

ELEMENT

christian church



GOSPEL CLASS

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	2
LESSON 1:	
SCRIPTURE.....	3
LESSON 2:	
GOD.....	13
LESSON 3:	
CREATION & SIN.....	20
LESSON 4:	
SALVATION.....	25
LESSON 5:	
MISSIONAL CHURCH.....	33
LESSON 6:	
MISSIONAL CHURCH II.....	41
GOSPEL COMMUNITIES & CHURCH PLANTING	
LESSON 7:	
STEWARDSHIP/GIVING.....	45
LESSON 8:	
STEWARDSHIP/TALENTS.....	48
SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION:	
MEMBERSHIP COVENANT.....	61

THE GOSPEL CLASS

00:INTRODUCTION

Element Christian Church holds the issue of church membership in high regard. Members function as the primary missionaries for the church to the culture. Members live, eat and breathe the climate of the Santa Maria Valley every day, placed in the culture to emulate Christ. We are called corporately as ambassadors of Christ to share and live the Gospel to those God—in His sovereignty— has placed in our lives.

- *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:1-2)*
- *"For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others." (Romans 12:3-8)*

The global church has a blemished track record of allowing members to become observers while an exhausted, burnt out pastor and staff do all the work in the church and the community around it. Element is committed to creating a model that reflects God's heart for his children, an organic composition of hearts and hands living out the gospel with more than lip service. Membership is about more than having exclusive access to a members' website; it is not merely a status symbol or social club. A member who enters into a covenant with their local church is called to a higher degree of responsibility; conversely, the elders and deacons are covenanted to assist their members first and foremost, to provide counsel, service, and aid, as well as to pray, teach, and guide as necessary.

- *"Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve for one another with whatever gift each of you have received." (1 Peter 4:8-10)*

To transition from a regular attender to an official member of Element Christian Church, we ask that you attend this foundational class, where we shall look at an overview of Christian essentials with time for questions and discussion. For those who desire to call Element their home, this class will ensure that you get connected. This is more than a simple survey of Christian beliefs; content includes an overview of the gospel, the church, and culture, and how this practically spins out into our lives individually and corporately. Everyone considering Element for their home should attend; this class is required for church membership.

ELEMENT CHRISTIAN CHURCH

From a practical perspective, the following items need to be completed for membership with Element Christian Church:

- Attend Gospel Glass
- Completion of Required Classes*
- Sign up for ministry interview
- Turn in paperwork

*if you miss a class and make it up via listening to the session via mp3, please inform the teacher so that it can be checked off.

BECOMING A MEMBER:

You will know that your membership process has been completed when you:

- Receive a letter confirming your membership with Element Church.
- Receive an email with password and access to the Element members' website.
- Find that you are included on advance notices regarding members' meetings or special member emails and announcements.

For more information about what our commitment as a church to you is as a member, and to see what Element holds as requirements for members, please see the membership covenant at the end of this booklet.

*if you believe you have completed all the membership process requirements above and have not received a letter or access to the Element Church Members' website, email membership@ourelement.org with inquiries and we will be happy to assist!



01:SCRIPTURE

“Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.” - Proverbs 30:5-6

WHAT ARE THE SCRIPTURES?

The New Testament speaks of the Old Testament as Scripture, for which the Greek word is *graphe*, meaning writing. The word *bible* comes from the Greek word for book. The Holy Bible means the “Holy Book”. It contains 66 separate books (39 Old Testament and 27 New Testament), written in three languages (Hebrew, Greek, and a bit in Aramaic), over a period of more than a thousand years, by over 40 authors (of varying ages and backgrounds), on three continents (Asia, Africa and Europe).

Authors include kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, poets, statesmen, scholars, etc. Books cover history, sermons, letters, a hymnbook, and a love song. There are geographical surveys, architectural specifications, travel diaries, population statistics, family trees, inventories, and numerous legal documents. It covers hundreds of controversial subjects with amazing unity. It is the best selling book of all time, and is now available in nearly 3000 languages.

The Old Testament was written on papyrus--a form of paper made out of reeds; the New Testament was written on parchments (prepared animal skins). Because both forms of documents easily degraded under the hot and dry conditions, it was difficult to obtain these ancient manuscripts.

A lecturer at the University of Paris created the Bible's chapter divisions in the early 1200's. Its current verse divisions were not fully developed until 1551.

WHAT DOES SCRIPTURE SAY ABOUT ITSELF?

Some statements from Scripture about Scripture

Given by inspiration of God – II Timothy 3:16, II Peter 1:19-21.

The very words of God - I Thessalonians 2:13

Are all we need to know God - Luke 16:29,31.

A perfect guide for life - Proverbs 6:23. Pure - Psalm 12:6; 119:140 True - Psalm 119:160; John 17:17.

Flawless – Proverbs 30:5-6 Perfect - Psalm 19:7

Effective - Isaiah 55:11

Precious - Ps 19:10.

Powerful - Hebrews 4:12.

Nothing to be taken from, or added to - Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32

For everyone - Romans 16:26

To be obeyed James 1:22

Some poetic images from Scripture about Scripture

Sweet like honey - Psalm 119:103

A lamp to guide our life - Psalm 119:105

Food for our soul - Jeremiah 15:16

A fire that purifies and hammer that breaks us - Jeremiah 23:29

A sword - Ephesians 6:17, Hebrews 4:12

A seed for faith salvation planted in us - James 1:21

Milk that nourishes us - I Peter 2:2

HOW DID JESUS VIEW SCRIPTURE?

Actual people, historical events, and straightforward facts

Jesus treated Old Testament narratives as straightforward facts: Creation (Lk. 11:51), Abel (Lk. 11:51), Noah (Mt. 24:37-39; Lk. 17:26-27), Abraham (Jn. 8:56), Sodom & Gomorrah (Mt. 10:15, 11:23-24; Luke 10:12), Lot (Lk. 17:28-32), Isaac & Jacob (Mt. 8:11; Lk. 13:28), the manna (Jn. 6:31, 49, 58), the wilderness serpent (Jn. 3:14), Moses as lawgiver (Mt. 8:4, 19:8; Mk. 1:44; 7:10, 10:5; 12:26; Lk. 5:14, 20:37; Jn. 5:46, 7:19), the popularity of the false prophets (Lk. 6:26), and Genesis 1 & 2 (Mt. 19:4-5; Mk. 10:6-8). In matters of controversy, Jesus used the Old Testament as his court of appeals (Mt. 23:23; Mt. 5:17-20; Mt. 23: 2-3; Mt. 22:29; Mk. 12:24).

