer.**

**2 Peter 3:16** - [Paul's] letters contain some things that are hard to understand...

**Psalms 119:18** - Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.

God's Word is clear. It contains everything we need to know about how we are saved. The main message of Jesus' payment for our sins is simple to see. But parts of God's Word are challenging to our simple, sinful minds. The psalmist's prayer listed above will be our prayer as well. We begin our Bible study by asking the Holy Spirit to "open our eyes" so that we might understand and love everything we read.

**2. Use one, appropriate translation.**

**Nehemiah 8:7-8** - The Levites...instructed the people in the Law while the people were standing there. They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read.

The Levites were the tribe of the Israelites that served as priests. In these verses the Levites need to clarify some things from the ancient Hebrew text to the people. We said before that there are obstacles to our studying God's Word. One obstacle is using a translation that is difficult to understand. Picking a translation that is written in straight-forward, modern English can make Bible study much easier and more enjoyable.

**3. Set aside a specific time each day for study.**

**Daniel 6:10** - Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.

We know how well we accomplish tasks when we say, "I'll get to it when I have time." Setting aside a specific time slot in your day for Bible study helps insure that you will cover a fair amount of material in a short amount of time.

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### 4. Always pay attention to the context of what you are reading.

Consider each passage in light of the verses that surround it. Consider the paragraph that it's in. Consider the book of the Bible that it comes from. Doctrinal errors often are the result of Bible passages that are ripped out of context. So as you read, ask yourself questions such as, "Who is the speaker in this verse?" "Who is being spoken to?" "What just happened to make the person say this?" "Under what circumstances was this passage written?"

### 5. Always consider parallel passages and cross-references.

You can't determine what God has to say on a subject until you've looked at every passage that deals with that subject. Scripture helps us interpret other portions of Scripture. Here's an example. Consider the following two passages.

**James 2:20** - *You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?*

**Ephesians 2:8-9** - *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.*

If we wanted to find out how we are saved and the only passage we looked at was James 2:20, we might get the impression that our good works play a part in our salvation. But when you look at the fuller context of James (cf. principle #4), you realize he's addressing a specific problem. People were claiming that if you had faith in Jesus, you had a license to sin. When you look at cross-references such as Ephesians 2:8-9 it becomes overwhelmingly clear that our works play no part in our salvation. Allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture further helps to safeguard Bible truths for us.

### 6. Take a passage literally unless the Bible itself tells you it's figurative.

Don't look for hidden meanings in God's Word. If the passage is meant to be taken figuratively either the passage itself or the context of the surrounding passages will indicate it is figurative speech. For example, a metaphor or simile is clearly figurative. A simile uses the word "like" or "as" to make a comparison. A metaphor makes a comparison by making a symbolic connection without the words "like" or "as."

**Matthew 13:24** - *Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field."*

**Psalms 119:105** - *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.*

Obviously, the Bible does not give off light. But the passage figuratively describes how God's Word gives guidance in life.

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

**Matthew 19:24** - *"Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."*

This is a figure of speech known as hyperbole—exaggerating a statement for effect. Jesus' point is that a rich person's love of money can very easily supercede their love for God, which is idolatry. The type of literature we're reading will also help us determine if something is literal or figurative. Poetry (the Psalms, for example) will often be figurative. Apocalyptic writing often uses very vivid picture language to make a point (the book of Revelation, for example).

### **7. Consider all passages in light of the clear, chief truths of God's Word.**

No correct interpretation of a portion of Scripture will contradict the doctrines that are easy to see and often stated in Scripture (for example: mankind's sinfulness, salvation by grace through faith, the deity of Jesus Christ, etc).

### **8. Plan out a method of Bible study.**

It is especially difficult to get a flow of thought and determine context if you study the Bible by randomly choosing what you are going to read. One good method of studying the Bible is book by book. You can get a sense of progression through the book, and maybe you can even outline what you've read. Introductory information from Bible handbooks might be useful. Another way to approach study is topically. Pick a topic and then look at all the passages in the Bible that deal with that topic. A good concordance would be helpful for this approach.

### **9. Familiarize yourself with an overview of Bible history.**

This will take time, so don't rush yourself. But the Bible becomes even richer when you can arrange events in some sort of chronological order. The Biblical accounts become more vivid when you begin to grasp the historical context and customs of the day. For example, the sacrificial system of the Israelite's worship seems, at face value, overly complex and even somewhat barbaric. But when you come to understand how each sacrifice somehow foreshadowed the work of Christ, your appreciation for Old Testament worship life is greatly enhanced. (For aid in increasing your knowledge of Bible history, try using *The People's Bible* series for your personal Bible study from time to time. Sunday morning Bible classes on Bible history are also very beneficial.)

### **10. Meditate on what you read.**

**Hebrews 4:12** - *For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*



# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

**Psalm 1:1-3** - *Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.*

The Bible is unlike any book you've ever read. Therefore, you shouldn't read it like you would a novel or a newspaper. You want more than simple knowledge of what it says. You want to *use* what it says—to apply what it says to your life. Focus on every word. Ask yourself questions like, "What do these verses tell me about God? What does this tell me about myself? What here makes me happy—or sad? How does God want to use this portion of his Word to change me to be more like him?" Throughout the day, turn that portion of Scripture over and over in your head. As you study, don't be afraid to take notes or write in your Bibles. It helps reinforce what you've read. And don't be afraid to come to your pastor with any questions you might have.

### RESOURCES FOR PERSONAL AND FAMILY TIME IN GOD'S WORD

You eat more than once a week, so we need to feed our faith more than once a week as well! Time in God's Word throughout the week is vital to your spiritual health and growth. Try to be sure that the resources that you are using are written by authors that have the same honor of God's Word as you do. There are many books, websites, etc. that do not believe what you believe about God and the Bible. If you choose to read something by an author you are unsure about, read "discerningly," and be sure to compare it to what God's Word says. You may also consider asking your pastor for guidance.

Below is a short list of user-friendly resources to aid you in your time in God's Word that you can be confident will accurately reflect God's Word.

#### **Luther's Small and Large Catechisms**

A Catechism is a book of questions and answers that teaches the basic doctrines (teachings) of the Bible. They were originally written for parents to teach their children the truths of God's Word. They are useful tools to train both children and adults as well as to review the basics of our Christian faith. They are the basis for the contents of this class.

#### **Meditations Devotion Book**

This book of devotions is written by pastors of our church body and contains a different devotion for every day of the year. The booklets come out quarterly and are available at our church. They are short, yet focused on God's love for us in Jesus. They apply God's Word to our lives. They are a great resource for personal or family time in God's Word. There are also special prayers available for use in the back of the book.

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### **WELS Daily Devotion**

You can subscribe to get a daily devotion by email at this link: <https://wels.net/subscribe/subscribe-to-daily-devotions>.

### ***The People's Bible***

The Bible can be a difficult book to understand and read through. *The People's Bible* was written by pastors of our church body, explaining the Bible in very simple ways. There is a *People's Bible* for every book of the Bible and they are very helpful tools to deepen your biblical knowledge and understanding.

### ***The Moody Atlas of Bible Lands***

This book (and others like it) can help you better understand Bible history and geography.

### **Bible Timeline**

It can be helpful to have a Bible timeline handy (they are available online for free) to help keep dates of events and people in mind.

Our church body has its own publishing house—Northwestern Publishing House—that offers many more resources for devotions, Bible studies, and books on different topics at all different levels. Their website is *nph.net*.

*May God bless your study of his Word! May it equip you with the tools you need to get through this life! May it fill you with joy as you realize you have eternal life!*

### *Can I get a fresh start in my life?*

#### LESSON 7

Do you ever wish life had a “do-over” button? Maybe you’re carrying around guilt and regret from things in the past you’ve done or said. Maybe you look back at your day as you lay your head down at night and think about all the mistakes you’ve made, the people you’ve hurt, the good things you should’ve done but didn’t, the bad things you shouldn’t have done but still did...and you just wish you could get a fresh start. To be different tomorrow. To wipe the slate clean and be something—someone—different.

God gives us a way to have a fresh start—each and every day. In the wonderful gift of Baptism, we’ll see how God assures us that we are washed clean of our sins. We are forgiven in Jesus. And, in his grace, our Baptism continues to assure us every day of our forgiveness and good standing with him. God gives us a fresh start!

#### **THE SACRAMENTS**

It’s customary for a bride and groom to exchange rings during their marriage ceremony. Their marriage would certainly be valid even if they didn’t exchange rings. They could even save a good deal of money if they didn’t purchase wedding rings! Why is it, then, that couples still exchange rings during their wedding ceremony and wear them regularly?

God has already shown us how much he loves us in his Word. But saying, “I love you” isn’t enough for our gracious God. He wants to *continually show* us his love. He wants us to have visible signs of his love, just as couples proudly wear their wedding rings as a sign of their love for one another. God shows us his love in visible ways in the *sacraments*.

It’s important to understand that many different church bodies define “sacrament” in many different ways. God does not explicitly tell us in his Word how to define the term “sacrament.” However, God does give some very specific details about how he gives us certain blessings in our lives. Because of this, in our church body, we define a sacrament in the following way:

- ✧ A sacrament is instituted by \_\_\_\_\_.
  
- ✧ A sacrament uses a \_\_\_\_\_ element connected with God’s \_\_\_\_\_.
  
- ✧ A sacrament gives the promise of \_\_\_\_\_.

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

There are two sacraments that fit this definition:



### WHAT HAPPENS IN BAPTISM?

A common misconception that people have about Baptism is that it is only a symbol by which believers shows their dedication and commitment to Christ. How does the Bible describe Baptism?

*The Greek word for "baptize" simply means "to wash with water." The water has no inherent power. The idea of "holy water" is a man-made teaching.*

#### **EPHESIANS 5:25-26**

**<sup>25</sup> ...just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her <sup>26</sup> to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word...**

- ✧ What is connected to the water in Baptism?
- ✧ Without the \_\_\_\_\_, the water is just \_\_\_\_\_!

#### **MATTHEW 28:19-20**

**<sup>19</sup> "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."**

- ✧ What words does Jesus command us to connect to the water in Baptism?
- ✧ What does it mean to be baptized "in" the name of the triune God?

#### **ACTS 22:16**

**<sup>16</sup> "And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name."**

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### ACTS 2:38-39

<sup>38</sup> Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup> The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

- ✧ What two blessings do these passages say we receive through Baptism?
  
- ✧ The word "baptize" simply means to wash with water (see Mark 7:3-4). What does this teach about the method of Baptism (e.g. sprinkling, pouring, immersing)?
  
- ✧ Therefore, what is Baptism?

**SOMETHING WE DO  
FOR GOD**

**SOMETHING GOD  
DOES FOR US**

### **HOW IS BAPTISM ABLE TO DO ALL THIS?**

That is why it would be incorrect to think of Baptism as just a *sign* or a *symbol*. It is a *sacrament*. The promise of forgiveness is linked with something we can see and touch. Jesus went so far as to link Baptism with salvation. "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mark 16:16). The following passages explain exactly how Baptism does its great work.

### 1 PETER 3:21

<sup>21</sup> ...and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ...

### GALATIANS 3:27

<sup>27</sup> ...for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

- ✧ To whom are we linked in Baptism?

### TITUS 3:4-5

<sup>4</sup> But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, <sup>5</sup> he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit...

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

- ✧ How does God save us?
- ✧ What do the pictures of rebirth and renewal teach us about what God does for us in Baptism?
- ✧ Therefore, what is Baptism?

### **SOMETHING WE DO FOR GOD**

### **SOMETHING GOD DOES FOR US**

#### **NOT “I WAS BAPTIZED” BUT “I AM BAPTIZED”**

The Bible teaches that since it is God who pledges himself to me in Baptism (and not me pledging myself to him), only one Baptism is necessary. But your Baptism is not just a one-time event—the blessings continue every day of your life.

#### **ROMANS 6:1-7**

**<sup>1</sup>What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? <sup>2</sup>By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? <sup>3</sup>Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup>We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. <sup>5</sup>If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. <sup>6</sup>For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— <sup>7</sup>because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.**

- ✧ What part of us gets buried with Christ through Baptism (verse 6)? What is God's purpose in burying that part of us (verse 4, 6)?
- ✧ What are we raised to be in our baptism?
- ✧ Through Baptism, the Holy Spirit creates or strengthens faith in Christ. Through faith in Christ, we receive the forgiveness of sins. But here Paul also says we receive spiritual strength through our Baptism. What does that spiritual strength enables us to do?

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

✧ Therefore, what is Baptism?

**SOMETHING WE DO  
FOR GOD**

**SOMETHING GOD  
DOES FOR US**

### WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

There are two ways for us to tell for whom Baptism is intended. The first is to look at who can benefit from being baptized. The second is to look at Jesus' words about whom should be baptized. Both ways teach us that God has no desire to limit his gift of Baptism.

#### PSALM 14:3

<sup>3</sup>All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.

#### ROMANS 3:23

<sup>23</sup>...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...

#### ISAIAH 59:2

<sup>2</sup>But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.

✧ Who is guilty of sin?

✧ What happens if the problem of sin is not taken care of?

#### GENESIS 8:21

<sup>21</sup>The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: "Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood."

#### PSALM 51:5

<sup>5</sup>Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

#### JOHN 3:6

<sup>6</sup>Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.

*"Inherited sin" or  
"original sin" is  
the sinful flesh  
with which we are  
born because we  
have sinful  
parents.*

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

- ✧ At what time in our lives did God first consider us guilty of sin?
- ✧ Psalm 51 makes it clear that human life begins at conception, for God considers what is conceived to be sinful. How can this be since we don't have a fully formed brain or a fully formed body yet at conception?

### **ACTS 22:16**

**<sup>16</sup> "And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name."**

### **JOHN 3:5**

**<sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit."**

### **ACTS 2:38-39**

**<sup>38</sup> Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup> The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."**

- ✧ What does Baptism do to sins?
- ✧ Therefore, for whom is the promise and blessing of Baptism intended?

### **MATTHEW 28:18-20**

**<sup>18</sup> Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."**

- ✧ Jesus tells us that we should baptize \_\_\_\_\_.
- ✧ Is there anything in Jesus' words that would limit whom we would baptize?
- ✧ What does Jesus say goes hand-in-hand with Baptism?



# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### FOR STUDY AT HOME

1. Complete the *Search the Scriptures* and the *True/False* below.
2. Memorize the following passages from this lesson:

**EPHESIANS 5:25-26** – *...just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word...*

**MATTHEW 28:19-20** – *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

### SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

Read Acts 16:19-34 and answer the questions below.

1. Which two apostles were put in prison (v. 19)?
2. What did these apostles do while they were in prison (v. 25)?
3. What happened while the apostles were in prison (v. 26)?
4. What was the jailor going to do (v. 27)?
5. What did the apostles tell the jailor to do (v. 28)?
6. What two things did the apostles do for the jailor and his family that night (v. 31-33)?
7. How did the jailor and his family feel after this (v. 34)?

### TRUE/FALSE

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The sacraments are important because Jesus instituted them and commanded their use.

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The Means of Grace actually give or strengthen faith in Jesus.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The word “baptize” means “to immerse completely under water.”
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Baptism is still good even if the Word of God is left out.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Any believer—not just pastors—can baptize another person.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Infants can actually have faith in Jesus as their Savior.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Only through the Bible and the sacraments can we receive the gift of faith.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Those who are baptized but then fall away should be re-baptized if they return to faith.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. The real power in Baptism is the Word of God.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. A Christian can take great comfort in Baptism because of God's promise of forgiveness.

### QUESTIONS ABOUT BAPTISM

**Question 1:** *What happens to babies who die before they are baptized?*

God tells us in his Word that “whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16). Baptism most certainly gives the blessings of forgiveness, life, and salvation. But the Bible also leaves room for the possibility for people who have *not* been baptized to come to faith and be saved (the thief on the cross may be just such an example). All we can say is that God has commanded us to use Baptism. What we do know about God and salvation is what the Bible tells us. It is only by grace that anyone is saved. And our God is loving, kind, caring, forgiving, and gracious. So we leave it in his hands. Obviously parents will want to have their children baptized as soon as possible. If Baptism cannot be conducted in a church service within a few weeks, a private Baptism at the church or in the home can be arranged.

**Question 2:** *Who should administer Baptism?*

God tells us in his Word that “everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way (1 Corinthians 14:40). God has given his church the command to baptize. For the sake of good order, it makes sense that we give this responsibility to our pastor(s). Baptizing, preaching, teaching, and communing are some of the important tasks that we “call” pastors to do. (We will study more about this call to carry out the church’s ministry in a future lesson). In an emergency, any Christian may administer Baptism. In such an extreme case, it is obviously more important that a dying person is baptized than whether or not a pastor administered the Baptism. (The bottom of page 14 in *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal* indicates what should be done in the case of an emergency Baptism).