Comfort in times of crisis

In times of crisis, Jesus quoted Scripture. When tempted by Satan, (Mt. 4:1-11) Jesus quotes Dt. 8:3; Dt. 6:16; Dt. 6:13. At the moment of his death, (Mt. 27:46, Mk. 15:34) he quotes Ps. 22:1 "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and in Lk. 23:46, he quotes Ps. 31:5 "Into thy hands I commit my spirit."

Fulfillment of the Old Testament Law, Prophecies, and Revelation of Christ

Jesus claimed that all Scriptures, including the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, were fulfilled in him (Lk. 24:25-47). Jesus also taught that the entire purpose of the Old Testament was to reveal himself (John 5:39). Jesus taught that Old Testament prophecy had been fulfilled (Lk. 4:21; Mt. 11:10; cf. Lk. 7:27; Mk. 9:12-13; Lk. 18:31-33; Lk. 21:22; Mt. 26:24; Mk. 14:21; Lk. 22:37; Mt. 26:31; cf. Mk. 14:27; Mt. 26:53-56; cf. Mk. 14:49; Lk. 24:25-27; Lk. 24:44-47; Jn. 5:39-47; Jn. 13:18; cf. Ps. 41:9; Jn. 15:25; cf. Ps. 35:19; Jn. 17:12).

Authentication of Old Testament authors

Jesus taught that Scripture was authored by Moses (Mk. 7:10), Isaiah (Mk. 7:6; Mt. 13:14), David (Mk. 12:36), and Daniel (Mt. 24:15).

Infallibility and Truth of the Scriptures

Jesus taught that the Scripture could not be broken (Jn. 10:35; Mt. 5:18; Lk. 16:17). Jesus also promised that the New Testament would come (Jn. 14:25-26, Jn. 16:23).

HOW DID THE APOSTLES VIEW SCRIPTURE?

GOD'S WORD

Paul used Scripture and God's spoken word interchangeably (Gen. 12:3 cf. Gal. 3:8; Ex. 9:6 cf. Rom. 9:17). The New Testament teaches that what the Bible says is akin to what God says (Gen. 2:24 cf. Mt. 19:4-5; Ps. 95:7 cf. Heb. 3:7; Ps. 2:1 cf. Acts 4:24-15; Isa. 55:3 cf. Acts 13:34; Ps. 16:10 cf. Acts 13:35; Ps. 2:7 cf. Heb. 1:5; Ps. 97:7 cf. Heb. 1:6; Ps. 104:4 cf. Heb. 1:7). Peter and Paul claimed that Scripture has dual authorship by both men and God (I Pet. 1:10-12; 1 Cor. 2:12-13).

SACRED SCRIPTURE

The New Testament writers claimed that the Old Testament was sacred Scripture (Mt. 21:42; 22:29; 26:54, 56; Lk. 24; Jn. 5:39; 10:35; Acts 17:2,11; 18:28; Rom. 1:2; 4:3; 9:17; 10:11; 11:2; 15:4; 16:26; I Co. 15:3-4; Gal. 3:8; 3:22; 4:30; I Ti. 5:18; II Ti. 3:16; II Pt. 1:20-21; 3:15-16). Furthermore, the New Testament authors quote the Old Testament as sacred on roughly 300 occasions.

DOES SCRIPTURE HAVE ANY ERRORS OR CONTRADICTIONS?

God cannot speak falsely (2 Samuel 7:28; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18), so all of Scripture is true and without any error or contradiction (Num. 23:19; Ps. 12:6; 119:89, 96; Prov. 30:5). But, the Bible also teaches the following:

- God's thoughts are much higher than ours (Isaiah 55:9)
- God has secrets that He has not revealed to anyone (Deut. 29:29)
- We sometimes see dimly (I Cor. 13:12)
- We tend to suppress the clear truth of God's word because of our unrepentant sin (Romans 1:18-19).

Therefore, if it appears that there is a contradiction in Scripture, we must humbly assume that we—not God’s word—are somehow in error. God leaves provision for seeming “contradictions” by telling us that some things in His Scriptures are very hard to understand (2 Peter 3:15-16). This does not mean that we cannot know the truth; it does mean that we only know it in part (1 Corinthians 13:9) and must live by faith and trust God.

HOW WERE THE 66 BOOKS CHOSEN?

Canon is a word meaning “a measuring rod.” The canon is a standard that all scriptural books must meet. The books of the Bible were authoritative and shared particular traits which distinguished them from other mere writings.

1. Was it written by a prophet of God (Dt. 18:18-22; 1 Pt. 1:20-21)?
2. Was the prophet confirmed by an act of God (Heb. 2:3-4)?
3. Does it tell the truth about God (Gal. 1:8; Dt. 13:1-5; Dt. 18:22)?
4. Does it have the power of God (Heb. 4:12)?
5. Was it accepted by the people of God (1 Thess. 2:13; Dt. 31:24-26; Josh. 24:26; 1 Sam. 10:25; Dan. 9:2; 2 Pt. 3:16; 1 Tim. 5:18; Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27)

No dispute on Old Testament Books

First, there is little if any dispute on the books of the Old Testament since those books were quickly accepted as inspired of God. The phrase “thus says the Lord” is repeated hundreds of times throughout the Old Testament by God’s messengers who spoke on His behalf. The Old Testament is clear that God spoke through His prophets (1 Kings 14:18; 16:12, 34; 2 Kings 9:36; 14:25; Jer. 37:2; Zech 7:7, 12) and so what the prophet says in God’s name is what God says (1 Kings 13:21, 26; 21:19; 2 Kings 9:25-26; Hag. 1:12 cf. 1 Sam. 15:3, 18). Therefore, to reject what a prophet had said was to reject what God had commanded (Deut. 18:19; 1 Sam. 10:8, 13:13-14; 15:3, 19, 23; 1 Kings 20:35, 36). When an Old Testament prophet spoke, it was clear that God had spoken. For example, the tablets of the Law were preserved in the Ark (Ex. 25:16-21; 40:20; Deut. 10:5; 1 Kings 8:9), the Five Books of Moses (Pentateuch) were placed alongside them as soon as Moses wrote them (Deut. 31:24-26), and the writings of the prophets were also added (1 Sam. 10:25; Josh. 24:25-26; Isaiah 8:20; 29:18; 34:16). The Old Testament books refer to one another as sacred Scripture (Joshua 1:8 quotes the Pentateuch; Daniel 9:2 quotes Jeremiah; and Ezekiel 14:14 speaks of Noah, Daniel, and Job).

Apocryphal Books

The Hebrew canon was closed and settled with the final book of the Old Testament, Malachi, around 400 B.C. Malachi concluded with the promise that the next event in redemptive history would be the coming of John the Baptist who would prepare the way for Jesus (Malachi 3:1, 4:5-6 cf. Matthew 3:1-17, 17:9-13).

During the 400 years of silence between the end of the Old Testament and the coming of Jesus, many of the apocryphal works were written and include such things as books of history, fiction, practical living, and end times speculation. While these books were read by some of God’s people, they were treated like Christian books in our own day and never accepted as Scripture. While the Old Testament is quoted roughly 300 times in the New Testament, none of the apocryphal (hidden books) or pseudepigraphal (pen name authored books) are ever quoted in the New Testament or recognized as Scripture by Christians until the Catholic Council of Trent in 1546. Under pressure from Protestant reformers, the Catholic Church voted to include some apocryphal books to justify their baseless doctrines such as purgatory. These books contradict each other, have some clearly aberrant doctrine at odds with the rest of God’s Word, and do not claim to be inspired.

Jesus summarized the Bible as existing in three parts: the Law, Prophets, and Psalms (Luke 24:4). He accepted the Old Testament canon as it exists today without any modifications and came to fulfill it (Matt. 5:17). Jesus also spoke of the Old Testament as existing from Abel (Genesis) to Zechariah (Malachi) in Luke 11:51 and Matthew 23:25.

Words of Jesus Christ

Second, the gospels were accepted as sacred scripture because they contained the words of Jesus that God’s people treasured (Matt 7:28-29; Luke 2:19, 51; John 6:63). Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would come to inspire the writing of the gospels and epistles (John 14:25-26, 16:13). Jesus also promised that His people would

recognize His teaching (John 10:27). This is possible because the same Holy Spirit who inspired the writing of Scripture also teaches their meaning to God's people in whom He dwells (I Corinthians 2:13-14). For example, in I Timothy 5:28 Paul quotes Jesus' words in Luke 10:7 and calls them "Scripture."