**Question 3:** *Are sponsors or godparents necessary for Baptism?*

No. The practice of having sponsors or godparents for Baptism is not commanded in the Bible. It is entirely a matter of personal freedom. Baptism is not more or less valid with or without godparents. In the early history of the church, an adult who desired Baptism needed a “sponsor” to confirm that he or she was legitimately interested in becoming a Christian and being baptized. Enemies who wanted to persecute the church tried to infiltrate congregations by posing as converts who wanted to be baptized. Our modern practice of godparents at a child’s Baptism is really a development from the early church’s practice of using sponsors. If the godparent’s role is simply to be a witness of the Baptism, we refer to them as a “witness.” If the godparent’s role is to assist in the spiritual training of the child, we refer to them as a “sponsor.” In the case of a sponsor, we will obviously want them to believe, teach, and confess the same faith that the parents believe, teach and confess, rooted in the Scriptures.

**Question 4:** *If someone was baptized in another Christian Church and later became a member of the Lutheran Church, does that person need to be baptized again?*

God tells us in his Word that “there is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4:4-5). As long as the Baptism was valid, a person does not need to be “re-baptized.” A valid Baptism takes place when water is applied to a person in the name of the one, true, triune God. If a church denies the triune God or does not apply water to a person in Baptism, then that person should be baptized “again” (although in reality the person was never baptized).

### ARGUMENTS ABOUT INFANT BAPTISM

The following are arguments leveled against infant baptism and Scriptural responses to them.

**ARGUMENT:** *Infants are too young and innocent to commit sin.*

This argument fails to acknowledge what the Bible says about original sin (also known as inherited sin). King David states very plainly that he was “sinful from the time my mother conceived me” (Psalm 51:5). That sin, handed down from parent to child, makes us “*by nature* objects of God’s wrath” (Ephesians 2:3). Furthermore, this argument minimizes the ability of children to sin. Scripture says even attitudes can be sinful. The two-month-old who screams at his parents in anger because he is hungry is guilty of sin, even though he doesn’t know what he’s doing. Ignorance is not an excuse for sin (Hebrews 9:7). All sin—both that which we inherit from our parents and that which we commit ourselves—is washed away through Baptism.

**ARGUMENT:** *God doesn't hold infants accountable for sins they commit until they are old enough to understand what they are doing.*

In order to deny the Biblical teaching of infant Baptism, one needs to manufacture supporting “truths” which have basis in Scripture. There is not a single passage which teaches this “age of accountability.” The “age of accountability” teaching is dangerous, because it attempts to counter God’s threats to punish sin with a man-made theory that goes contrary to clear passages of Scripture. If the sinfulness of infants is plainly taught and God’s promise to punish sin is plainly taught, then the way children escape that punishment must be equally plain. We maintain it is, as the Apostle Peter declared. “This promise [of forgiveness] is for you and your children” (Acts 2:39).

**ARGUMENT:** *God offers forgiveness through faith in Jesus. Infants cannot understand Jesus.*

This argument equates faith to cognitive recognition of Jesus' person and work. But the Bible describes faith as more than an intellectual process, more than mere head knowledge. "It is with your heart that you believe" (Romans 10:10). The Bible teaches that this heart knowledge is not something we come to possess by our own power or choice. Paul writes, "It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). Since God is all-powerful, it is no more miraculous for him to give that gift of faith to an unbelieving infant as it is for him to create faith in the heart of an unbelieving adult. In addition to this, the Bible teaches that children can have faith. In Matthew 19:14, Jesus says, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." In Mark 10:15, he says, "Anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." So Christ himself describes these children as already possessing the kingdom of heaven! And there is nothing in the Bible that speaks of people being part of the kingdom of heaven *outside of* saving faith. We cannot understand *how* an infant can have faith in Christ. We simply believe that it is true, because of what the Bible teaches. And we know God can do anything. Jesus said, "With God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:25,25). What we *can* understand is that God has chosen to use tools to give the gift of faith. One of those tools is Baptism.

**ARGUMENT:** *Baptism is the way we show our obedience and dedication to Christ. Since children are too young to decide to follow Christ, baptizing them is meaningless.*

This gets to the heart of the matter. What is Baptism? This argument views Baptism as something that we do for God. But that is *not* how Scripture describes Baptism. Paul writes, "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word" (Ephesians 5:25-26). If Baptism were something you did for God, then baptizing infants would make no sense. But Baptism is something God does for us...something that all people, including little children, desperately need. God cleanses us of our sins.

**ARGUMENT:** *There is no mention of infant Baptism in the Bible. The Baptisms described are of adults.*

This argument assumes that for something to be a theological truth, it must be shared in a Bible story. That is a *false* principle of interpretation. If God's Word teaches that children are conceived sinful, that baptism washes away sin, and that "all nations" are to be baptized, then God's word *does teach infant Baptism*, even if it contains no stories *about* infant Baptism. However, there are examples of infant baptism recorded in Scripture:

- In Acts, chapter 10, a Roman centurion named Cornelius is excited that the apostle Peter was coming to pay him a visit. We're told he "called together his relatives and close friends" (24). After Peter preaches to them, we're told that Peter "ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" (48).

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

- In Acts, chapter 16, Paul and Silas go home with their jailer and share the Gospel with everyone living in his house. We're told "he and all his family were baptized" (33).
- The Apostle Paul writes, "I baptized the household of Stephanas" (1 Corinthians 1:16).

In all these cases, the entire family was baptized. Were there no children among those three households? That seems highly unlikely. We shouldn't misinterpret the fact that the stories about Baptism in the book of Acts often revolve around adults (Saul, the Ethiopian eunuch, etc.). The sacrament of Baptism was new. As Christianity spread in the early Church, there would have been many adult Baptisms. As we see in the passages above, children would only be baptized if a parent was first brought to faith.

Scripture is the only divinely inspired book. It alone binds our consciences and sets our theology. However, it can be helpful at times to read early church historians. They lived closest to the time of the apostles. Thus, they can help us understand how the early Christian Church practiced Baptism. Irenaeus (c. 130–202) speaks not only of children but even of infants being "born again to God." Origen (c. 185–254) repeatedly mentions infant Baptism as commonplace. The reason: "Infants are baptized for the remission of sins ... That is the reason why infants too are baptized." *The Apostolic Tradition*, written by Hippolytus of Rome (who died c. 235), was one of the first theology and practice textbooks for the early Church. It describes how to perform the ceremony of Baptism. Cyprian (c. 200–258), the bishop of Carthage, wrote that it was acceptable to baptize infants as young as two or three days old. Thus, the practice of infant Baptism was widespread throughout the early Christian church.

The belief that only adults should be baptized is sometimes called *credo-baptism*. *Credo* means "I believe." Thus, proponents of *credo-baptism* would maintain that only believers should be baptized. This view of Baptism was never widespread in any Christian denomination until the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The *Anabaptists* arose as part of the Protestant Reformation. The Anabaptists viewed faith as an intellectual decision to follow Christ. Baptism was sign that one had made that decision. Thus, Baptism was reserved for adults. Today, about 20% of all Christian churches practice *credo-baptism*.

### Summary

The early Christian Church practiced infant baptism. *Credo-baptism* does not even become a wide-spread heresy until the 16<sup>th</sup> century. However, our argument for infant baptism is not based on history, but upon Scripture. Our God wants all to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). He has laid out how that salvation is accomplished in his Word. God's Word teaches that all are sinful from conception. Therefore, little children need the forgiveness that is only found in Christ. The way that God saves is through faith in Christ (Ephesians 2:8). No other method of salvation is even hinted at in Scripture (John 3:5). The Bible teaches that Baptism is one way the Holy Spirit creates saving faith. Therefore, unless it can be clearly shown from Scripture that God *didn't* intend for children to be baptized, we will continue to do so.

# ANSWERS TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

## *How can I be sure that God really forgives my sins?*

### LESSON 8

I know that God tells me in the Bible that my sins are forgiven. But there are so many. And I keep doing them. How can I be sure that God really forgives my sins—all of them?

In his wonderful gift of Holy Communion (also called Lord's Supper), God assures us that all our sins really are forgiven. Every single one. The ones we remember and the ones we don't. The ones that were absolutely horrible and the one's we've done thousands of time. Full and free forgiveness is ours in the visible promise of Holy Communion.

#### THE SACRAMENTS

In the last lesson, we talked about how our church body defines the word "sacrament." The word "sacrament" actually means "sacred act." This already tells us something about what is and isn't a sacrament. Fill in the blanks below to summarize our definition of a "sacrament." And remember, even though other church bodies may define "sacrament" in different ways, we always want our definition to highlight the wonderful gifts that God gives to us.

- ◇ A sacrament is instituted by \_\_\_\_\_.
- ◇ A sacrament uses a \_\_\_\_\_ element connected with God's \_\_\_\_\_.
- ◇ A sacrament gives the promise of \_\_\_\_\_.

There are two sacraments that fit this definition:



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### A SPECIAL MEAL

The Thanksgiving turkey. Triple chocolate birthday cake. A 4<sup>th</sup> of July barbecue. Celebrations and food go together. We use special meals to commemorate special events. We mark family and friendships by gathering around the dinner table.

Jesus used a special meal, too. We call it the Lord's Supper, because it was first celebrated by Jesus with his disciples on the night before he died. Christians have been eating this meal ever since. However, the Lord's Supper is unlike any other meal. The Bible tells us the Lord's Supper grants blessings infinitely greater than physical nourishment. This holy meal is so powerful that Scripture warns us that not all people should eat it.

*The "Lord's Supper" and "Holy Communion" are both legitimate names for this sacrament.*

The account of Jesus celebrating and instituting the Lord's Supper is recorded in four places in the Bible: Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:15-23, and 1 Corinthians 11:23-25.

#### **MATTHEW 26:26-29**

**<sup>26</sup> While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." <sup>27</sup> Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. <sup>28</sup> This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>29</sup> I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."**

◇ What two things do we eat and drink in a natural way during the Lord's Supper?

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◇ What two things do we eat and drink in a miraculous way during the Lord's Supper?

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Generally, there are three different beliefs within Christian churches as to what is happening here in Holy Communion. But it is important to recognize that not all these teachings are equally valid. Some are based on historical tradition and developed over time. Some are based on human reason and what makes logical and reasonable sense.

It is both disrespectful to God and his Word and dangerous for us to base our teaching about Holy Communion on anything *other* than what God directly tells us in the Bible. For this reason, we often say that our teaching about Holy Communion is not an explanation, but rather a simple summary of what God says.



# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

NAME OF TEACHING	Transubstantiation	Representation	Real Presence
<b>SUMMARY</b>	The bread and wine are miraculously transformed into the body and blood of Christ; it is no longer bread and wine	The bread and wine are and remain only bread and wine; bread and wine symbolize the body and blood of Jesus	The bread and wine remain present, but the body and blood of Jesus are also present in a supernatural way
<b>BASIS</b>	Belief that the sacrament is actually a "sacrifice" that needs to be "re-sacrificed" over and over for our sins	Belief that it is physically impossible for Jesus' body and blood to be present when he is in heaven	Belief that Jesus' words should be taken at face value when he says, "This is my body; this is my blood"
<b>ADHERENTS</b>	Roman Catholic Church	Reformed Churches	Lutheran Churches

### COMMUNION IS A COVENANT

Jesus told his disciples that in this meal they would receive his body and blood as part of a *covenant*. A covenant is a legal, binding agreement—a contract. Jesus also says that this is a *new* covenant.

#### **MATTHEW 26:19-20**

<sup>19</sup> So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover. <sup>20</sup> When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve.

- ✧ What were Jesus and his disciples celebrating when he instituted the Lord's Supper?
  
- ✧ What do you remember about Passover?

#### **EXODUS 12:3, 5-8, 12-14**

<sup>3</sup> "Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household."

<sup>5</sup> "The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. <sup>6</sup> Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. <sup>7</sup> Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs. <sup>8</sup> That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast."

You can read more about the Passover and its historical context in Exodus 1-14.

<sup>12</sup> "On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn—both men and animals—and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. <sup>13</sup> The blood will be a sign for

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt. <sup>14</sup> This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD—a lasting ordinance.”

◇ Note some of the key details of the Lord’s instructions to his people.

But Jesus was not simply sharing a celebratory meal. He was also bridging the connections between God’s promises in the Passover and the atoning work that he came to do. In other words, Jesus wanted his disciples (and us) to understand that he is the Passover Lamb who takes away our sin and rescues us from death.

### JOHN 1:29

<sup>29</sup> The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”

### 1 CORINTHIANS 5:7

<sup>7</sup> Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

### 1 PETER 1:18-19

<sup>18</sup> For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, <sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

◇ Why was it fitting that Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper on the night before he died?

### THE OLD COVENANT

### THE NEW COVENANT



### THE TERMS OF THIS NEW COVENANT

It might be difficult, at times, to keep the old and the new covenants distinguished. After all, there is a gospel thread that connects them both. However, one of the ways to understand the differences between them is to examine the terms of each.

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### LUKE 22:20

<sup>20</sup> In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is poured out for you."

### HEBREWS 9:15

<sup>15</sup> For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

### ROMANS 11:27

<sup>27</sup> "And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins."

### JEREMIAH 31:31,34

<sup>31</sup> "The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel...

<sup>34</sup> For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

✧ What does God promise to do for us in this covenant?

### 1 JOHN 1:7

<sup>7</sup> ...and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

### ROMANS 5:9

<sup>9</sup> ...Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!

### EPHESIANS 1:7

<sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace...

### 1 PETER 2:24

<sup>24</sup> He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

### 1 PETER 3:18

<sup>18</sup> For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body...

✧ What did Jesus do to make this covenant possible?

✧ Therefore, every time we receive the Lord's Supper, what does God tell us?

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### WHO SHOULD RECEIVE HOLY COMMUNION?

You would not give steak to a newborn. Instead of nourishing the small body, it would only make the baby's stomach sick. Nor do you give alcohol to children. A child's liver is not mature enough to metabolize alcohol.

The same is true for the Lord's Supper. It is not something everyone is ready to eat. Partaking of the Lord's Supper when you aren't ready does something worse than upset your stomach. It damages your faith!

#### 1 CORINTHIANS 11:27-29

**<sup>27</sup> Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup> A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. <sup>29</sup> For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.**

- ✧ How do these verses teach the "Real Presence"?
  
- ✧ Scripture clearly teaches that you can take the Lord's Supper to your \_\_\_\_\_.
  
- ✧ What is one way that someone might sin when taking Lord's Supper?

It should be stressed that the phrase "unworthy manner" does not mean "too sinful." The Lord's Supper is precisely for those who have a conscience burdened by sin. Instead, we take the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner if we think we have no need for forgiveness. Someone who does this sins against the body and blood of Christ. Such a person receives Christ's body and blood, except it is for judgment and not forgiveness.

Therefore, since it is possible to harm our faith by taking the Lord's Supper improperly, Scripture says we should "examine ourselves" before we eat this meal. The following are some good questions to ask:

- ✧ Am I \_\_\_\_\_ for my sins?
  
- ✧ Do I believe that Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ for my sins?
  
- ✧ Do I believe that Jesus gives me his \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in this Supper for the forgiveness of my sins?
  
- ✧ Do I have the desire to no longer \_\_\_\_\_?

*You can see more detailed questions for personal examination before Lord's Supper on page 104 of this lesson.*

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

Those who humbly acknowledge their need for forgiveness and who understand that Christ gives forgiveness by sharing his real body and blood in the Lord's Supper are ready to receive its blessings.

### **A HOLY COMMUNION**

In Holy Communion, there are a number of different unions expressed. The bread and wine are united with the body and blood of Christ. Sinners are made holy and united with their God. And, we are united with one another when we receive this sacrament together.

#### **COLOSSIANS 1:21-22**

**<sup>21</sup> Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. <sup>22</sup> But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation...**

#### **1 JOHN 3:1**

**<sup>1</sup> How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!**

#### **HEBREWS 2:11**

**<sup>11</sup> Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.**

✧ What was our relationship with God before he called us to faith? What is it now?

✧ How does Scripture picture the relationship between believers?

#### **1 CORINTHIANS 10:17**

**<sup>17</sup> Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.**

✧ What does Scripture say is one way we celebrate the unity we have as the family of God?

#### **ROMANS 10:10**

**<sup>10</sup> For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.**

#### **1 TIMOTHY 6:12**

**<sup>12</sup> Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.**

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

- ✧ How do you know if someone is part of the family of faith, and therefore, someone with whom you would share Holy Communion?

Since unity among Christians must be based on their confession of faith, it is appropriate and desirable that fellow Christians study Scripture together before taking Holy Communion together. This enables them to first confess what they believe to one another. Celebrating the Lord's Supper on the basis of this confession of faith is known as *Close Communion*.