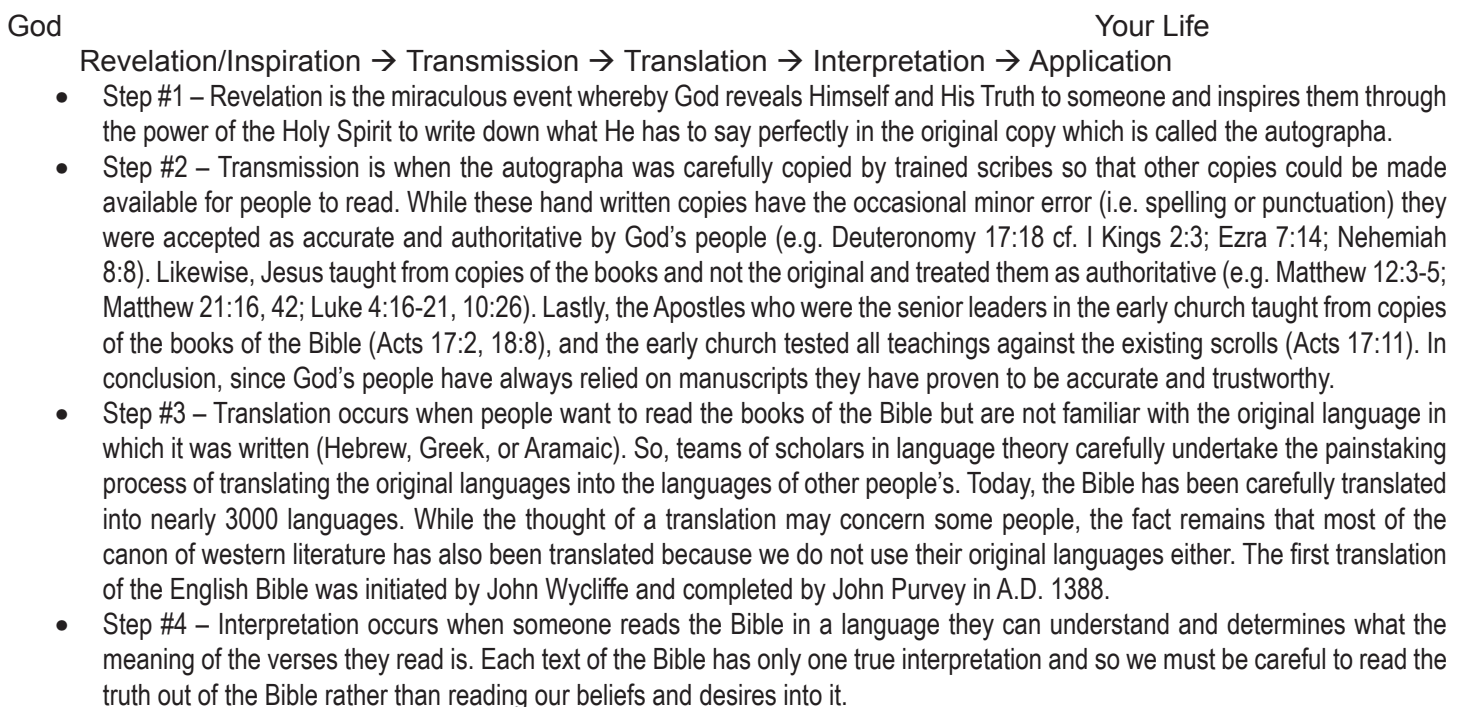
Eyewitness accounts

Third, all but a few New Testament writers claim to be eyewitnesses (2 Pt. 1:16; I Jn. 1:1-3; Luke 1:1-3; Acts 1:1-3; I Cor. 15:6-8; John 20:30-31; Acts 10:39-42; I Pt. 5:1; Acts 1:9). Some authors who were not eyewitnesses received first-hand information from other reliable witnesses. Luke received his information from Paul (2 Tim. 4:11) and numerous eyewitnesses (Lk. 1:1-4), Mark received his information from Peter (I Pt. 5:13), and James and Jude were closely associated with the apostles in Jerusalem and were probably Jesus' brothers. Paul claimed Jesus Christ was speaking through him (I Cor. 14:37; 2 Cor. 13:3). Paul quotes Luke as Scripture (I Tim. 5:18 cf. Dt. 25:4, Lk. 10:7). New Testament writers claim that their writings are holy (2 Tim. 3:15). The New Testament writers said that their writings were the very words of God (1 Thess. 2:13, I Cor. 14:37, 2 Peter 3:2). Peter called Paul's writings Scripture (2 Pt. 3:15-16). Paul declared that the letters he wrote were to be read in the churches and obeyed (Col. 4:16; 2 Thess. 3:14). The early church treated the apostles teaching as authoritative (Eph. 2:20; Acts 2:42; Acts 15; Eph. 2:20; I John 4:6). Almost all books of the New Testament canon were accepted by the second century. The New Testament canon was finalized after some questions were raised and resolved around the fourth century. There were never any widespread debates on any of the books until the Catholic Council of Trent in 1546.

CAN SCRIPTURE BE WRITTEN TODAY?

Hebrews 1:1-2 tells us that God has spoken to us through Jesus and that we have no need of any more revelation beyond what was recorded of His life and work and the subsequent apostolic explanation. The Book of Revelation deals with the end of all things and tells us to expect no more Scripture than what we already have (Revelation 22:18-19). Any new book of the Bible would require eyewitness verification, a new working of God after 2000 years of silence, absolute consistency with the rest of Scripture, and perfect prophecy without any error. We would also have to assume that God had some pertinent revelation that He has withheld from His people for the past 2000 years that He has for some reason now decided to make known. Lastly, the Scriptures warn us of adding to them (Dt. 4:2; Prov. 30:5-6).

The existence of the Bible is actually a fascinating and miraculous process that many volumes have been written to explain. To help you understand the process in a brief and simple way I will explain a five-fold sequence that has occurred for you to read the Bible.



- Step #5 – Application is the result of taking what we learn from the principles in the Bible and making changes in our thoughts and actions so that our life is congruent with the Bible. There are a seemingly infinite number of applications to a text of the Bible. For example, when the Bible says that we should love people the applications for that principle are seemingly endless.

In this five-step process we see how God speaks to us and cares deeply about our lives. We also see how the chasm between God and us is graciously filled by God’s revelation which is more accurate and true than our human speculation such as religion and philosophy. Lastly, while step #1 is the only step that is guaranteed to be perfect, the other steps are indeed accurate though we must be increasingly careful as we move through them because the opportunity for error increases at each step.

WHY SHOULD I TRUST THAT THE BIBLE IS ACCURATE?

In regards to the five-step process I have explained above, some people struggle in trusting that the early copies of the original copy of each book of the Bible is trustworthy. To help bolster your confidence in the early copies, simply compare the New Testament books with various other books that are widely read and accepted in Western literature. In so doing the trustworthiness of the earliest copies of the Bible are shown to be nearly identical to the original writings of the New Testament. To help explain this more fully we will examine three forms of evidence for the trustworthiness of the copies of the New Testament books.

Three general tests exist for determining the historicity of any ancient text: the bibliographical test (number and quality of manuscripts), the internal test (the consistency of the text to not contradict itself), and the external test (the accuracy of the text in relation to other works of history from that period).

TEST #1 – THE BIBLIOGRAPHICAL TEST

The bibliographical test seeks to determine the quantity and quality of documents, as well as how far removed they are from the time of the originals. The quantity of NT manuscripts is unparalleled in ancient literature. There are over 5,000 Greek manuscripts, about 8,000 Latin manuscripts, and another 1,000 manuscripts in other languages (Syriac, Coptic, etc.).

AUTHOR	DATE WRITTEN	EARLIEST COPY	TIME SPAN	NUMBER OF COPIES	ACCURACY
Homer	Ca. 850 BC	-----	-----	643	95%
Herodotus	Ca. 450 BC	ca. AD 900	About 1,350 years	8	
Euripedes	Ca. 440 BC	ca. AD 1100	About 1,500 years	9	Not
Thucydides	Ca. 420 BC	ca. AD 900	About 1,300 years	8	enough
Plato	Ca. 380 BC	ca. AD 900	About 1,300 years	7	copies
Aristotle	Ca. 350 BC	ca. AD 1100	About 1,400 years	5	To
Caesar	Ca. 60 BC	ca. AD 900	About 950 years	10	reconstruct
Catullus	Ca. 50 BC	ca. AD 1500	About 1,600 years	3	The
Livy	Ca. 10 BC	-----	-----	20	original
Tacitus	Ca. AD 100	ca. AD 1100	About 1,000 years	20	
New Test.	Ca. AD 60	ca. AD 130	About 100 years	About 14,000	99.5%

Taken directly from Ken Boa’s “I’m Glad You Asked” page 78

The age of the manuscripts is also excellent. Possibly the oldest manuscript is a scrap of papyrus (p52) containing John 18:31-33, 37-38, dating from AD 125-130, no more than 40 years after John’s gospel was likely written. A non-Christian scholar, Carsten Peter Thiede even claims that he has dated a fragment of Matthew to about 60 AD. By comparing the ancient manuscripts we find that the vast majority of variations are minor elements of spelling, grammar, and style, or accidental omissions or duplications of words or phrases. Only about 400 (less than one page of an English translation) have any significant bearing on the meaning of a passage, and most are footnoted in Modern English translations. Overall, 97-99% of the NT can be reconstructed beyond any reasonable doubt, and no Christian doctrine is founded solely or even primarily on textually disputed passages.