**CLOSE COMMUNION** = the practice of inviting to Holy Communion only those who have publicly confessed unity in beliefs with the body of believers who are communing.

Out of love for God's Word and the best interests of a person's spiritual welfare, the following should not receive Holy Communion:

- ✧ Those who are unable to \_\_\_\_\_ themselves
- ✧ Those who are not \_\_\_\_\_ for their sins or think they don't need forgiveness
- ✧ Those who do not recognize the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of Jesus in Lord's Supper
- ✧ Those who are not \_\_\_\_\_ in beliefs with us

In our church body, we do not admit everyone to the Lord's Supper. Young children do not attend. Also, we ask guests and visitors to speak with the pastor before they come to the Lord's Supper. Some might say that the practice of *Close Communion* is unloving, because it temporarily excludes people from receiving the Lord's Supper. Would you agree? Why or why not?

### SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE SACRAMENTS

Holy Baptism and Holy Communion have many similarities. However, they do have one important detail that makes them different from each other.

SACRAMENT	INSTITUTED BY...	ELEMENT USED...	BLESSINGS GIVEN...	PARTICIPANTS...
Holy Baptism				
Holy Communion				

### FOR STUDY AT HOME

1. Complete the *Search the Scriptures* and the *True/False* below.
2. Memorize the following passages from this lesson:

**1 CORINTHIANS 11:26** – *For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*

**1 CORINTHIANS 11:28** – *A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.*

### SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 and answer the questions below.

1. Instead of "communion" among believers, what was going on (v. 18)?
2. Describe how the Corinthians were celebrating their meal (v. 20-21)?
3. What purpose for Holy Communion does Paul point out (v. 26)?
4. What do we eat and drink in Holy Communion (v. 27)?
5. If we eat and drink unworthily, against what are we sinning (v. 27)?
6. What should we do before receiving Holy Communion (v. 28)?
7. What consequence follows from unworthy eating and drinking (v. 30)?
8. How may this judgment from God show itself (v. 30)?
9. What is the purpose of God's judgment (v. 32)?

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### TRUE/FALSE

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Holy Communion is a means through which God gives us forgiveness.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Those who receive Holy Communion receive forgiveness simply because they participate.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. We should examine ourselves before receiving Holy Communion.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The power in Holy Communion is in the words of Christ connected to the elements.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Communion should be celebrated regularly and frequently as nourishing food for our faith.



### QUESTIONS ABOUT HOLY COMMUNION

**Question 1:** *What type of bread should be used?*

Since Jesus used unleavened bread (bread without yeast) when he instituted the Lord's Supper, that is what we use. While Jesus more than likely used a large piece of bread, our practice is to use small, individual wafers for uniformity of size for those receiving.

**Question 2:** *Should wine or grape juice be used?*

Since Jesus used grape wine (fruit of the vine, i.e. grapes) in his institution of the Lord's Supper, we use grape wine. We know it was wine because the grape harvest was in the fall during Jesus' day, so by spring the juice would need to be fermented to be used at Passover. If someone is a recovering alcoholic or has health reasons that require alcohol-free wine, grape juice may be substituted because it is still "fruit of the vine."

**Question 3:** *How often should one receive Holy Communion?*

The Bible sets no rules or limitations about the frequency of Holy Communion. Given the tremendous blessings and spiritual strength offered in the Lord's Supper, it is natural that we will want to receive it often. Most churches offer it twice a month, though some also offer it every Sunday.

**Question 4:** *Is receiving the individual cup safer than receiving the common cup (chalice)?*

Our practice is to offer the wine by both the common cup and the individual cup. Numerous studies have been done on the health risks of using a common cup for Holy Communion, including studies conducted by the United States Center for Disease Control. The conclusions have indicated that there is generally no greater risk for spreading germs with a chalice than with the individual cups. Some appreciate the chalice because of its strong symbolism (the unity we are expressing as we receive Holy Communion together). Others appreciate the individual cups because they remove any concerns over hygiene or sickness.

**Question 5:** *How can a person receive Holy Communion if he or she is unable to attend worship?*

If a person is ill, elderly, or experiencing some other reason that prevents worship attendance, the pastor can be contacted and private communion can be arranged. Please do not hesitate to contact your pastor if such a circumstance exists!

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### **PERSONAL PREPARATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION**

Scripture is clear: we are to spiritually examine ourselves in order to receive Holy Communion in a worthy manner and receive its blessings. Below are some questions from *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal* (p. 156) that can help you prepare yourself to receive the Sacrament in a God-pleasing way. This can be done before one arrives at worship (either the night before or early in the morning), when one arrives at worship (before the service begins), or even before coming forward for Holy Communion. When the examination is done is not so important as that it is actually done before receiving Holy Communion.

#### **What does God tell me about myself in his holy Word?**

He says that I am a sinner and deserve only his punishment.

#### **What should I do if I am not aware of my sins or am not troubled by them?**

I should examine myself according to the Ten Commandments and ask how well I have carried out my responsibilities as a husband or wife or single person, as a parent or child, an employer or employee, a teacher or student. Have I loved God with all my heart, gladly heard his Word, and patiently endured affliction? Have I been disobedient, proud, or unforgiving? Have I been selfish, lazy, envious, or quarrelsome? Have I lied or deceived, taken something not mine, or given anyone a bad name? Have I abused my body or permitted indecent thoughts to linger in my mind? Have I failed to do what is right and good?

#### **When I realize that I have sinned against God and deserve his punishment, what should I do?**

I will confess before God all my sins, those which I remember as well as those of which I am unaware. I will pray to God for his mercy and forgiveness.

#### **How do I receive his gracious forgiveness?**

His Word assures me that Jesus led a pure and holy life for me and died on the cross for me to pay the full price for all my sins. Through faith in Jesus, I have been clothed in my Savior's perfect righteousness and holiness.

#### **What further assurance do I have that Jesus is mine and I am his?**

In Holy Communion he gives me his body and blood together with the bread and wine as a truly life-giving food and drink to unite me with him and my fellow believers. By means of this sacrament, Jesus not only forgives my sins but sweeps away all my doubts about his love for me, gives me his own strength to live a God-pleasing life, and grants me a joyful foretaste of heaven.

#### **How can I be sure that I receive all these blessings in the Lord's Supper?**

I have his own word spoken as his last will and testament on the night before he died. There he

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

tells me: "Take and eat; this is my body. Drink from it, all of you; this is my blood which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of me."

### How will I respond to this priceless gift from Jesus?

I will daily thank and praise him for his love to me. With his help I will fight temptation, do my best to correct whatever wrongs I have done, and serve him and those around me with love and good works.

### Sample prayers to use before Holy Communion:

Lord Jesus, with joy and gratitude I now come to your table to receive the precious food of your life-giving body and blood. May it strengthen me to remain in you as you remain in me, so that I bear much fruit in devoted service to you and in acts of kindness to others. Amen.

Lord, I am not worthy to be a guest at your holy table. But you are the friend of sinners, and you will not cast me out. This bread is your body, which bore my sins upon the tree. This wine is your blood, which purifies me from all guilt. At your invitation, I come rejoicing. Receive me, my Savior. Amen.

### Sample prayers to use after Holy Communion:

Thank you, Lord Jesus Christ, for nourishing me in this Sacrament with your body and blood. You have given me forgiveness, life, and salvation. Let me always remain in you as a branch remains in the vine. Send me out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory. Amen.

O living Bread from heaven, how richly you have fed your guest!  
The gifts you now have given have filled my heart with joy and rest.  
Lord, grant me that thus strengthened with heavenly food, while here  
My course on earth is lengthened, I serve with holy fear.  
And when you call my spirit to leave this world below,  
I enter through your merit where joys unmingled flow. Amen.

## ARGUMENTS ABOUT THE REAL PRESENCE

The following are arguments leveled against the doctrine of the Real Presence.

**ARGUMENT:** *The doctrine of the Real Presence is unnecessary because God offers forgiveness to his people through the Word.*

While it is true that God offers forgiveness through the Word, it is not true that this renders the doctrine of the Real Presence unnecessary. The Old Testament believers are proof that we don't "need" the Lord's Supper to be assured of our forgiveness. Even the Bible limits who should partake of the Lord's Supper. However, it is not logical to assume that because God offers

forgiveness one way (through the Word) that he would not or could not offer it in other ways as well (through Baptism and the Lord's Supper). In his love, God desired to connect forgiveness to something we can touch in order to make the message even more clear and vivid. It would not be absolutely "necessary," but God chose to do it nonetheless.

**ARGUMENT:** *Jesus was speaking figuratively when he said, "This is my body. This is my blood."*

Jesus makes no mention or indication of doing so. This is a dangerous argument to take. For if we say that Jesus was speaking figuratively at the Lord's Supper, how can we be sure he isn't speaking figuratively when he makes statements such as "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies" (*John 11:25*)? Good principles of Biblical interpretation say that we let the text itself tell us if it is meant to be taken figuratively. The Bible loses all sense and meaning if we abandon this principle.

**ARGUMENT:** *Jesus indicated he was speaking figuratively when he said, "This do in remembrance of me."*

Jesus' words are not an indication of figurative speech. Reversing the words of institution demonstrates this. Imagine Jesus had said, "Take and eat, this is bread...do this in remembrance of me." Would we then assume that Jesus was distributing something other than bread? No. When we receive the Lord's Supper, we obviously remember what Christ did for us. However, the recollection and remembrance of Christ's redemptive work is not hindered by the doctrine of the Real Presence. In fact, it is enhanced!

**ARGUMENT:** *It is repulsive to think of eating Jesus' body and blood.*

This is not an argument, but an emotion—one that is borne from a misunderstanding of the doctrine of the Real Presence. The bread does not become a piece of Christ's flesh. Nor does the wine turn into a quart of blood like you might give at a blood bank. This error has sometimes been called *Capernaïc Eating*. The Bible teaches that the body and blood of Christ are truly there, but in a miraculous way.

**ARGUMENT:** *Jesus' body and blood can't be present in the Lord's Supper, otherwise it would have been used up long ago by the millions of people who have communed.*

This is an attempt to rationalize a doctrine of God's Word that proclaims a miraculous event. Similar to the previous argument, it approaches the Lord's Supper with a strictly physical understanding. The miracle of the Real Presence cannot be rationally comprehended any more than the doctrine of the Trinity, the union of Christ's human and divine natures, the six-day creation, etc. It is simply accepted by faith (see *Hebrews 11:1*).

### *How can I have a better life here on earth?*

#### LESSON 9

I know I have heaven waiting for me through what Jesus has done for me. And I know it's going to be awesome and it's going to last forever. But what about my life right now? How can I have a better life right here, right now?

In lesson 5, we began to talk about our lives of *sanctification*. We learned that the term *sanctify* means “to make holy.” We also learned two ways that this term can be used. Sanctification in the “broad sense” means that the Holy Spirit makes us holy in God’s sight when he brings us to faith. Sanctification in the “narrow sense” refers to the way a Christian lives his or her life, striving to follow God’s will more and more each day as an expression of gratitude for God’s grace.

In this lesson, we are going to focus on the “narrow sense” of sanctification—how we desire to live our lives according to God’s Word because of his great love for us. We’ll take a look at the Ten Commandments and see how obeying them is not only a way to give our praise and thanks to our God, but also a way for God to give great blessings to us.

#### THE LAW

We’ve learned that the law is the teaching of God’s Word in which he tells us what to do and what not to do. But what exactly is included in the law? And how do we use it?

##### **MATTHEW 22:36-40**

<sup>36</sup> “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” <sup>37</sup> Jesus replied: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ <sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup> And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ <sup>40</sup> All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

◇ The first three commandments deal with our relationship with \_\_\_\_\_.

◇ The last seven commandments deal with our relationship with \_\_\_\_\_.

##### **ROMANS 13:8**

<sup>8</sup> Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow man has fulfilled the law.

◇ The Ten Commandments can be summarized with one word: \_\_\_\_ \_

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### ROMANS 3:20

**<sup>20</sup> Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.**

✧ The law *does not exist* for the purpose of...

Jesus fulfilled the law perfectly in our place. He loved God and all people perfectly in every way—for us. He also died an innocent death in our place for all the times we have broken God's law. So we do *not* desire to obey God's law so that he will give us heaven. No! We desire to obey God's law because we *already* have heaven! This is our way of showing thanks to God.

### LUKE 19:1-10

**<sup>1</sup> Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. <sup>2</sup> A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. <sup>3</sup> He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. <sup>4</sup> So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.**

**<sup>5</sup> When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." <sup>6</sup> So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.**

**<sup>7</sup> All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a 'sinner.'" <sup>8</sup> But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." <sup>9</sup> Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup> For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."**

✧ What difference did meeting Jesus make for Zacchaeus?

### 1 JOHN 4:19

**<sup>19</sup> We love because he first loved us.**

### 2 CORINTHIANS 5:14-15

**<sup>14</sup> For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. <sup>15</sup> And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.**

✧ What is our motivation for loving God and others?

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### PSALM 119:103-105

<sup>103</sup> How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! <sup>104</sup> I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path. <sup>105</sup> Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

### PSALM 86:11

<sup>11</sup> Teach me your way, O LORD, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.

- ✧ How does God's law help us live our lives in thanks for God's love?

## THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The Ten Commandments are recorded in Exodus 20 and in Deuteronomy 5. They are listed below, along with Martin Luther's explanation of each from his small catechism. For each of the commandments, it is good to identify ways that we break them in our thoughts, words, and actions. But it is also good to identify ways that we can keep these commandments in thanks and praise for what God has done for us.

### 1<sup>st</sup> COMMANDMENT

**You shall have no other gods.**

*What does this mean?*

**We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.**

- ✧ Ways we break this commandment:
- ✧ Ways we can keep this commandment:

**OPEN IDOLATRY** =  
openly  
worshipping a  
false god

**SECRET IDOLATRY**  
placing our fear,  
love, and trust in  
anything other  
than God

### 2<sup>nd</sup> COMMANDMENT

**You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.**

*What does this mean?*

**We should fear and love God that we do not use his name to curse, swear, lie, or deceive, or use witchcraft, but call upon God's name in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.**

- ✧ Ways we break this commandment:
- ✧ Ways we can keep this commandment:

**GOD'S NAME** = all  
his titles and  
everything we  
know about him  
from his Word

**CURSING** = using  
God's name to  
wish evil on  
someone else

**SWEARING** = using  
God's name to  
swear falsely or  
needlessly

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### 3<sup>rd</sup> COMMANDMENT

**Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy.**

*What does this mean?*

**We should fear and love God that we do not despise preaching and his Word, but regard it as holy and gladly hear and learn it.**

The word  
"Sabbath" means  
"rest" in Hebrew.

- ✧ Ways we break this commandment:
  
- ✧ Ways we can keep this commandment:

*NOTE: In the Old Testament, God's people were forbidden from doing work and commanded to worship on the Sabbath Day (Saturday). The New Testament does not require a specific day upon which we are to rest and worship, because these Old Testament ceremonial laws were fulfilled in Christ (Colossians 2:13-17). But God still commands that we take rest for our souls (Matthew 11:8-30). So, the way this commandment applies to us today as New Testament Christians is to take regular time to be in God's Word.*

### 4<sup>th</sup> COMMANDMENT

**Honor your father and mother, that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.**

*What does this mean?*

**We should fear and love God that we do not dishonor or anger our parents and others in authority, but honor, serve, and obey them, and give them love and respect.**

Luther's  
explanation  
helps us  
understand that  
it's God's will that  
we obey and  
respect not only  
our parents, but  
everyone in  
authority over us.

- ✧ Ways we break this commandment:
  
- ✧ Ways we can keep this commandment:

### 5<sup>th</sup> COMMANDMENT

**You shall not murder.**

*What does this mean?*

**We should fear and love God that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and befriend him in every bodily need.**

The 5<sup>th</sup>  
commandment is  
not just about  
murder, but about  
hurting and  
hating someone  
else (1 John 3:15).



# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

✧ Ways we break this commandment:

✧ Ways we can keep this commandment:

### 6<sup>th</sup> COMMANDMENT

**You shall not commit adultery.**

*What does this mean?*

**We should fear and love God that we lead a pure and decent life in words and actions, and that husband and wife love and honor each other.**

✧ Ways we break this commandment:

✧ Ways we can keep this commandment:

### 7<sup>th</sup> COMMANDMENT

**You shall not steal.**

*What does this mean?*

**We should fear and love God that we do not take our neighbor's money or property or get it by dishonest dealing, but help him to improve and protect his property and means of income.**

✧ Ways we break this commandment:

✧ Ways we can keep this commandment:

### 8<sup>th</sup> COMMANDMENT

**You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.**

*What does this mean?*

**We should fear and love God that we do not tell lies about our neighbor, betray him, or give him a bad name, but defend him, speak well of him, and take his words and actions in the kindest possible way.**

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

✧ Ways we break this commandment:

✧ Ways we can keep this commandment:

### 9<sup>th</sup> COMMANDMENT

**You shall not covet your neighbor's house.**

*What does this mean?*

**We should fear and love God that we do not scheme to get our neighbor's inheritance or house, or obtain it by a show of right, but do all we can to help him keep it.**

**COVET** = to have a sinful desire for something that God has chosen not to give you

### 10<sup>th</sup> COMMANDMENT

**You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, workers, animals, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.**

*What does this mean?*

**We should fear and love God that we do not force or entice away our neighbor's spouse, workers, or animals, but urge them to stay and do their duty.**

✧ Ways we break these commandments:

✧ Ways we can keep these commandments:

## **THE BLESSINGS OF OBEDIENCE**

It cannot be stressed enough—we are saved by God's grace alone through the work of our Savior and Substitute, Jesus. We are not saved by our good works. We do good works, therefore, and desire to live according to God's law because we are saved.

But an additional blessing of obeying God's law is to make our lives here on earth easier and better. After working through the commandments, what blessings do you see in them that would make our lives easier and better?

### **1 JOHN 2:5-6**

**<sup>5</sup> But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: <sup>6</sup> Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.**

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### JAMES 1:25

**<sup>25</sup> But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.**

- ◇ What does God say will happen when we obey his law?

### JOHN 15:1-5

**<sup>1</sup>“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. <sup>2</sup>He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. <sup>3</sup>You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup>Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. <sup>5</sup>“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.**

- ◇ Jesus says that he is the \_\_\_\_\_ and we are the \_\_\_\_\_.
- ◇ The fruit that we produce are \_\_\_\_\_.
- ◇ If we want to do good works and live according to God’s Word, Jesus says that we must \_\_\_\_\_ in him.
- ◇ How do we remain in the vine (Jesus) and produce fruit (good works)?

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### FOR STUDY AT HOME

1. Complete the *Search the Scriptures* and the *True/False* below.

2. Memorize the Ten Commandments:

**1<sup>st</sup> COMMANDMENT** – *You shall have no other gods.*

**2<sup>nd</sup> COMMANDMENT** – *You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.*

**3<sup>rd</sup> COMMANDMENT** – *Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy.*

**4<sup>th</sup> COMMANDMENT** – *Honor your father and mother, that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.*

**5<sup>th</sup> COMMANDMENT** – *You shall not murder.*

**6<sup>th</sup> COMMANDMENT** – *You shall not commit adultery.*

**7<sup>th</sup> COMMANDMENT** – *You shall not steal.*

**8<sup>th</sup> COMMANDMENT** – *You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.*

**9<sup>th</sup> COMMANDMENT** – *You shall not covet your neighbor's house.*

**10<sup>th</sup> COMMANDMENT** – *You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, workers, animals, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.*

### SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

Read Luke 17:11-19 and answer the questions below.

1. What kind of men met Jesus? How many were there (v. 12)?
2. What did they feel certain Jesus could do for them (v. 13)?
3. What happened to them as they followed Jesus' command (v. 14)?

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

4. What did one man do when he realized he had been healed (v. 15-16)?
  
5. What attitude of the thankful man's heart did Jesus mention? What did it accomplish (v. 17-19)?
  
6. What does Jesus desire us to do since he has done so much for us (v. 18)?

### TRUE/FALSE

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The Ten Commandments are important because they show us how to earn heaven.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. God is concerned with our thoughts and words as well as our actions.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Since Jesus paid the penalty for our sins, our obedience isn't really that important.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Parents who love their children more than God break the 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Fortune-telling and horoscopes are contrary to God's will.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Worship and Bible study are God's will for us as his people.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. If someone in authority tells us to disobey God, we should respectfully decline and bear the consequences.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Bearing a grudge or plotting revenge is the same as physical murder in God's eyes.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Looking at someone lustfully is adultery to God.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. We obey the commandments out of love for God to please God and earn his favor.

### IN OUR WORSHIP

In Lesson 1 of this class, we pointed out that nearly every one of our worship services includes a *Confession of Sins* and an *Absolution*. We make this confession and absolution a point of emphasis in our worship services because it reflects a proper view of the Ten Commandments as well as a proper view of God's forgiveness for us in Jesus. It is important that we daily remember that we are sinners who need a Savior. And it is also important that we daily remember that we have the Savior for our sins—Jesus. And finally, it is especially important that we are daily refreshed with God's love and forgiveness so that we desire to live a new life and show our thanks to God by striving to obey his commands.

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

While we usually have a *Confession of Sins* and an *Absolution* in each of our worship services, sometimes the wording is different from week to week. Below are a few samples of different confessions and absolutions from our hymnal (*Christian Worship*). Read through them and note the differences between them. Think of what benefits there might be from confessing sins and hearing forgiveness in different words each week.

The Common Service (from *Christian Worship*, p. 15)

**People:** Holy and merciful Father, I confess that I am by nature sinful and that I have disobeyed you in my thoughts, words, and actions. I have done what is evil and failed to do what is good. For this I deserve your punishment both now and in eternity. But I am truly sorry for my sins, and trusting in my Savior Jesus Christ, I pray: Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner.

**Leader:** God, our heavenly Father, has been merciful to us and has given his only Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son (+) and of the Holy Spirit.

The Service of the Word (from *Christian Worship*, p. 38)

**People:** Merciful Father in heaven, I am altogether sinful from birth. In countless ways I have sinned against you and do not deserve to be called your child. But trusting in Jesus, my Savior, I pray: Have mercy on me according to your unfailing love. Cleanse me from my sin, and take away my guilt.

**Leader:** God, our heavenly Father, has forgiven all your sins. By the perfect life and innocent death of our Lord Jesus Christ, he has removed your guilt forever. You are his own dear child. May God give you strength to live according to his will.

Private Confession (from *Christian Worship*, p. 154)

**People:** Almighty God, merciful Father, I, a troubled and repentant sinner, confess that I have sinned against you in my thoughts, my words, and my actions. I have not loved you with my whole heart; I have not loved others as I should. I am distressed by the sins that trouble me and am deeply sorry for them.

**Leader:** Jesus says to his people: "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven." His death paid for the guilt of your sins and the sins of the whole world. Do you believe this?

**People:** Yes, I believe.

**Leader:** Because of the promise of our Savior Jesus, I forgive you all your sins. Be assured that you are a dear child of God and an heir of eternal life.

### *Why am I here?*

#### LESSON 10

In the midst of the busyness of life, have you ever stopped and asked yourself, “What am I doing? Why am I doing all this stuff? What’s my purpose?” Maybe you’ve felt that you should just quit your job and do something more “important” with your life, something more “worthwhile” or “meaningful.” The day-to-day difficulties and frustrations can easily make us begin to wonder about our greater purpose in life.

In this lesson we are going to take a look at what God says about our purpose in this life. We’ll learn that in everything—no matter where we are or what we do—God gives us a noble purpose that brings great meaning to our lives.

#### **OUR STARTING POINT**

What is our starting point? Where’s our motivation and direction as we talk about our lives and their purpose?

#### **2 CORINTHIANS 5:14-15**

**<sup>14</sup>For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. <sup>15</sup>And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.**

◇ As Christians, we live for \_\_\_\_\_.

◇ Why do we live for him?

#### **EPHESIANS 1:18-21**

**<sup>18</sup>I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, <sup>19</sup>and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, <sup>20</sup>which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, <sup>21</sup>far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.**

◇ What is Paul’s prayer for you?

\_\_\_\_\_

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

- ✧ How does knowing these things impact and change your life?

### **EPHESIANS 5:15-18**

**<sup>15</sup> Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup> Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. <sup>18</sup> Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.**

- ✧ What kind of lives do we want to live as Christians? Why?
- ✧ How do we know the difference between what is “wise” and what is “foolish”?

### **A CHRISTIAN'S NOBLE PURPOSE**

No matter who we are, where we live, or what we do, God has a noble purpose for us. And it's good for us to remember what that purpose is.

### **1 PETER 2:9-12**

**<sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. <sup>10</sup> Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. <sup>11</sup> Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. <sup>12</sup> Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.**

- ✧ What do the following phrases tell us about our purpose?

*A chosen people:*

*A royal priesthood:*

*A holy nation:*

*A people belonging to God:*

- ✧ Because God declares us to be all of these things by his grace, what's our purpose?



# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

- ◇ How do we live out our purpose as...

*Husbands or wives?*

*Parents and grandparents?*

*Sons or daughters?*

*Family members and friends?*

*Employers or employees?*

### **EPHESIANS 4:31 – 5:3**

**<sup>31</sup>Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. <sup>32</sup>Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.**

**<sup>1</sup>Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children <sup>2</sup>and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. <sup>3</sup>But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. <sup>4</sup>Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.**

- ◇ What things do we get rid of as God's holy people?

- ◇ What things do we desire as God's holy people?

### **MATTHEW 5:13-16**

**<sup>13</sup>"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. <sup>14</sup>You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup>Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. <sup>16</sup>In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."**

- ◇ What are some uses for salt? How are Christians like salt in the world?

- ◇ How are Christians like light in the world?

- ◇ What does Jesus say our purpose is?

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### **1 CORINTHIANS 10:31**

**<sup>31</sup>So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.**

- ✧ What noble purpose do we have, no matter what we are doing?

### **MORE THAN ACTIONS**

While we have the noble purpose of living out our faith, we are also called by God to do more. Not only does he want us (and use us) to live out our faith, he also calls us to speak about it.

### **ROMANS 10:11-15**

**<sup>11</sup>As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." <sup>12</sup>For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, <sup>13</sup>for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." <sup>14</sup>How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? <sup>15</sup>And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"**

- ✧ In verse 11, we read about "everyone who trusts in him." In verse 13, we read about "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord." What do these phrases tell us about salvation?
- ✧ Restate verse 14 in your own words. What is the simple cause and effect of that verse?
- ✧ Think for a moment about all the Bible study you've done in your lifetime. Do you remember any time or any place in the Bible that God even hinted that people can be saved *outside* of faith in Jesus?
- ✧ What is the "good news" that Paul talks about in verse 15 (he quotes from the book of Isaiah)?
- ✧ Why are the feet of the messenger "beautiful"? Why doesn't Paul talk about the messenger's mouth being "beautiful"? What does this tell you about sharing your faith?

### **WHAT ABOUT "QUALIFICATIONS"?**

The Bible makes it clear that we have the privilege and responsibility to spread the message of the gospel. But isn't that why we pay people to serve us at church? Isn't that their job?

# ANSWERS

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## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

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### **1 PETER 3:15**

**<sup>15</sup> But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...**

### **ACTS 4:20**

**<sup>20</sup> "For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."**

- ◇ What balance do we have to strike as we consider how to share our faith with others?

### **1 CORINTHIANS 2:1-5**

**<sup>1</sup>When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. <sup>2</sup>For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. <sup>3</sup>I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. <sup>4</sup>My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, <sup>5</sup>so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.**

- ◇ What is not required in order to share your faith?
- ◇ What is required in order to share your faith?
- ◇ Where does the power come from to bring someone to faith?
- ◇ How does all of this take the pressure off your shoulders as you share your faith with others?

### **LUKE 15:10**

**<sup>10</sup> "In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."**

- ◇ The word we use to describe sharing our faith is "evangelism." In that word, you'll also see the word "angel." The two words are actually related! Angel means "messenger." Evangelism means "good message." What are some jobs that we normally associate with angels? How is the job that God gives to us *even greater* than that of angels?

*The end of this lesson will include some tips on how to share your faith with others.*

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### CONSIDER WHOM YOU CAN TELL

It's interesting to sit back for a moment and reflect on all the people that God brings into our lives in various ways. Take a moment to fill out the following list to identify people with whom you could share the message of the gospel.

- ◇ A relative: \_\_\_\_\_
  
- ◇ A co-worker: \_\_\_\_\_
  
- ◇ A close friend: \_\_\_\_\_
  
- ◇ A neighbor: \_\_\_\_\_

### AN ADDED BLESSING

We have seen that we all have a great purpose as we live our lives! However, God does not limit his blessings only to those who are able to go and tell others about their faith. God also gives us the unique opportunity to live our faith by serving especially those in the church.

#### **ROMANS 12:4-8**

**<sup>4</sup>Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup>so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. <sup>6</sup>We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. <sup>7</sup>If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; <sup>8</sup>if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.**

- ◇ What are some of the wonderful gifts God gives to believers to be used in the church?

#### **1 PETER 4:10-11**

**<sup>10</sup>Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. <sup>11</sup>If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.**

- ◇ What do the words "has received" tell you about all your talents?

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

- ✧ What do the words “each one” tell you about the gifts God gives?
  
- ✧ What does the word “faithfully” tell you about whether or not to use your gifts?
  
- ✧ For what reason does God give us gifts?
  
- ✧ Peter describes “God’s grace in its various forms.” Grace is undeserved, unconditional love. The way God loves us motivates us to show the same love for others. But that love can take “various forms.” List at least five ways that members (other than the pastor) can show love for each other by using their various talents?
  - 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
  - 4.
  - 5.
  
- ✧ According to verse 11, what is accomplished when we serve each other faithfully with the gifts that God has given us?

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### FOR STUDY AT HOME

1. Complete the *Search the Scriptures* and the *True/False* below.
2. Memorize the following passages from this lesson :

**1 PETER 2:9** – *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

**1 PETER 4:10** – *Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.*

### SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

Read Romans 12:1-13 and answer the questions below.

1. What are we urged to do (v. 1)?
2. How is God's will for us described (v. 2)?
3. To what is the Christian church compared (v. 4, 6)?
4. Circle the correct statements after reading v. 4-6. Cross out the incorrect statements.
  - a. *The whole Christian church is like a human body—it is a unit.*
  - b. *Each believer is like a member of the body.*
  - c. *Believers have no special connection to each other.*
  - d. *Each believer has Spirit-given gifts.*
  - e. *Some believers have no gifts at all.*
  - f. *Each member is to use its gifts and abilities for the good of all.*

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

5. What does God want us to do with the specific gifts he has given us (v. 6-8)?
6. What attitude should guide our interactions with each other (v. 10)?
7. Whom are we really serving when we use our gifts (v. 11)?

### TRUE/FALSE

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Jesus Christ is the head of his body, the Church.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Most, but not all, believers are part of Christ's body.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. You have spiritual gifts and abilities that some other believers don't have.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Believers show a special love and concern for their fellow believers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Every believer is able to witness for Jesus in his or her own life.

### TIPS FOR SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

You have someone—a family member, a friend, your neighbor—who needs to hear the good news about Jesus. But you aren't certain how to go about sharing the message of salvation. The following is a brief summary of how you might go about it. It gives you some simple diagrams that help illustrate the main points. It also gives you a single Bible passage for each point.

#### STEP 1: Start the Conversation

The most difficult part of sharing the message of salvation is working it into a conversation. "Hey, are you saved?" might not be the best way to begin the conversation! There are more natural times to turn a topic towards God's grace:

- *Someone is questioning why God is allowing life to be so difficult.*
- *Someone is wondering why the world seems to be so broken.*
- *Someone is thinking about death (such as after the loss of a loved one).*
- *Someone asks you why you always seem so positive.*

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

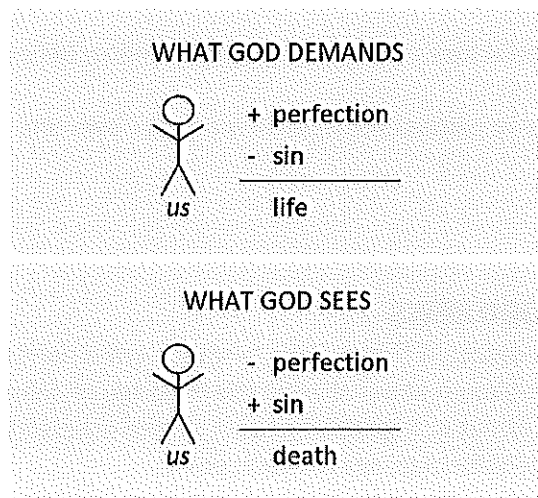
So the first step in sharing the Good News is simply keeping your eyes and ears open for opportunities.

### STEP 2: Explain the Problem

Mankind's problem can be summed up in three simple statements:

- *God's standard is perfection. Jesus said, "Be perfect, as your heavenly father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48)*
- *None of us is perfect. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).*
- *God is a just God who must punish sin. The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23).*

After stating those three facts, you could then sketch what's below to summarize.