The Scripture quoted in the works of the early Christian writers (most 95-150 AD) are so extensive that virtually the entire New Testament can be reconstructed except for 11 verses, mostly from 2 and 3 John.

Critics of the accuracy of the Bible routinely claimed that it was in fact a series of fables and legends that had developed over hundreds of years because there were not enough copies of ancient manuscripts to alleviate their skepticism. Curiously, a simple shepherd boy dealt a death blow to their criticisms in 1947. He wandered into a cave in the Middle East and discovered large pottery jars filled with leather scrolls that had been wrapped in linen cloth. Amazingly, the ancient copies of the books of the Bible were in good condition despite their age and harsh climate because they had been well sealed for nearly 1900 years. What is now known as The Dead Sea Scrolls are made up of some 40,000 inscribed ancient fragments. From these fragments more than 500 books have been reconstructed, including some Old Testament books such as a complete copy of Isaiah.

Simply, if someone seeks to eliminate the trustworthiness of the New Testament they would also have to dismiss virtually the entire canon of western literature and pull everything from Homer to Plato and Aristotle off of bookstore shelves and out of classroom discussions.

TEST #2 – THE INTERNAL TEST

This test of the Bible's accuracy is indeed important because each book is a witness to a body of truth and much like a legal case in our day if a witness were to contradict themselves then their testimony should not be deemed trustworthy. While there is not sufficient time in such a brief booklet to thoroughly defend the internal consistency of the Bible, there are a few simple examples that illustrate the amazing internal unity of the Bible.

Neither Islam, nor any other world religion or cult can present any specific prophecies concerning the coming of their prophets. However in the Bible we see hundreds of fulfilled prophecies extending hundreds, and sometimes over a thousand years into the future. Consider the few following prophecies and their fulfillment in Jesus Christ:

1. Born of a woman (Gen. 3:15 cf. Mt. 1:20; Gal. 4:4)
2. Descendant of Abraham (Gen. 22:18 cf. Mt. 1:1; Gal. 3:16)
3. Born of a virgin (Is. 7:14 cf. Mt. 1:18)
4. Born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2 cf. Luke 2:1-7)
5. Prophesied by the forerunner John the Baptist (Is. 40; Mal. 3:1 cf. Jn. 1:19-52)
6. Rejected by his own people (Is. 53 cf. Jn. 1)
7. Presented as a king riding a donkey (Zech. 9:9 cf. Lk. 19:35-37)
8. Betrayed by a friend (Ps. 41:9 cf. Mt. 26:50)
9. Betrayed for 30 pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12 cf. 26:15)
10. Blood money thrown on temple floor & used to buy a potters field (Zech. 11:13 cf. Mt. 27:5-7)
 - **Note:** the temple was destroyed in 70 AD so the Messiah must have come prior to then.
11. Crucified (Ps. 22:16 cf. Lk 23:33)
 - **Note:** crucifixion didn't exist until hundreds of years after Psalms was written
12. Crucified with thieves (Isa. 53:12 cf. Mt. 27:38)
13. Forsaken by God (Ps. 22:1 cf. Mt. 27:46)
14. Lots cast for His clothing (Ps. 22:18 cf. Jn. 19:23)
15. Buried in a rich man's tomb (Isa. 53:9 cf. Mt. 27:57)
16. Resurrected & exalted (Ps. 16:10, Isa. 52:13, 53:10-12 cf. Acts 2:25-32)
17. Ascended into heaven (Ps. 68:18 cf. Acts 1:8, Eph. 4:8).

The Bible is clearly a book of history and not just philosophy because it continually promises concrete historical events that in time come to pass exactly as promised. These promises show the divine inspiration of the Bible and their fulfillment proves that there is a God who rules over human history and brings events to pass just as He ordains them. Because of these facts, we can trust the internal consistency of the Bible to be a chorus of faithful witnesses who sing together in harmony.

TEST #3 – THE HISTORICAL TEST

The historicity of Jesus and events surrounding the time of his life has been well established by early Roman, Greek, and Jewish sources. Such ancient historians include Flavius Josephus, Mara BarSerapion, Cornelius Tacitus, Suetonius, Pliny the Younger, Lucian, and the Jewish Talmud. Simply, when the New Testament mentions such historical facts as rulers, nations, people groups, political events, and the existence of Jesus non-Christian historical sources confirm the accuracy of the New Testament accounts.

A SUMMARIZED HISTORICAL TIMELINE OF SCRIPTURE

Old Testament 1800-400 B.C.	Intertestamental Period - 400 Silent Years	Life of Jesus Roughly 0-33 A.D.	New Testament 45-95 A.D.	Pseuda- pigrapha
<p>Prophets spoke "Thus says the Lord"</p> <p>Same prophets wrote their book (i.e. Jer. 36; Josh. 24:26; Is. 30:8; Ez. 43:11; Hab. 2:2; Dan. 7:1-2; 2 Ch. 21:12)</p> <p>Some prophets had a scribe (i.e. Ex. 17:14, 34:28)</p> <p>Books were treated as sacred</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Placed in Ark (Dt. 31:24-26) Placed in Sanctuary (Josh. 24:26) Placed before God (1 Sam. 10:25) <p>Books showed the power of God changing peoples' lives (2 Ki. 22-23; Ex. 24:7; Neh. 8)</p> <p>Old Testament books appeal to each other for authority as God's word, i.e.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joshua 1:8 quotes Pentateuch Daniel 9:2 quotes Jeremiah Ezekiel 14:14 refers to Noah, Daniel, and Job <p>Old Testament ends with the last prophet Malachi –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promises that the next event will be Jesus' coming to the temple (Mal.3:1) Promises that the next prophet will be John the Baptist (Mal. 4:4-6) 	<p>No new books of scripture are given</p> <p>The Old Testament canon is settled without any significant debates regarding certain books</p> <p>Apocryphal "hidden" books are written as history, fiction, wisdom, and apocalyptic literature that become popular books but are never considered to be scripture</p> <p>OT ends with the promise of John preaching & Jesus coming to the Temple Malachi 3:14:5-6</p>	<p>400 silent years ends with John & Jesus (Mt. 3:1-17, 17:9-13; Lk. 1:8-17)</p>	<p>Jesus spoke of Old Testament history as existing from Abel (Genesis) to Zechariah (the time of Malachi) in Lk. 11:51 and Mt. 23:35</p> <p>Jesus described the Old Testament as Law, Prophets, and Psalms (Lk. 24:4)</p> <p>Jesus quoted the Old Testament freely for teaching</p> <p>Jesus and the New Testament never quote any apocryphal books and accepted the Old Testament as we have it</p> <p>Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would inspire his disciples (Jn. 14:26, 16:13)</p> <p>New Testament writers were nearly all eyewitnesses (i.e. 1Jn. 1:1-3)</p> <p>New Testament books claim to be Scripture (1 Cor. 14:37; 1 Th. 2:13; 2 Th. 2:15; Col 4:16; Rev. 1:3)</p> <p>New Testament authors claimed other works of disciples were Scripture (2 Pet. 3:15-16)</p> <p>After all eyewitnesses died, some pseudepigraphal (pen name) books were written by people pretending to be apostles</p> <p>Almost all New Testament books were accepted by the 2nd century and all were finalized by the 4th century</p> <p>No apocryphal books were accepted until the Catholic Council of Trent in 1546</p>	<p>Books written by authors under pen names pretending to be eyewitnesses to Jesus write various false gospels</p>

Why Are There Different Bible Translations?

In translating the Bible into English, three general categories of translation are most common. Word for word translations, thought for thought translations, and paraphrases. The same three options are also used in the translation of other ancient books into English.

Word for word translations make a special effort to carefully interpret each word from their original Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic into English. Word for word translations tend to be the best for studying because of their accuracy, though they sometimes lose the poetic nuances of the original languages. Probably the best word for word translations are the New American Standard Bible (NASB), English Standard Version (ESV), and the New King James Version (NKJV). The King James Version (KJV) is also a word for word translation but because of its use of old English it is very difficult for some people to read.

Thought for thought translations attempt to convey the full nuances of a passage by interpreting the scriptures entire meaning and not just the individual words. Thought for thought translations may include words that were not included in the originals in an effort to give the same meaning that the reader of the original languages would have had. The best and most widely read thought for thought English translation is the New International Version (NIV).

Paraphrased translations pay even less attention to specific word meanings than thought for thought translations in an attempt to give the poetic or narrative essence of a passage. For this reason, many paraphrased translations do not even have verses in them. Examples of paraphrased translations include The Message, The New Living Bible, and The Amplified Bible.

Some translations are very poor and we would not recommend that they be used as credible translations for study. These include the Jehovah's Witness translation called the New World Translation, which was written by editors with no working knowledge of the original languages. We would also not recommend current politically correct attempts to remove the masculine names for God in Bibles like the New Revised Standard Version.

Since each style of translation has different strengths and weaknesses it is best for students of the Bible to use multiple translations that include word for word, thought for thought, and paraphrase versions to gain a fuller insight into the Scriptures. Generally, it is best to use the NIV as your primary study Bible as it is the most common modern day translation.

While purchasing a study Bible can be quite expensive, it is imperative that every serious student of the Bible invest some money purchasing at least one nice Bible with some helps and room for their notes. When buying a Bible the general rule is that the more money you spend the better the quality of paper, binding, and leather you will receive. The highest quality Bibles tend to be published by B.B. Kirkbride and Cambridge publishers. If you are planning to read your primary Bible a lot, fill it with notes, and keep it for a long time, you will want to invest in a good Bible.

WORD FOR WORD

THOUGHT FOR THOUGHT

PARAPHRASE

FOR FURTHER READING

The Origin of the Bible, edited by Philip Comfort, is a good introduction to the authority and perfection of Scripture from a team of good theologians.

Christ and the Bible, by John Wenhan, is a very helpful survey of how Jesus Christ viewed the Old Testament.

The Canon of Scripture, by F.F. Bruce, is a thorough book on how the 66 books of the Protestant canon came to be.

From Ancient Text to Modern Translations, by David Ewart, is a very helpful and thorough book surveying how the Bible went from the hands of the original authors to the Bible we hold in our hand today.

Are the New Testament Documents Reliable, by F.F. Bruce, is a good survey of the accuracy and credibility of the New Testament.

The Indestructible Book, by Ken Connolly, is a fascinating historical look at how the Scriptures have been both opposed and adored over the ages.

How to Read the Bible for All its Worth, by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stewart, is a lesson in exegesis and hermeneutics: understanding the literary dimensions of the Bible, the methodology of Bible study, and its practical application.

Getting the Message, by Daniel Doriani, provides insight, guidance, and practical wisdom for studying the Scriptures.

What the Bible is All About, by Henrietta Means, is a good book-by-book overview of the Bible.

02:GOD

“...I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me.” Isaiah 46:9

*The gravest question before a person is always God Himself, and the most portentous fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like. We tend by a secret law of the soul to move toward our mental image of God...Were we able to extract from any man a complete answer to the question, “What comes into your mind when you think about God?” we might predict with certainty the spiritual future of that man...Without doubt, the mightiest thought the mind can entertain is the thought of God, and the weightiest word in any language is its word for God...
The Knowledge of the Holy – A. W. Tozer*



GOD IS INCOMPREHENSIBLE BUT WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

While the Scripture is clear that God has revealed Himself, it is also true that God hides Himself (Isaiah 45:15). This means that we may know God truly while not yet knowing Him fully because He is absolutely infinite and there is no end of Him and therefore He can never be known in totality.