### STEP 3: Debunk Man-made Solutions

You have presented the problem through a simple sketch. The passages you have shared demonstrate that this is Biblically true. Now it is time to deal with the man-made solutions that people have to sin. They tend to fall into one of three categories:

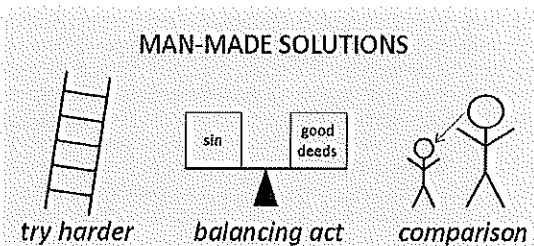
- *I'll try harder to be a better person.*
- *I'll balance out my sin with good deeds.*
- *When I compare myself to others, I don't look that bad.*



# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

As you explain each of those man-made solutions, you could sketch the following. As you sketch them, explain why each of these man-made solutions doesn't really deal with the problem.



The *try harder* approach doesn't work, for it fails to acknowledge that the standard our Creator sets for us is perfection. Even if I got a little better every day without ever having a setback (which is a bit unrealistic), I know I could never achieve perfection. Therefore, the *try harder* approach cannot deal with the problem of sin. Skim through Scripture. You will not find one passage where God says, "Do your best." You will find *many* where he says, "Be holy, as I the LORD, your God, am holy" (e.g. Matthew 5:48).

The *balancing act* approach also fails to acknowledge that the standard God sets for our behavior is perfection. The good I do today does not mean the sin I committed yesterday never happened!

The *comparison* approach is flawed in that it presupposes God would have us compare ourselves to one another. "Well, I'm not a murderer or arsonist or rapist. God has to let someone into heaven!" However, God never asks us to compare ourselves to our fellow man. God asks us to compare ourselves to *him*. God is perfect and holy, and he created us to be the same.

All three of these man-made solutions ignore the Biblical truths about what God demands from us (perfection) and what God sees in us (sin). Therefore, these man-made solutions leave us unsatisfied.

### STEP 4: Share God's Solution

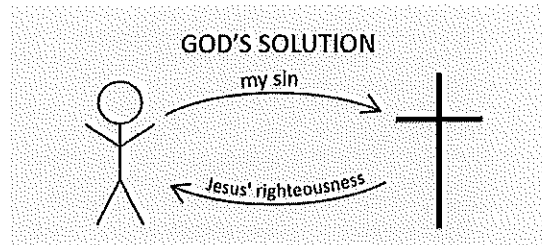
God's solution to sin can be summed up in three simple statements:

- *God sent his only Son Jesus to save us. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).*
- *Jesus saved us by taking away our sin, paying for it on the cross. He gives us his righteousness (perfection). "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21).*
- *Our salvation is a free gift that is received by faith in Jesus Christ. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).*

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

After you have shared those three points, you could summarize them with the following sketch, which captures 2 Corinthians 5:21 very well.



If the person asks where good works fit in, you can explain that they are indeed important. The apostle Paul writes, "We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10). But those good works are not done to earn salvation. They are done to say "thank you" to God for saving us.

### THE BODY OF CHRIST

Read through 1 Corinthians 12:12-20, 25-27 and then answer the following questions.

- *Our culture tends to value individualism. But God values interdependence. How do you see that in this illustration of the Church?*
- *The apostle Paul pictures the absurdity of the whole body being an eye. What would the Church be like if everyone in the Church was exactly alike and served God in exactly the same way?*
- *We understand that certain parts of the body might do more glorious work than other parts. The eye would seem to be more glamorous than the pinkie finger. Yet, you still don't want to lose your pinkie finger! How does that truth pertain to the church?*
- *Give a literal example of how if one part of the body suffers, all of the body suffers. How does this truth play out in the life of the Church?*
- *A friend tells you, "Faith is a personal thing. I don't need to be part of a church." How would 1 Corinthians 12 help you respond?*

### *What about the stuff I need for this life?*

#### LESSON 11

We live in a world that puts quite a bit of emphasis on material things. As Christians living in this world, we can easily get caught up in the materialistic lifestyle. Sometimes we put our hope and happiness in things, rather than God. When we don't have, we worry. When we have, sometimes we desire more, or better, or different.

What about the stuff we need for this life? What does God promise? What is a God-pleasing attitude towards earthly things? How does God want me to use what I have? These are the important questions for our Christian lives that we'll answer in this lesson.

#### **GOD SUPPLIES EVERYTHING WE NEED**

A good place to start is to see from where we get what we need for this life. Learning this helps us also see why we don't have to worry about it at all.

##### **PSALM 24:1**

**<sup>1</sup>The earth is the LORD's and everything in it, the world and all who live in it...**

- ◇ To whom does everything belong?
  
- ◇ How does this impact the way we view and handle "our" possessions?

##### **MATTHEW 6:25-34**

**<sup>25</sup>Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? <sup>26</sup>Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? <sup>27</sup>Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?**

**<sup>28</sup>And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. <sup>29</sup>Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. <sup>30</sup>If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? <sup>31</sup>So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' <sup>32</sup>For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. <sup>33</sup>But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. <sup>34</sup>Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."**

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

- ✧ Why don't we need to worry about the things of this life?
- ✧ God tells us to seek first his \_\_\_\_\_. What does this mean?
- ✧ What does God promise (v. 33) when we seek first his righteousness?

### **ROMANS 8:32**

**<sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?**

- ✧ If God has provided us with the gifts of forgiveness, peace, and eternal life through Jesus, what else can we be assured God is going to provide in his grace?

### **ATTITUDE MATTERS**

All that we have in this life belongs to God and is a gift from God. And as such, God cares about our attitude towards it all.

### **ECCLESIASTES 5:10-15**

**<sup>10</sup> Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless. <sup>11</sup> As goods increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the owner except to feast his eyes on them? <sup>12</sup> The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether he eats little or much, but the abundance of a rich man permits him no sleep. <sup>13</sup> I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owner, <sup>14</sup> or wealth lost through some misfortune, so that when he has a son there is nothing left for him. <sup>15</sup> Naked a man comes from his mother's womb, and as he comes, so he departs. He takes nothing from his labor that he can carry in his hand.**

- ✧ What attitude does God desire for us to have towards our possessions?
- ✧ What impact does such an attitude have on our lives?

### **1 TIMOTHY 6:6-10**

**<sup>6</sup> But godliness with contentment is great gain. <sup>7</sup> For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. <sup>8</sup> But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. <sup>9</sup> People who**

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. <sup>10</sup> For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

- ✧ God does not necessarily give us everything we \_\_\_\_\_, but he does give us everything we \_\_\_\_\_.
- ✧ Because we know God will supply everything we need, we can be \_\_\_\_\_.
- ✧ Verse 10 says the "love of money is the root of all kinds of evil," not "money is the root of all kinds of evil." What's the difference, and why does it matter?
- ✧ What's the danger for those who want to get rich and who love money?

### MANAGING THE BLESSINGS

Often people outside the church will complain that the church talks too much about money. Well, a church *shouldn't* be focused on money. But since it's a gift from God that is to be cared for and used in a way that glorifies God, it is important for us to talk about it. In fact, no one talks more about money and its use in the Bible than Jesus. Let's take a look at one of his parables that teaches us how to manage the blessings God entrusts to us.

#### **MATTHEW 25:14-18**

<sup>14</sup> "Again, [the kingdom of heaven] will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. <sup>15</sup> To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. <sup>16</sup> The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. <sup>17</sup> So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. <sup>18</sup> But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money."

A "talent" was a unit of money worth more than a thousand dollars.

- ✧ What are some possible reasons that the third servant didn't invest the talent he had been given?
- ✧ This is a parable, which we often describe as "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning." If the master is Jesus, the servants are obviously Jesus' followers. What do you think the talents might represent?

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### MATTHEW 25:19-23

<sup>19</sup> "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. <sup>20</sup> The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.' <sup>21</sup> His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' <sup>22</sup> The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.' <sup>23</sup> His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'"

- ✧ In verse 21, the master uses an adjective twice to refer to the servant. He uses the same adjective twice again in verse 23. Use that word to complete the definition of "stewardship":

Stewardship = being \_\_\_\_\_ with the blessings God gives

- ✧ Is there any difference in the way the master rewarded the first two servants? What does this tell you about stewardship?

### MATTHEW 25:24-30

<sup>24</sup> "Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. <sup>25</sup> So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' <sup>26</sup> His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? <sup>27</sup> Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. <sup>28</sup> Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. <sup>29</sup> For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. <sup>30</sup> And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'"

- ✧ What was the mistake of the third servant?

- A) He did not use his talent.
- B) He did not understand what his master wanted.
- C) He did not love his master.

- ✧ For what reasons did Jesus use the servant with one talent as the negative example? Why not the servant with five talents? What is Jesus teaching us?

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### USING BLESSINGS IN A GOD-PLEASING WAY

God desires that we use our possessions in a way that glorifies him and honors him as the one who owns all things and gives us all our blessings. The Bible gives us some specific instructions for how to do this.

#### **1 TIMOTHY 5:8**

**<sup>8</sup>If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.**

✧ We glorify God with our possessions when we \_\_\_\_\_ for our families.

#### **GALATIANS 6:10**

**<sup>10</sup>Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.**

✧ We glorify God with our possessions when we do \_\_\_\_\_ to others.

#### **MATTHEW 22:21**

**<sup>21</sup>Then he said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."**

✧ We glorify God with our possessions when we pay \_\_\_\_\_.

#### **1 CORINTHIANS 16:1-2**

**<sup>1</sup>Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. <sup>2</sup>On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.**

✧ In these verses, Paul establishes some basic principles about giving an offering at church. Each of these phrases teaches us something about how Christians will want to give.

*"On the first day..."* – What does this say about the priority our offering is to take over other expenses (bills, recreation, etc.)?

*"...of the week..."* – What does this say about the regularity of giving an offering?

*"...each one of you..."* – What does this say about who is to give an offering?

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

*"...set aside...saving it up..."* – What does this say about using our offering for other expenses?

*"...in keeping with his income..."* – What does this say about the size of our offering?

- ✧ The New Testament makes it clear that the Old Testament ceremonial laws (the laws telling the Jewish people how to worship) no longer apply to us. Therefore, would the principle of giving "in keeping with his income" mean we must give a tithe (10%)?

### **2 CORINTHIANS 9:7-8**

**<sup>7</sup>Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. <sup>8</sup>And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.**

- ✧ With what kind of attitude does God desire for us to give? For what reasons?
- ✧ Consider the following reasons why some people give their offerings, and identify the potential problem with them.

*To get something in return...*

*Guilt, fear, compulsion...*

*So other people see that they give...*

*For the tax deduction...*

*To feel good...*

### **1 TIMOTHY 6:17-18**

**<sup>17</sup>Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. <sup>18</sup>Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.**

- ✧ What is our overall attitude towards giving of the blessings God has entrusted to our care?



### THE BLESSING OF BEING GENEROUS

While a Christian does not give in order to get more from God (we give because we are compelled by God's love for us in Christ), God does promise blessings to those who give freely and generously.

#### **2 CORINTHIANS 9:6,10-15**

**<sup>6</sup>Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.**

**<sup>10</sup>Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. <sup>11</sup>You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. <sup>12</sup>This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. <sup>13</sup>Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. <sup>14</sup>And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. <sup>15</sup>Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!**

- ◇ What blessing does God promise those who sow generously (v. 6)?
  
- ◇ What does it mean that God will "supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness" and that you'll be made "rich in every way"? What *doesn't* that mean?
  
- ◇ What goes right along with our confession of faith (v. 13)?
  
- ◇ What three things result from our generosity (v. 12-14)?
  - 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
  
- ◇ What is God's "indescribable gift" that moves us to give generously (see v. 14)?

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### FOR STUDY AT HOME

1. Complete the *True/False* below.

2. Memorize the following passages from this lesson:

**2 CORINTHIANS 9:7** – *Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

**ROMANS 8:32** – *He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?*

### TRUE/FALSE

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. God gives everyone the same amount of blessings and resources to use in this life.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Everything we have ultimately comes from God.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. When it comes to stewardship, God is more concerned with faithfulness than numbers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. It is more important to manage our finances wisely than to manage our time wisely.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. God purposefully gives different abilities and resources to different people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The church wants people's offerings because it is only interested in getting money.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. If we give too much to our church, we might not have enough left for ourselves.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. It is possible for people who give \$50 or \$500 to be equally generous.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. The church should specify the amount of money its members should give.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. God will take us to heaven because we support his church with our offerings.

### BASIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Good management of financial resources starts with a number of sound principles. As faithful managers of God's resources, Christians want to put these basic principles into practice in their day-to-day living.

- **Keep God First**  
Plan your offering to the Lord before you plan any other expenses. With a heart moved by the Gospel, this is “rule” number one!
- **Live Within Your Means**  
Don't spend what you don't have. Avoid trying to enhance your lifestyle by going into debt through the use of credit cards and loans. If you can't pay for it, don't buy it. If you already have incurred debt, work to pay it off as quickly as possible.
- **Practice Contentment**  
When you see what others have, it's easy to feel that you are somehow coming up short. It's easy to fall into the trap of thinking we “deserve” something new and nice when what we have is more than adequate—and we can't afford anything newer. Don't be driven by the urge to stay ahead of the latest trends in fashion, technology, automobiles, etc.
- **Plan Your Income and Expenses**  
Know how much you have to work with in any given month. Develop a budget of expenses that will not exceed your monthly income.

### DEVELOPING A BUDGET

It is very important to know where your money is going. If you don't plan around your income and control your spending, your spending will end up controlling you. The following principles are useful when planning your budget:

- **Keep God First**  
See “rule” number one above!
- **Take Care of Basic Needs**  
After your offerings, plan for your basic living expenses: food, shelter, clothing, and transportation. Don't spend money on luxuries, such as recreation, dining out, vacations, etc., until you have covered life's basic necessities.
- **Plan Your Savings**  
Save responsibly for future needs such as retirement, a future home, college expenses, vehicle replacement, a vacation, etc.

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

- **Establish an Emergency Fund**

Set aside part of your income each month so that you are prepared for unforeseen circumstances that might otherwise force you into debt.

- **Pay Off Debt**

When you are in debt to someone, you are under that person's control. The interest you are paying on your debt obligations is money you cannot save or use for other needs. Pay off debt!

- **Plan for Every Dollar**

If, after you have prioritized your expenses, you have money left over in your budget, plan for how extra money will be spent. Review your budget categories to determine where you might increase your giving or spending. Can you increase your offerings? Will you increase your savings? Can you prepay on your credit cards, auto loan, or mortgage? Do you have a special purchase or special event to plan for? Undesignated money easily gets squandered, so plan how you will direct every dollar to be allocated.

### *Does anyone care? Is anyone listening?*

#### LESSON 12

In a world that's smaller and more connected than ever—with cell phones, computers, and other technology—we are also lonelier than ever before. It can be very easy to feel like no one really cares to listen to your joys, your fears, your doubts, or your worries.

But there is one who does care. And he can actually do something about your concerns and cares. He's always there, always available, always eager to listen to you talk to him. In this lesson, we'll discuss God's wonderful gift of prayer—its place in the life of a Christian, and why, how, and when to use it.

#### **PRAYER IS A GIFT**

To begin, it's important to remember that we don't inherently have the right to approach a holy and almighty God. However, in his grace, he makes a way for it to happen!

##### **JOHN 14:6-7**

**<sup>6</sup>Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup>If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."**

- ✧ According to Jesus, is it possible for someone to reject Jesus and still approach God?
  
- ✧ What do Jesus' words tell us about the prayer of a Muslim? What about one who practices Judaism? What about an agnostic who's trying to "play it safe"?
  
- ✧ It is common to close prayers by saying, "in Jesus' name, Amen." Why is that a great way to close a prayer?

##### **1 CORINTHIANS 12:3**

**<sup>3</sup>Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.**

- ✧ What is the only way someone can believe in Jesus?

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

- ✧ Put two and two together. We learned that the only way to approach God (including in prayer) is through Jesus. And we learned that the Holy Spirit is the one who gives us the ability to believe in Jesus. Therefore, what does this tell you about prayer?
  
- ✧ Imagine this situation: You are trying to encourage a friend to come to church more often. You tell him, "It is important that we be in church regularly because we need our faith to be strengthened." He snaps back at you, "I don't need church for that! I pray all the time!" How do you respond?
  
- ✧ Prayer is *not* a \_\_\_\_\_.

### THE MODEL PRAYER

Jesus' model prayer is found in Matthew 6. It is comprised of an address, seven petitions, and a doxology (closing words of praise). Here is the Lord's Prayer as we use it in church:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

Let's take a look at each of the seven petitions to be sure we understand what they mean and what we are praying for.

#### 1<sup>st</sup> PETITION

**...hallowed be thy name...**

- ✧ "Hallowed" means "to keep holy." A person's name is more than the word used to refer to them (e.g. John, Carol, Sam, etc.). We often use the word "name" to refer to one's reputation. With that in mind, what are we asking when we pray, "Hallowed be thy name"?
  
- ✧ How do we detract from God's holiness?
  
- ✧ What are some ways we can keep God's name holy?

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### 2<sup>nd</sup> PETITION

**...thy kingdom come...**

- ✧ Jesus once said that “the kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation...because the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:20-21). With this in mind, what are we asking God to do in this petition?
  
- ✧ Where are we asking God to establish his kingdom?
  
- ✧ To whom do we want God’s kingdom to come?

### 3<sup>rd</sup> PETITION

**...thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven...**

- ✧ What are some things that are God’s will?
  
- ✧ What are we praying for in this petition?

### 4<sup>th</sup> PETITION

**...give us this day our daily bread...**

- ✧ What is the “bread” we are praying for in this petition?
  
- ✧ For what reasons does Jesus tell us to pray for “daily” bread? Why not pray for “monthly” or “yearly” bread and be done with it?

### 5<sup>th</sup> PETITION

**...forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us...**

- ✧ What is the proper way to understand this petition in light of the rest of the Bible?
  - A) *God will forgive our sins only after we forgive the sins of others.*
  - B) *God forgives our sins because we forgive the sins of others.*
  - C) *If we understand God’s forgiveness, we will naturally want to forgive others.*

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

- ✧ In Luke 6:32-33, 35-36, Jesus says: "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." What does God's free and full forgiveness move us to do?
  
- ✧ How does that make us different than most people?
  
- ✧ Name some of the many blessings of forgiving someone who wrongs you.
  
- ✧ How do you respond to someone who says, "I'll forgive—but I'll never forget!"?

### **6<sup>th</sup> PETITION**

**...lead us not into temptation...**

- ✧ James 1:13 says: "When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone." Who is it that leads us into temptation?
  
- ✧ 1 Corinthians 10:13 says: "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it." What does God promise about the temptations we face?
  
- ✧ So, with this petition, we are really praying for two things:

*Keep temptations \_\_\_\_\_*

*When temptations come, help us \_\_\_\_\_*

### **7<sup>th</sup> PETITION**

**...deliver us from evil...**



# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

- ✧ Hebrews 2:14 says: "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil." Evil is the work of the devil. Why don't we need to fear the devil?
  
- ✧ Review the seven petitions again. How many of these refer to spiritual blessings? How many refer to physical blessings? Why do you think this is the case?

### **PERSISTENT IN PRAYER**

Sometimes, we pray and pray and pray...but don't seem to get an answer. Or, we pray and pray and pray...and don't get the answer we had hoped for. What is God telling us about prayer when we doesn't answer as we might expect him to?

#### **LUKE 11:5-13**

**<sup>5</sup>Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, <sup>6</sup>because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.' <sup>7</sup>Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' <sup>8</sup>I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs. <sup>9</sup>So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. <sup>10</sup>For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. <sup>11</sup>Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? <sup>12</sup>Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? <sup>13</sup>If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"**

- ✧ What is the main point of this parable?
  
- ✧ List at least five ways that our Heavenly Father is better than an earthly father:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

- ◇ What do these verses tell us God intends to do for us when we pray to him?
  
- ◇ In Matthew 6:33, Jesus says, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." How are Matthew 6:33 and Luke 11:13 related?
  
- ◇ What are the three answers God gives to our prayers?
  1. \_\_\_\_\_
  2. \_\_\_\_\_
  3. \_\_\_\_\_
  
- ◇ Why does God always answer the way he does?
  
- ◇ Why is it good for us to pray as Jesus did, "not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42)?

### 1 THESSALONIANS 5:17

**<sup>17</sup>...pray continually...**

- ◇ How often does God want you to pray to him?

### MATTHEW 6:5-8

**<sup>5</sup>"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. <sup>6</sup>But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. <sup>7</sup>And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. <sup>8</sup>Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him."**

- ◇ What should and shouldn't we do in prayer according to these verses?

*Do:*

*Don't:*

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### WHY PRAY?

If God has already determined what is going to happen, why should I pray? What's the point?

#### **PSALM 50:15**

**<sup>15</sup>...and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me.**

✧ The phrase "call upon me" is best described as a:

A) request

B) suggestion

C) command

D) question

✧ In this verse, God says that he "will" deliver you. How would the meaning of this verse change if God said he "might" deliver you instead? What does "will" tell you?

✧ God also says that "you will honor me." God's deliverance goes together with the honor you give him. What are some ways we can honor God with our prayers?

✧ *True or False:* If someone takes their problems to God, God will always deliver them.

✧ Fill in the table below, contrasting an unbeliever's hope with a believer's comfort.

Situation	Unbeliever's Hope	Believer's Comfort
You lose all your savings on a bad investment.		
The person you are dating decides to end your relationship		
Your spouse of 30 years dies after a battle with cancer		

### PRAY CONFIDENTLY

Prayer is an exercise of faith. God loves to hear our prayers. God always promises to answer in the way that is best for us. But sometimes we don't even know what to pray for. So, how then should we approach God in prayer?

#### ROMANS 8:26-27

**<sup>26</sup>In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. <sup>27</sup>And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.**

- ✧ What is the reason that we don't always pray well?
  
- ✧ What are some weaknesses that get in the way of our prayer life?
  
- ✧ How can we be certain that our weaknesses don't get in the way of God hearing about all our concerns and troubles?

#### ROMANS 8:28-32

**<sup>28</sup>And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup>For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. <sup>30</sup>And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. <sup>31</sup>What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup>He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?**

- ✧ What has God done for you already? How does this help you take your cares and concerns to him in prayer?
  
- ✧ Your friend says that he can't pray because, he says, "When I pray, I stammer over words and get stuck half-way through." What can you say to your friend to encourage him?
  
- ✧ Your friend says that she doesn't pray because God didn't answer her prayer to heal her father. "It's just not worth the time," she says. What can you say to your friend to encourage her?

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### FOR STUDY AT HOME

1. Complete the *Search the Scriptures* and *True/False* below.

2. Memorize the following passages from this lesson:

**PSALM 50:15** – ...and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me.

**1 THESSALONIANS 5:17** – ...pray continually...

### SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

Read Philippians 4:6-7 and answer the questions below.

1. What are we not to be (v. 6)?
2. What are we to do in everything (v. 6)?
3. What attitude of the heart will show itself as we pray to God (v. 6)?
4. As a final result of all this, what will guard our hearts and minds (v. 7)?
5. In connection with whom will our hearts and minds be guarded (v. 7)?

### TRUE/FALSE

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. It does not matter to whom we pray as long as we are sincere in our prayers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. It isn't important that we love to pray as long as we just do it anyway.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Unbelievers who pray to God can do so with the same confidence as believers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Christian prayer is always in accordance to God's will.

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Prayer is one sign or reflection of a person's faith in Jesus.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. To pray to the Virgin Mary or to "saints" is idolatry.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The longer the prayer is the better it is.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Regular Bible reading and study go together with prayer to God.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Our prayers, like the Lord's Prayer, should emphasize spiritual blessings from God.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. I should not keep asking God the same prayers over and over.

### TIME TO TALK WITH GOD

Christians have such a wonderful privilege to be able to approach the maker of the universe in prayer, to pour out our hearts before his throne, and to be certain that he listens to our prayers for Jesus' sake! Scriptures invites us: "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

Growing in your life of prayer takes practice. It may help you to remember some things:

- Take time out of your day to talk with God. Talk to God in any and every situation in which you may find yourself.
- Pray especially when you find yourself stressed out!
- Prayers to God don't have to be formal. Bowing your head and folding your hands show reverence and respect (and helps you to concentrate), but you can talk to God just as easily with both hands on the steering wheel as you're driving (carefully!) down the road.
- Say what's on your heart. Even if you can't put it into words, be assured that God knows your burdens and desires.
- Use prayer books, prayer lists, prayer reminders, and other resources to help develop your prayer life.

### PRAYER RESOURCES

The following is a list of helpful prayers and suggestions that can help you grow in your daily prayer life.

#### DAILY PRAYERS

Some times during the day are natural for prayer. At those times, use these or other prayers—just remember to pray!

#### **Luther's Morning Prayer:**

*In the name of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Amen.*

*I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have kept me this night from all harm and danger. Keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings in life may please you. Into your hands I commend my body and soul and all things, Let your holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen.*

#### **Luther's Evening Prayer:**

*In the name of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Amen.*

*I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have graciously kept me this day. Forgive me all my sins, and graciously keep me this night. Into your hands I commend my body and soul and all things. Let your holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen.*

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### **Bedtime Prayers:**

*Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take. This I ask for Jesus' sake. Amen.*

*Jesus, Tender Shepherd, hear me. Bless thy tiny lamb tonight. Through the darkness be thou near me; keep me safe 'til morning light. Amen.*

### **PRAYERS FOR BLESSING**

Another great time to pray is when you recognize God's grace in showering you with blessings. That's a wonderful time to ask his blessing on your use of these gifts.

### **Mealtime Prayers:**

*The eyes of all look to you, O Lord, and you give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing. Amen.*

*Lord God, Heavenly Father, bless us through these gifts that we receive from your bountiful goodness, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*

*Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest, let these gifts to us be blessed. Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endures forever. Amen.*

*Lord God, Heavenly Father, we thank you for all your gifts, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*

### **PRAYER HELPS**

There are a number of helps and suggestions that can aid you in your prayer life. The following are just a few. However, it's good to remember that you can talk to your God at any time in any way. Don't feel obligated to rigidly follow these models (and then lose the blessing of spontaneously pouring your heart out to the Lord!).

### **The ACTS Model:**

Using the ACTS model can help round out prayers and keep them from becoming repetitive requests for personal wants. In your prayers, remember to include the following four areas:

1. **Adoration** – Give God praise, and glorify him for his greatness and his wonderful blessings. Especially praise him for his complete salvation, revealed in Jesus Christ.
2. **Confession** – Confess your sins to God. Be specific in confessing particular sins you are aware of, even as you confess all of the sins of which you are not aware.
3. **Thanksgiving** – Remember to give thanks to God for all his mercies and goodness to you. Again, be specific in telling God what you are thankful for, even as you give thanks for all his kindness to you.



# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

4. **Supplication** – The word “supplication” really means “begging.” Here you ask God for things that you desire from him, Remember to qualify your requests with “Your will be done.”

Take a blank sheet of paper, and draw one horizontal line across the middle of the page. Then draw a vertical line down the middle of the page so that the page is divided into four sections. In the corner of each section, write the letter A, C, T, or S (one letter per section). In each section, make a list of things to pray for under that heading. In the “A” section, include ways you would adore and praise God. In the “T” section, write things for which you are thankful, etc.

### **The Five-Finger Method:**

This simple method uses the fingers of your hand to remind you of different things for which to pray.

1. **Thumb** – Your thumb is nearest to you, so begin your prayer by praying for those closest to you. They are often the easiest to remember. To pray for our loved ones is, as C.S. Lewis once said, “a sweet duty.”
2. **Index Finger** – The next finger is the index finger. Pray for those who teach, instruct, and heal. This includes teachers, doctors, and ministers. They need support and wisdom in pointing others in the right direction. Keep them in your prayers.
3. **Tallest Finger** – The next finger is the tallest finger. It reminds us of our leaders. Pray for the president, leaders in industry and business, and administrators. These people shape our nation and guide public opinion. They need God’s guidance.
4. **Ring Finger** – The fourth finger is the ring finger. It may be surprising to many that the ring finger is our weakest finger (as any piano teacher will testify). It should remind us to pray for those who are weak, in trouble, or in pain. They need your prayers day and night.
5. **Pinkie Finger** – And finally comes the pinkie finger, the smallest finger of all. This is where we should place ourselves in relation to God and others. Your pinkie should remind you to pray for yourself.

### **Keep a Written Prayer List**

Use a notepad to keep a list of people and things for which you wish to pray. Keep it current with all the needs you see around you every day. Place the list on your nightstand next to your bed; affix it to your refrigerator; place it on the dashboard in your car. Put it in the place where you will be able to make the best use of it.

### IN OUR WORSHIP

In our regular worship services, we often include what is called "The Prayer of the Church." This is a general prayer that often coordinates to the particular season the church is celebrating. However, it also includes general prayers for all types of people and all sorts of situations. Read through the general prayer of the church listed below.

*O Lord, our God, you are wise and powerful, good and gracious. Your mercies are new every morning. Each day you open your hand and provide for the needs of your children on earth.*

**We praise you for every grace and blessing.**

*Strengthen your Church in all the world. Let your comforting message of salvation in Christ Jesus be proclaimed to troubled souls everywhere.*

**Use our ministries and offerings to extend your healing and your hope.**

*We bring you our requests for the various structures of our society. Bless our national, state (provincial), and local governments.*

**Grant us civil servants who are worthy of honor and respect.**

*Grant prosperity to our businesses and industries. Give employers a sense of fairness toward their workers, and employees a feeling of joy and pride in their workmanship.*

**Help us find satisfaction in all work well done.**

*Invigorate the schools of our land. Give success to every effort that helps students read, think, and communicate in ways that will promote an informed and responsible citizenry. Arouse curious minds to discover the wonders of your created order.*

**Give us teachers and students who pursue excellence.**

*Strengthen the families of our country. Give fathers and mothers a renewed commitment to be good parents. Give children and young people the wisdom to regard their parents as your representatives.*

**Lead us to love one another as you have loved us.**

*(Special prayers and intercessions may follow)*

*Hear us, Lord, as we bring you our private petitions.*

*(Silent prayer)*

*Gracious Father, we pray boldly as Jesus taught, with the confidence that you will hear and with the faith that you will respond for our welfare.*

**Amen.**

During what season of the church year do you think this prayer might be used? What are the benefits of having a pre-printed prayer to use in our worship services? What blessing is there in realizing that we are praying this prayer with all believers?

# ANSWERS TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

## *How can I have a happy home life?*

### LESSON 13

If there's one place we want to feel safe and secure, one place we want happiness to dwell, it's in our homes. But because of sin, sometimes our homes have trouble, short tempers, frustrations, and fighting.

What does God have to say in his Word about our home lives? How can we have happiness in our homes? In this lesson, we'll take a look at the relationships between husbands and wives and parents and children and discover the blessings he desires that we have and share with each other.

#### **MARRIAGE IS A GIFT FROM GOD**

Marriage is not a human institution, social custom, or cultural tradition. Marriage was established by God, right from the beginning.

##### **GENESIS 2:15-18**

**<sup>15</sup> The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. <sup>16</sup> And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; <sup>17</sup> but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."**

**<sup>18</sup> The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."**

- ✧ What instruction does God give Adam in v. 17? We are not told anywhere in Scripture that God gave these instructions to Eve. What did God obviously intend for Adam to do?
  
- ✧ What does God say for the first time during Creation in v. 18?
  
- ✧ Adam was living in paradise. He was the master of all living creatures. And yet, God says, "It is not good for the man to be alone." What are some blessings that Adam would not experience as long as he was alone, the only one of his kind?
  
- ✧ God calls the woman a "helper" for the man. The Bible uses the same word to describe God's relationship to us as our "helper." How does this help you understand God's desire for the woman?
  
- ✧ What does the term "suitable" tell us?

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### GENESIS 2:19-24

<sup>19</sup> Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup> So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. <sup>21</sup> So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. <sup>22</sup> Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. <sup>23</sup> The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." <sup>24</sup> For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

- ✧ God has all the animals come before Adam. For what reasons did God do this?
  
- ✧ God created Adam out of the earth, but he created Eve out of Adam. What point would this drive home for Adam and Eve? Did Adam understand this significance?
  
- ✧ Adam composes the first spontaneous poem of the Bible: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." Adam describes the attitude of marital love. Can you think of three ways that husbands and wives can demonstrate this attitude in marriage?

1.

2.

3.

- ✧ In verse 24, we read the phrases "will leave" and "be united." For what reason does God ask husbands and wives to "leave behind" the connection they have with their parents?

### **BLESSINGS FOR HUSBANDS AND WIVES**

God desires to give special blessings in a marriage. Some of these blessings are intended only for a husband and wife. Any time people try to get these blessings outside of a marriage relationship, there will be difficulty and pain involved since it's outside God's plan and design.

### GENESIS 2:18

<sup>18</sup> The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

✧ Marriage Blessing #1: \_\_\_\_\_

### **1 CORINTHIANS 7:2-5**

<sup>2</sup>But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. <sup>3</sup>The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. <sup>4</sup>The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. <sup>5</sup>Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

✧ Marriage Blessing #2: \_\_\_\_\_

### **PSALM 127:3**

<sup>3</sup>Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him.