HOW IS GOD KNOWN?

God is not known by any instrument or human ability. He is known only through selfdisclosure, which is called revelation. God reveals Himself by what he has created (General Revelation). He also reveals himself by the deeds performed by Him alone and the employment of language (Special Revelation). Language is employed because of human necessity and limited capacity, not a deficiency of God’s character.

Special Revelation, represented exclusively in the Bible you own, is particularly important, as discussed last week, because God speaks to us about Himself, our relationship with Him and others, and the precious nature of being image bearers reflecting His very character to other humans, as well as, rulers and authorities in heavenly places (Eph. 3:10).

HOW MANY GODS ARE THERE?

The Bible is abundantly clear that there is only one true God (2 Chr. 15:3; Jer. 10:10; John 17:3; I Thess. 1:9; I John 5:20-21) and that all other “gods” are false and therefore mere idols that are not “gods” at all (Deut. 32:21; 1 Sam. 12:21; Psa. 96:5; Isa. 37:19; 41:23-24, 29; Jer. 2:11; 5:7; 16:20; 1 Cor. 8:4; 10:19-20). However, demons (fallen angels) may also pose as gods and illicit worship, possibly even through counterfeit signs, wonders, and miracles (Deut. 32:17; Psa. 106:37; I Cor. 10:20; Gal. 4:8).

The Old Testament contains a number of clear statements that there is only one God (Deut. 4:35, 4:39, 6:4-5, 32:39; 1 Sam. 2:2; 2 Sam. 7:22, 22:32; Ps. 86:8-10; Isa. 37:20; 43:10; 44:6-8; 45:5, 14, 21-22; 46:9). Likewise, the New Testament clearly states that there is only one God (John 5:44; Rom. 3:30, 16:27; I Co. 8:4-6; Gal. 3:20; Eph. 4:6; I Tim. 1:17, 2:5; James 2:19; Jude 25).

Scripture clearly teaches that there is no one like God (Ex. 8:10; 9:14; 15:11; 2 Sam. 7:22; 1 Chr. 17:20; Psa 86:8; 1 Kgs. 8:23; Isa. 40:18, 25; 44:7; 46:5, 9; Jer. 10:6-7; Micah 7:18). Scripture also teaches that any claim to be like God is a satanic lie (Gen. 3:5; Isa. 14:14; John 8:44).

WHAT ARE GOD’S ATTRIBUTES?

God is not an idea or a proposition but instead a living and free person who is completely other, or holy. Speaking about this entirely other God is difficult and so Christians often speak about God in two main terms:

- His attributes that He has revealed to us in Scripture
- Attributes that that he has revealed through our relationship with Him

First, His attributes are not something merely attributed to Him, but qualities inseparable from His very Being. In every way that God exists, He exists without limit, that is, in perfection. God's attributes can be divided into two categories: shared and unshared. His **Unshared Attributes** belong only to God, while His **Shared Attributes** are found in people to a limited degree since we are created in His image and likeness.

Secondly, we know God by our experiences through relationship with Him: when we recognize His presence all around us; when we recognize His provision in our lives; when we confess our sins and accept His grace to live by faith. In His loving friendship we come to a fuller realization of who He truly is as revealed in Scripture.

UNSHARED ATTRIBUTES

- **Omnipresence** - God is everywhere at all times. (Psalm 139:7-12, see also Jer. 23:24, Prov. 15:3, Deut. 31:6, Col. 1:17).
Application - Since God is present everywhere at all times, it is foolish to think we can avoid Him or hide our sins from Him (Job 34:21-22). Also, it is comforting to know that He is there in times of trouble (2 Kings 6:14-17).
- **Omniscience** - God has complete and perfect knowledge of all things, including the past, present, future, and everything actual or potential (Psalm 147:5, see also Is. 40:12-14, 46:10; Ps. 139:1-6, Job 42:2, Heb. 4:13).
Application - It is comforting to know that God knows all about us, yet still loves and forgives us. Since God knows everything, nothing can separate us from Him, nothing can surprise Him, and He knows our all our needs.
- **Omnipotence** - God is all-powerful and able to do all that He wills (Job. 42:2, see also Ps. 147:5, Mt. 19:26, Eph. 3:20).
Application - It is God's power which guarantees us assurance of our salvation (Rom. 8:35-39, see also 1:16). Also, we can trust God to work out our seemingly impossible situations (Gen. 18:14, see also Jer. 32:17 & 27, Luke 1:37). No being visible or invisible, committee, nation, or federation can add or detract from God's power. God is not aided or defeated by opposition from what He chooses to do. What God has decreed will be.
- **Immutability** - God does not change (Malachi 3:6, see also Num. 23:19, Ps. 102:27, Rom. 11:29, Heb. 13:8, James 1:17).
Application - God has decreed the right order to the universe. He has set a course for His story, which He will not edit later. He has made promises, which He is sure to fulfill. He has chosen you to be part of Christ's household, not as slave but as son or daughter with a shared estate with Him, which He will not rethink later and change. So, it is comforting to know that God remains the same even when we change. Also, it is reassuring to know that we can trust what God has said because His Word never changes.
- **Eternality** - God has no beginning or end and is not bound by time, though He is conscious of time and does work in time (Psalm 90:2, see also 93:2; 102:12; Eph. 3:21).
Application - God endows you with eternal life made possible because God Himself possesses it unequivocally. It is, therefore, comforting to know that God sees things from an eternal perspective. Despite what might happen to you in this life He has secured an eternity with Him.
- **Sovereignty** - God is supreme in rule and authority over all things (Psalm 103:19, see also 2 Sam. 7:28, I Chron. 29:10-13), though He does allow human freedom (Gen. 50:21, 22).
Application - The freedom of God to rule without opposition is the security we have to trust Him through terrible trials. No attribute can supply the security and comfort like God's sovereignty, because within our trials is the reminder that God is working out all things for our eventual good (Romans 8:28, see also account of Joseph in Genesis 50:20).
- **Righteousness and Justice** - Inherent with God being the exclusive creator of all was a right and perfect creation. All the laws of order, including human conduct were right. No court exists in which God can be brought to trial by His creatures to be questioned and condemned of wrong doing. This being the case, all rebellion is justly declared wrong. The righteous consequence is punishment as God sees fit, punishment Biblically described as Wrath.