✧ Marriage Blessing #3: \_\_\_\_\_

### **GOD-GIVEN ROLES IN MARRIAGE**

Every player on a football field has a role to play. How well would a team do if it had eleven quarterbacks on the field? It's not until all players know their roles and can fulfill their roles that they will have success. In a similar way in marriage, God has given specific roles to both husband and wife. They are different. When husband and wife know their roles and desire to fulfill their God-given roles, only then can a marriage be successful.

In this section we are going to take a look at Ephesians 5:21-33, where Paul is led by the Holy Spirit to outline the roles of husbands and wives.

### **EPHESIANS 5:21**

<sup>21</sup>Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

✧ What is the over-arching instruction that Paul gives to both husbands and wives?

*For more Bible references about God's design for sex in marriage only, see:*

**HEBREWS 13:4**  
*sex is reserved for husband and wife*

**MATTHEW 5:27-28**  
*warnings against lust*

**EPHESIANS 5:3-4**  
*sexual immorality in thought, word, or action*

**ROMANS 1:26-27**  
*the sin of homosexuality*

*Though some people try to take advantage of these blessings outside of marriage, forgiveness is found at the cross of Jesus. This good news leads us to want to honor God with our bodies and lives.*

**SUBMIT = to yield one's rights to another**

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### **EPHESIANS 5:22-24**

**<sup>22</sup>Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup>For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. <sup>24</sup>Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.**

- ✧ In 1 Corinthians 11:3, Paul writes, "The head of Christ is God." How does this passage demonstrate that if someone is your "head" it *does not* mean that he or she is your superior? What does headship mean, then?
  
- ✧ Why does the Church submit to Christ?
  - A) *Christ has the complete confidence of the Church to be its leader.*
  - B) *The Church is Christ's slave.*
  - C) *A lack of submission leads to a lack of punishment.*
  - D) *Christ has motivated the Church to submit by showing his unfailing love.*
  
- ✧ What does this passage tell husbands about their wives' submission to their leadership?
  
- ✧ What husband deserves to be submitted to and respected in this way by his wife?

### **EPHESIANS 5:25-27**

**<sup>25</sup>Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her <sup>26</sup>to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, <sup>27</sup>and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.**

- ✧ How much did Christ love his bride, the Church?
  
- ✧ What was the result of Jesus giving himself for the Church?
  
- ✧ Paul instructs men to "love your wives, just as Christ loved the church." What are some adjectives you would use to describe the love that Christ has for the Church?
  
- ✧ What wife deserves to be loved and cherished in this way by her husband?

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### **EPHESIANS 5:28-30**

**<sup>28</sup>In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup>After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church— <sup>30</sup>for we are members of his body.**

- ◇ Imagine you step on a nail and get an infection in your foot. It's only logical that you would take care of your foot, or else the rest of your body would suffer as the infection spreads! You would be a fool *not* to take care of that foot. How does Paul compare that line of reasoning to a husband's love for his wife?

### **EPHESIANS 5:31-33**

**<sup>31</sup>“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” <sup>32</sup>This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup>However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.**

- ◇ How does the relationship between husband and wife help us understand the kind of relationship Christ wants us to have with all people?
- ◇ Some people see this section of the Bible as “old-fashioned” and “outdated.” Try the following exercise. List at least five specific ways a wife could submit to her husband. Then list five specific ways a husband could show Christ-like love to his wife. Then answer the following questions.

- |    |    |
|----|----|
| 1. | 1. |
| 2. | 2. |
| 3. | 3. |
| 4. | 4. |
| 5. | 5. |

*If couples did these things regularly, how much divorce would there be?*

*Is there anything wrong or outdated with God's “old-fashioned” plan?*

*It's interesting to note that modern psychology agrees with these principles for marriage! Husbands and wives both want to feel loved and respected, but husbands in particular appreciate knowing that their wives respect them. And wives, in particular, appreciate feeling that their husbands love them. The roles God has established for marriage simply reflect the way God created us!*

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### HONORING GOD'S GIFT OF MARRIAGE

"No fault" divorces have become very popular today. "I've fallen out of love" is a reason to get divorced in minds of many. What does the Bible have to say about how long a marriage is supposed to last? And what about when there's unfaithfulness?

#### **MATTHEW 19:4-6,9**

<sup>4</sup>"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' <sup>5</sup> and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh?' <sup>6</sup> So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

<sup>9</sup>I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery."

- ✧ Who alone has the right to end marriage? When does that happen?
  
- ✧ What is the only reason that God permits (*not commands*) a marriage to end in divorce?

#### **HEBREWS 13:4**

<sup>4</sup>Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.

- ✧ Marital unfaithfulness may include \_\_\_\_\_ or sexual \_\_\_\_\_.

#### **1 CORINTHIANS 7:15**

<sup>15</sup>But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace.

- ✧ Marital unfaithfulness may include \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.

#### **MALACHI 2:16**

<sup>16</sup>"I hate divorce," says the LORD God of Israel, "and I hate a man's covering himself with violence as well as with his garment," says the LORD Almighty.

- ✧ Marital unfaithfulness may include \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.



# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

Sometimes unfaithfulness destroys a marriage so that it cannot be repaired. Sometimes unfaithfulness makes it impossible for a husband and wife to remain married. But not always.

Married people who are going through struggles often believe they have only two options: a) remain in an unhappy marriage, or b) divorce. What option is always available? How will being connected to Christ help them with that option?

### WITNESSING TO YOUR SPOUSE

What is God-pleasing when one spouse is an unbeliever, has fallen from faith, or is weak in faith?

#### **1 PETER 3:1-2**

**<sup>1</sup>Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, <sup>2</sup>when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.**

- ✧ What is the best strategy for witnessing your faith to your spouse?

### RAISING CHILDREN IN THE LORD

God makes it clear that children are always a blessing from him. However, that doesn't mean that children don't present challenges to family life. Despite the challenges, though, God gives wonderful guidance for parents to raise and instruct children "in the Lord."

#### **EPHESIANS 6:1-3**

**<sup>1</sup>Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. <sup>2</sup>"Honor your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise— <sup>3</sup>"that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."**

- ✧ What is the difference between a child obeying a parent and a child obeying a parent "in the Lord"?
- ✧ How do obedience and happiness go hand in hand?

#### **EPHESIANS 6:4**

**<sup>4</sup>Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.**

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

- ✧ What does “exasperate” mean? In what ways do parents sometimes do this?
- ✧ What is the primary responsibility for parents with their children?

### **PROVERBS 22:6,15**

- <sup>6</sup> Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.  
<sup>15</sup> Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him.

### **PROVERBS 23:13-14**

- <sup>13</sup> Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die.  
<sup>14</sup> Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death.

### **PROVERBS 29:15,17**

- <sup>15</sup> The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother.  
<sup>17</sup> Discipline your son, and he will give you peace; he will bring delight to your soul.

- ✧ According to these passages, what will Christian parents do in love in order to bring their children up in the training and instruction of the Lord?

### **ROMANS 3:20,23**

- <sup>20</sup> Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.  
<sup>23</sup> ...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...

- ✧ What is one of the tools that God has given Christian parents to train their children?

### **JOHN 3:16**

- <sup>16</sup> “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

- ✧ What is another tool that God has given Christian parents to train their children?

### **1 CORINTHIANS 5:14-17**

- <sup>14</sup> For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

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<sup>15</sup> And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. <sup>16</sup> So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. <sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

- ✧ Which tool is the only proper and God-pleasing tool for encouraging obedience in a Christian child?

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### FOR STUDY AT HOME

1. Complete the *True/False* below.
2. Memorize the following passages from this lesson:

**GENESIS 2:24** – *For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.*

**1 THESSALONIANS 5:17** – *Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*

### TRUE/FALSE

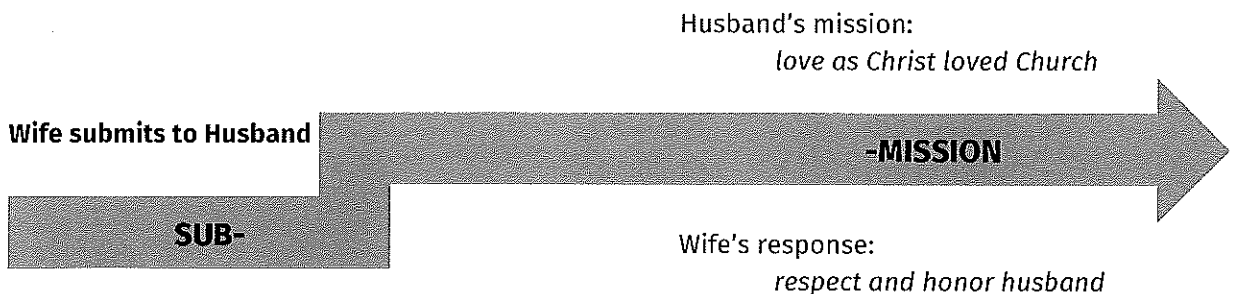
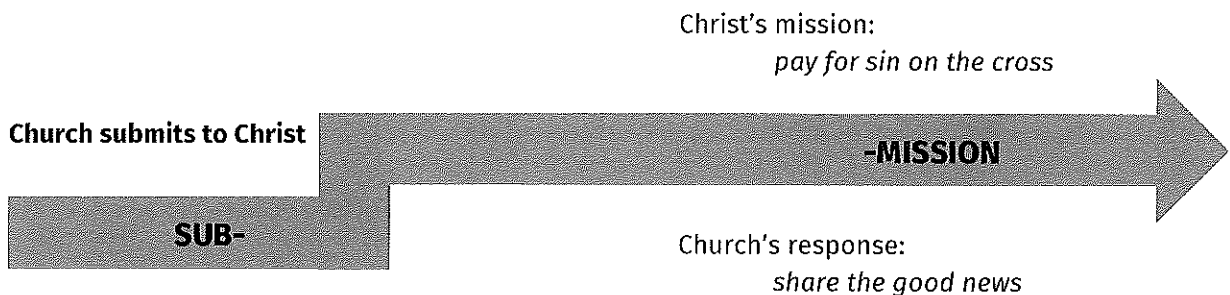
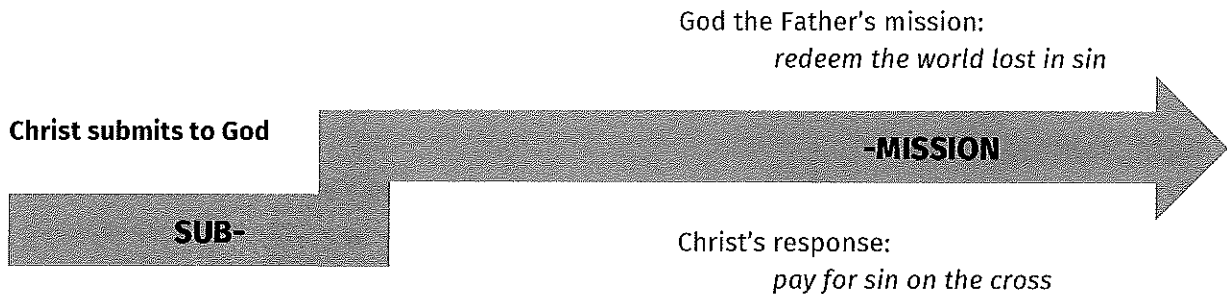
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Marriage is a human custom that the church regulates.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Marriage is the lifelong union of any two consenting adults.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Sexual relations outside marriage are always sinful.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Sex should not be discussed lightly because sex is sinful.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. The wife's role as helper is inferior to the husband's role as head of the family.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. A marriage is not complete without the blessing of children.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. A marriage is hopeless if the husband and wife no longer love each other.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Divorce is never pleasing to God.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. It is better for a couple to get a divorce than to be constantly fighting with each other.

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

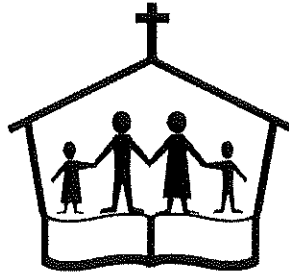
### HEADSHIP AND SUBMISSION

See the diagrams below for a visual description of headship and submission.



# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS



### **FAMILY UNDER CHRIST**

"Picture life without family. Hard to imagine, isn't it? Life begins in the home. Our earliest relationships are established there. Character is shaped in the family setting. Personalities formed. Values cultivated. Family members nurture one another, encourage one another, comfort one another, support one another, and provide peace and order for the good of all. In a bygone era people said, 'Family gives us roots.' Considering all the blessings family brings to us, life would be very different without one."

"To determine what distinguishes the Christian home from all others is to first consider what the Bible has to say about God's family." (*from From the Ground Up: A Plan to Build Your Christian Family, by Kenneth Kremer, p. 3-4*)

### *What happens when I die or this world comes to an end?*

#### LESSON 14

Benjamin Franklin is credited with writing, "In this world nothing can be said to be certain except death and taxes." It would be hard to disagree with either one. Death is inevitable for everyone. That is, unless Jesus comes back first.

So what's it going to be like? What happens after death? What will happen when Jesus comes back? These are thoughts that concern and frighten many people. But in this lesson, we'll see that for a Christian there is no need for fear in death or in the thought of Judgment Day. We'll take a look at what the Bible says about both.

#### THE LAST DAYS

Jesus has given us signs to indicate when he's going to come back.

##### **MATTHEW 24:36, 42-44**

<sup>36</sup> "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

<sup>42</sup> "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. <sup>43</sup> But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. <sup>44</sup> So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

- ◇ When will Jesus come again?
- ◇ So what do we know about all those who make guesses as to when the Last Day will be?
- ◇ What implication does the unknown nature of the Last Day have for us right now?

##### **MATTHEW 24:4-14**

<sup>4</sup> Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. <sup>5</sup> For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. <sup>6</sup> You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. <sup>7</sup> Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. <sup>8</sup> All these are the beginning of birth pains.

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<sup>9</sup> "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. <sup>10</sup> At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, <sup>11</sup> and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. <sup>12</sup> Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, <sup>13</sup> but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. <sup>14</sup> And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

- ✧ What signs should we be watching for in our society?
  
- ✧ What signs should we be watching for in nature?
  
- ✧ What signs should we be watching for in the church?
  
- ✧ Are there any signs of Jesus' impending return that have yet to be fulfilled?

### OUR TIME ON EARTH IS SHORT

Even if the Lord should choose to delay his coming for a long time, we know that our lives can end at any moment.

#### ECCLESIASTES 12:7

<sup>7</sup> ...and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

- ✧ What happens to the body at death?
  
- ✧ What happens to the soul at death?

#### 1 CORINTHIANS 15:20

<sup>20</sup> But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

- ✧ Why don't Christians have to fear death?
  
- ✧ To what is death compared for the Christian?



# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### **PHILIPPIANS 1:21-23**

**<sup>21</sup> For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. <sup>22</sup> If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! <sup>23</sup> I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far...**

- ✧ Where does a Christian go at the departure from the body?
  
- ✧ Technology has enabled medicine to extend life in ways that were impossible only a few years ago. In what ways is this a good thing? In what ways is this a bad thing?
  
- ✧ How should Christians feel about lengthening our time on this earth?

### **HOW IS HEAVEN DESCRIBED?**

As Christians, we can't wait to be with Christ and in the eternal life he has won for us and prepared for us. The Bible gives us some pretty amazing pictures of what heaven is going to be like.

### **REVELATION 7:9-17**

**<sup>9</sup> After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. <sup>10</sup> And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." <sup>11</sup> All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, <sup>12</sup> saying: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!" <sup>13</sup> Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?" <sup>14</sup> I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. <sup>15</sup> Therefore, "they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. <sup>16</sup> Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. <sup>17</sup> For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."**

- ✧ How is heaven described?
  
- ✧ What is this life called in verse 14? In what ways is that an apt description?
  
- ✧ What makes the robes of the saints in heaven white (pure and holy)?

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

- ✧ What are you looking forward to most in heaven?

### THE END WILL COME

No one knows when that day will come, but on the day God has appointed, this world will end. Here's what the Bible tells us about that day.

#### JOHN 5:28-29

<sup>28</sup> "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice <sup>29</sup> and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned."

- ✧ What will happen to all people—both believers and unbelievers—who have died?

#### 1 CORINTHIANS 15:50-54

<sup>50</sup> I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. <sup>51</sup> Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— <sup>52</sup> in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. <sup>53</sup> For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. <sup>54</sup> When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

- ✧ What will happen to people who have not died?

#### 2 PETER 3:10

<sup>10</sup> But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

- ✧ What will happen to this world on the Last Day? Why does this need to happen?

#### ISAIAH 65:17

<sup>17</sup> "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind."

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### **2 PETER 3:13**

**<sup>13</sup> But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.**

- ◇ Where will we live after the Last Day?
  
- ◇ We don't know much about it, but what can we be absolutely sure it will be?

### **MATTHEW 25:31-46**

**<sup>31</sup> "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. <sup>32</sup> All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup> He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. <sup>34</sup> Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. <sup>35</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, <sup>36</sup> I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' <sup>37</sup> Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? <sup>38</sup> When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? <sup>39</sup> When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' <sup>40</sup> The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'"**

**<sup>41</sup> "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. <sup>42</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, <sup>43</sup> I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' <sup>44</sup> They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' <sup>45</sup> He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' <sup>46</sup> Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."**

- ◇ What will Jesus do when he returns?
  
- ◇ Whom do the sheep represent? Whom do the goats represent?
  
- ◇ What will Jesus say to those on his right?
  
- ◇ Why will this verdict be surprising to those who hear it?

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

- ◇ What will Jesus say to those on his left?
- ◇ In what were those on Jesus' left putting their trust?

### **REVELATION 20:11 – 21:5**

<sup>11</sup> Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. <sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. <sup>13</sup> The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. <sup>14</sup> Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. <sup>15</sup> If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

<sup>21:1</sup> Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. <sup>2</sup> I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup> He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." <sup>5</sup> He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

- ◇ What will eternity be like for the condemned?
- ◇ What will eternity be like for the righteous?

### **PHILIPPIANS 3:20-21**

<sup>20</sup> But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

- ◇ How will the bodies of believers be prepared for eternity?
- ◇ If our bodies are glorified, what sorts of things will we no longer need to endure?

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### 2 PETER 3:7-9

<sup>7</sup>By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. <sup>8</sup>But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. <sup>9</sup>The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

✧ Why doesn't Jesus return right now?

### LUKE 21:28

<sup>28</sup>“When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

### PSALM 16:9-11

<sup>9</sup>Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, <sup>10</sup>because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. <sup>11</sup>You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

✧ Why can we eagerly anticipate—and not fear—the Last Day?

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### FOR STUDY AT HOME

1. Complete the *Search the Scriptures* and *True/False* below.
2. Memorize the following passages from this lesson:

**1 CORINTHIANS 15:20** – *Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*

**PHILIPPIANS 1:21** – *For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.*

### SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

Read Revelation 21:1-8 and answer the questions below.

1. What did the Lord cause John (the writer of Revelation) to see (v. 1)?
2. Who will be with us in heaven (v. 3)?
3. What won't be found in heaven (v. 4)?
4. How much will heaven "cost us" (v. 6)?
5. What will happen to all the unbelievers who refused to turn from their sins (v. 8)?

### TRUE/FALSE

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. There is no such place as hell.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. When we personally trust in Christ, we do not have to fear his return to judge us.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. When Jesus returns to earth again, even unbelievers will stand before him.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Most people will spend time in "purgatory" to pay for remaining sins.

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. If I have lived a good enough life, Jesus will give me heaven.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The bodies of all people will be raised and made perfect on the Last Day.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Our eternal future depends on our relation to Jesus Christ while we are on earth.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Hell was originally established for the devil and the demons, not for people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. There will be absolutely no pain or sorrow in heaven.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. We are living in the last days right now.

### IN OUR WORSHIP

Our music and prayers in our worship services reflect the seasons of the church year that we studied in an earlier lesson. Read through the following prayer and note how it emphasizes the comfort that Christians have in the face of death.

*Out of the depths we cry to you, O Lord; O Lord, hear our voices.*

**Let your ears be attentive to our cries for mercy.**

*Heavenly Father, we confess with sorrow that we have sinned and deserve only your anger and punishment.*

**If you kept a record of sins, we would surely be lost.**

*We confess with joy that your unfailing love has redeemed us.*

**Our hope is in you and in your full redemption.**

*Around us we see the birth pains of the last days: war, famine, earthquakes, false prophets, spiritual apathy.*

**Use these signs to remind us that we do not know the day or hour when Christ will come again.**

*Keep us faithful to your Word; send your Spirit to strengthen our faith so that we are always prepared for your Son's return as judge.*

**Make us faithful in sharing your Word, and cause many more to put their hope in you before the end comes.**

*Build our fellowship of love as brothers and sisters in faith.*

**Help us support one another when trials and troubles come our way.**

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

Heavenly Father, we eagerly wait for Jesus to come again and make all things new. May he find us, whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life, faithfully enduring to the end, through the power of your Holy Spirit.

**Come, Lord Jesus. May your grace be with us. Amen.**

Read through the verses (or sing) the following hymn. Which words and phrases strike you as particularly beautiful as you think about the joys of heaven that await you?



1. Je - ru - sa - lem the gold - en, With milk and hon - ey blest—  
2. Oh, sweet and bless - ed coun - try, The home of God's e - lect!  
3. The Christ is ev - er with them; The day - light is se - rene.



The sight of it re - fresh - es The wea - ry and op - pressed:  
Oh, sweet and bless - ed coun - try That ea - ger hearts ex - pect,  
The pas - tures of the bless - ed Are ev - er rich and green.



I\_\_\_ know not, oh, I know not What joys a - wait us there,  
Where they who with their lead - er Have con - quered in the fight  
There is the throne of Da - vid; And there from care re - leased,



What ra - dian - cy of glo - ry, What bliss be - yond com - pare:  
For - ev - er and for - ev - er Are clad in robes of white.  
The\_\_\_ shout of them that tri - umph, The song of them that feast.



To\_\_\_ sing the hymn un - end - ing With all the mar - tyr throng,  
Je - sus in mer - cy bring us To that dear land of rest  
To\_\_\_ God en - throned in glo - ry The Church's voic - es blend,



A - midst the halls of Zi - on Re - sound - ing full with song.  
Where sings the host of heav - en Your glo - rious name to bless.  
The\_\_\_ Lamb for - ev - er bless - ed, The Light that knows no end.



### *What benefit is there in being connected with a church?*

#### LESSON 15

What comes to mind when you hear the word “church”? Some people might think of stained glass windows or a place they visited as a child on Christmas or Easter. Others might think of long sermons or a favorite hymn.

In this lesson, we are going to see that a church is much more than a building or the activities that go on there. We are going to take a look at what *The Church* is, and what benefits there are to being connected to a church.

#### **WHAT IS THE CHURCH?**

If you look up the word “church” in the dictionary, the first definition will refer to a building that has been consecrated for the Lord’s use. Interestingly, Scripture *never* uses the word “church” to refer to a building. However, it does use the word in two other ways.

##### **EPHESIANS 1:22**

<sup>22</sup>And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church...

##### **EPHESIANS 5:23-27**

<sup>23</sup>For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. <sup>24</sup>Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. <sup>25</sup>Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her <sup>26</sup>to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, <sup>27</sup>and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

✧ What is meant by “church” in these verses?

##### **EPHESIANS 2:19-21**

<sup>19</sup>Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, <sup>20</sup>built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. <sup>21</sup>In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.

✧ How would you describe the “church” according to these verses?

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

When we understand the word “church” in this way, we would say there really is only *one Church*. All believers of all time make up *The Church*. However, this is not the only way the Bible uses the word “church.”

### **ACTS 8:1**

**<sup>1</sup>On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.**

### **1 CORINTHIANS 16:19**

**<sup>19</sup>The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house.**

- ✧ How is the word “church” being used here?
  
- ✧ Would someone who is a member of a *church* automatically be a part of *The Church*?

*Church with a capital “C” usually refers to all believers of all time, both on earth and in heaven. This is the Church we are confessing when we say the words “The Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints” in the 3<sup>rd</sup> article of the Apostles’ Creed. Church with a small “c” usually refers to the different churches we see within the Holy Christian Church.*

## **HOW DO WE KNOW WHO IS A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH?**

Even though we are unable to look inside a person’s heart and see whether or not they truly have faith, God does tell us in the Bible that we can examine certain factors to see whether or not people are a part of *The Church*.

### **1 TIMOTHY 6:12**

**<sup>12</sup>Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.**

- ✧ We can examine a person’s \_\_\_\_\_.

### **HEBREWS 10:26**

**<sup>26</sup>If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left...**

- ✧ We can examine a person’s \_\_\_\_\_.

*Please remember that examining a person’s life for evidence of repentance requires assessing the underlying attitude. Someone can struggle with sin and still be a Christian. But someone who has been hardened in sin and no longer cares about their sin even if they know it’s wrong calls their faith into question.*

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### MATTHEW 13:24-30

<sup>24</sup> Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. <sup>25</sup> But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. <sup>26</sup> When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. <sup>27</sup> The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' <sup>28</sup> 'An enemy did this,' he replied. The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' <sup>29</sup> 'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. <sup>30</sup> Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'"

**INVISIBLE CHURCH**  
All people who have faith in Jesus that only God can see, so it is invisible to us.

**VISIBLE CHURCH**  
All people who confess their faith and connect themselves to a church, which is visible to us.

✧ What two things does Jesus teach us about the *visible* church in this parable?

1.

2.

### 1 SAMUEL 16:7

<sup>7</sup> But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

✧ Who alone knows the member of *The Church*?

## WHERE DO WE FIND THE CHURCH?

Membership in *The Church* is based on faith. However, only God can see faith. So, how do we know which church is in *The Church*? How do we know which church is a spiritually healthy place to be?

### ISAIAH 55:9-11

<sup>9</sup> "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. <sup>10</sup> As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, <sup>11</sup> so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."

✧ *The Church* is found wherever the \_\_\_\_\_ is preached!

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### TITUS 3:5

<sup>5</sup>...he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit...

✧ *The Church* is found wherever \_\_\_\_\_ takes place!

### MATTHEW 26:27-28

<sup>27</sup>Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. <sup>28</sup>This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

✧ *The Church* is found wherever the \_\_\_\_\_ is served.

### 1 CORINTHIANS 3:9-14

<sup>9</sup>For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. <sup>10</sup>By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. <sup>11</sup>For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. <sup>12</sup>If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, <sup>13</sup>his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. <sup>14</sup>If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward.

✧ What are the proper tools for building and growing the church?

✧ What will happen if someone tries to build *The Church* in an improper way, without the proper tools?

## TO WHICH CHURCH SHOULD I CONNECT?

While all Christians churches should teach Jesus Christ as the Savior (that's what makes them "Christian"), there are definitely differences between *churches* in what they believe, teach and practice. While we don't have the opportunity to study every different denomination within Christianity, we can discover some general truths from Scripture about what we should look for in a *church* to join.

### 1 JOHN 4:1

<sup>1</sup>Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### **2 PETER 2:1**

**<sup>1</sup>But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. <sup>2</sup>Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute.**

✧ What warning does Scripture give us as we examine any *church*?

✧ What are the two types of false prophets?

1.

2.

### **2 TIMOTHY 2:16-18**

**<sup>16</sup>Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. <sup>17</sup>Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, <sup>18</sup>who have wandered away from the truth.**

### **GALATIANS 5:9**

**<sup>9</sup>“A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough.”**

✧ How is false teaching like yeast? How is it like gangrene?

### **JOHN 8:31**

**<sup>31</sup>To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.”**

✧ What does Jesus himself teach us should be our top concern when looking for a *church*?

## **WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF BEING CONNECTED TO A CHURCH?**

We can summarize the benefits of being connected to a *church* with three “F’s.” The *church* serves as a fortress; it provides us with family; and it gives a satisfying function to our lives. Let’s look at all three.

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### 1 CORINTHIANS 3:9-11

<sup>9</sup>For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. <sup>10</sup>By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. <sup>11</sup>For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

✧ Who is the foundation of *The Church*?

### MATTHEW 16:19

<sup>18</sup>"And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."

### JOHN 16:33

<sup>33</sup>"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

### REVELATION 2:11

<sup>11</sup>He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.

✧ When we're building on the foundation of Jesus as our Savior, we are assured of fortress against:

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✧ Being connected to a church that is helping me grow in faith in Jesus is a benefit because...

### GALATIANS 3:26-27

<sup>26</sup>You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, <sup>27</sup>for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

✧ What is it that makes Christians into a family?

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### HEBREWS 2:11

<sup>11</sup> Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.

✧ In what ways is this bond stronger than a biological relative?

### GALATIANS 6:10

<sup>10</sup> Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

### 1 PETER 3:8

<sup>8</sup> Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.

### GALATIANS 5:13

<sup>13</sup> You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.

### ROMANS 15:7

<sup>7</sup> Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

✧ What are some of the ways that *The Church* demonstrates they are family?

### HEBREWS 3:13

<sup>13</sup> But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

### HEBREWS 10:25

<sup>25</sup> Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

✧ For what reasons do we need the support of a Christian family?

### ECCLESIASTES 2:11, 3:19-20

<sup>11</sup> Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

<sup>19</sup> Man's fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath; man has no advantage over the animal. Everything is meaningless. <sup>20</sup> All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return.

✧ King Solomon was one of the greatest and wealthiest kings of all time. He expanded the borders of the kingdom. He amassed great wealth. He built monumental buildings. He had vast scientific knowledge. Yet...what did Solomon conclude about all these earthly achievements?

✧ For what reasons did he feel this way?

### **1 PETER 2:9**

<sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

✧ What noble purpose has Christ given to all members of *The Church*?

✧ The passage above calls believers "a royal priesthood." In what ways do you function as a priest...

- in your home?
- In your neighborhood?
- at your job?
- at church?

### **1 JOHN 1:2**

<sup>2</sup> The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.

### **DANIEL 4:2-3**

<sup>2</sup> It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me. <sup>3</sup> How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation.

✧ What makes serving within God's *Church* so meaningful?



### ABOUT CHURCH FELLOWSHIP

The Bible has a lot to say about our relationship with other Christian churches. Even though there are some similarities in teaching, there are often key differences. As we examine and explore these differences, it's important to see what God says about how to handle these delicate issues.

#### **ACTS 2:42**

**<sup>42</sup>They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.**

The Greek word translated *fellowship* means "to share in" something. Perhaps you have read the classic J.R.R. Tolkien novel (or seen the blockbuster movie) *The Fellowship of the Ring*. In that story a group of nine individuals—all very different from one another—*share in* the common mission of destroying an evil ring. *Fellowship* is a *sharing*. So it is to be in the Church. That verse from the book of Acts tells us what it is that the early Christians shared in: the apostles' teaching, which is simply what those men had learned from Jesus Christ himself.

#### **MATTHEW 28:20**

**<sup>19</sup>Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."**

#### **JOHN 8:31**

**<sup>31</sup>To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.**

From Jesus' words we learn that Christians should be concerned about teaching and upholding *everything* the Bible says. We do not distinguish between "important doctrines" and "unimportant doctrines," for Scripture makes no such distinction. Moreover, since all of Scripture is his Word, to deny any portion of the Word is ultimately to deny Jesus.

#### **2 JOHN 9**

**<sup>9</sup>Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.**

Therefore, Scripture encourages us to be very cautious about religious teaching. We are to test both teachings and teachers.

#### **1 JOHN 4:1**

**<sup>1</sup>Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.**

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### **TITUS 1:9**

**<sup>9</sup>He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.**

### **2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17**

**<sup>16</sup>All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

You'll notice that God never asks us to judge anyone's faith. We are incapable of doing such a thing, for we cannot see into the heart. Only God can judge faith. God does, however, ask us to judge *teachings*, comparing them to God's Word. Any religious teaching that goes contrary to the Scripture is to be exposed and turned away from. Just as there are no minor portions of God's Word, there are no minor false doctrines. For if false teaching is not corrected, it will inevitably spread.

### **GALATIANS 5:9**

**<sup>9</sup>"A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough."**

What do we do when, after prayer and careful Bible study, we are convinced that a church or teacher is teaching falsely? We warn against the error, showing how it is contrary to God's Word. We pray that God would send the Holy Spirit to let them see the truth of his Word. We are persistent in this process. We do *not* compromise, for the sake of unity. "Agreeing to disagree" about God's Word does not promote *unity*. It promotes *religious unionism*, which is a shoddy substitute, and is forbidden by God in his Word. Ultimately, if the church or teacher does not change their false teaching, we must separate ourselves from them.

### **ROMANS 16:17**

**<sup>17</sup>I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.**

"Keep away" does not mean we shun false teachers or members of false churches. It means we do not engage in joint religious activity: worship, prayer, mission work, etc. This step is only taken when the false doctrine is taught *persistently*, and there is no repentance after the false doctrine is refuted with God's Word. When this separation sadly occurs, it should be noted what causes the separation—the false doctrine, *not* the one warning against the false doctrine.

The goal of this drastic step is not to proclaim oneself morally superior. Such a smug, self-righteous attitude is contrary to faith. Rather, the goal is to send a strong warning: *what you believe is dangerous, for it is contrary to the Word of God*. In summary, it is God's will that Christians strive for true unity, unity produced by the Holy Spirit and based on God's Word.

# ANSWERS

## TO LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### **1 CORINTHIANS 1:10**

**<sup>10</sup> I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.**

We call such unity *fellowship*—a sharing in all of God's wonderful Word. Church fellowship is a treasure to be cherished and preserved.