The gospel announces God's just punishment of wrath was thrust at Jesus on the cross. He endured

the full, just brutal force of wrath to redeem those He saves, so God is satisfied fully. Those under Jesus' headship are seen with favor. They are eternally secure, because they are in union with Jesus (Rom 3:21-26, 6:5).

SHARED ATTRIBUTES

- **Spirit** - God is invisible and immaterial (John 4:19-24, see also John 1:18, 3:1-10, 14:16-17, 16:12-16, 2 Cor. 3:15-17, 1 Tim. 6:15-16). A Spirit is personal with a mind (Ps. 139:1-4), emotions (Eph. 4:30), and a will (John 6:40).
Application - It is encouraging to know that since we are created in the image and likeness of God we have a spirit and will go on to eternal life if we know Him.
- **Holiness** - God is absolutely separate from any evil (I Peter 1:16, see also Ex. 3:5; Lev.19:2; Psa. 5:4-6, 99:5; Isa. 6:3, 8:13, 57:15; Hab. 1:12-13; 1 Jn. 1:5, I Pet. 1:14-19).
Application - The Holiness of God is both fearful and awe-inspiring. Since He is absolutely holy, it is only through His holy work that we can come into a relationship with Him and one day enter into His presence. Also, we are made holy by His sanctifying work in our lives (I Peter 1:2, 2 Cor. 3:18).
- **Love/Goodness** - God alone is perfectly good and loving, and He alone is the source for all goodness and love (1 John 4:8-16, see also ex. 34:7, Ps. 84:11, Jn. 3:16, Eph. 2:4-7, Gal. 5:22).
Application - All that we do in life should be motivated by our love for God and our neighbor (Matt. 22:37-40). Also, we must remember that love may involve rebuke or chastisement when we sin (Hebrews 12:6, Prov. 13:24).
- **Truth** - God is the source of all truth. He is the embodiment of truth (Jn. 17:17, see also John 14:6, Titus 1:2, Num. 23:19, 2 Cor. 1:20).
Application - It brings great confidence and comfort to know that we can completely trust God and His Word.
- **Justice/Righteousness** - God does not conform to a standard of right and wrong, but right and wrong flow out of His character (Exodus 34:7, see also Gen. 18:25, Deut. 32:4, Acts 17:31, Romans 2:11).
Application - It is comforting to know that God deals fairly with all people, not allowing the guilty to go unpunished, but providing love and mercy to those who turn from sin and to Him for forgiveness.
- **Mercy** - God does not give some people what they deserve because He is loving and gracious (Titus 3:5, see also Eph. 2:4-7, Ex. 34:6-7, Matt. 18:23-35, Rom. 12:8)
Application - Jesus' dying for and becoming our sin and saving us from the deserved wrath of God, was the ultimate act of mercy for which we should be eternally grateful. Due to His mercy, we should be eagerly merciful to those whom we meet.
- **Beauty** - God is beautiful and His creation reflects His beauty. God made men and women in His image and likeness to also create works of beauty (Psalm 27:4, see also Psalm 50:2, Isaiah 33:17, Ecc. 3:11).
Application - In response to God's beauty we should take time to enjoy the beautiful creation He has surrounded us with. We should also appreciate the reflection of His beauty that we find in the arts and creative process, recognizing that creating is a part of being made in the image and likeness of God, an act that gives Him glory.

IS THE FATHER GOD?

Throughout the Scriptures, the Father is unequivocally called God (John 6:27, 17:3; I Cor. 8:6; 2 Cor. 1:3; Eph. 1:3; I Pet. 1:3).

IS JESUS GOD?

Jesus Christ is clearly called God throughout the Scriptures (Matt. 28:9, John 1:1-4, 1:14, 5:17-18, 8:58, 10:30-33, 12:37-41 cf. Isaiah 6:9-11; 20:28-29, Acts 20:28; Romans 9:5; Col. 1:16-17, 2:8-9, Php. 2:10-11, Heb. 1:8; 1 Co. 8:4-6, 1 Tim. 6:15, Titus 2:13; I John 5:20; Rev. 1:8, 1:17-18, 17:14, 19:16, 22:13-16).

This fact of Jesus' deity was spoken clearly by Himself and recognized as a claim to be God by the Jewish leaders without Jesus' apology or correction (Matt. 26:63-65; John 5:17-23, 8:58-59, 10:30-39, 19:7). The Scriptures are also clear that Jesus was fully human (Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 9:16, Rom. 8:3, I John 4:2).

IS THE HOLY SPIRIT GOD?

The Holy Spirit is clearly called God throughout the Scriptures. In the Old Testament He is all-powerful (Micah 3:8; see also Acts 1:8, Rom. 15:13, 19), eternal (Heb. 9:14) all knowing (Isaiah 40:13-14; see also 1 Cor. 2:10), creator (Gen 1:2; Ps. 104:30) and all present (Psalm 139:7). In the New Testament, He is also clearly declared God (Acts 5:3-4, see also John 14:16, 2 Co. 3:16-18).

The Holy Spirit is not merely an impersonal force, but a person who can be grieved (Eph. 4:30), resisted (Acts 7:51), and insulted (Heb. 10:29).

ARE THE FATHER, SON, AND SPIRIT DIFFERENT PERSONS?

Though one God, the Father, Son, and Spirit are distinct persons, The Father and Son are two persons in frequent salutations (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; 6:23; Phil. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1, 2; 1 Tim. 1:1, 2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Tit. 1:4; Phm. 3; James 1:1; 2 Peter 1:2; 2 John 3) as well as in other Scriptures (John 3:17, 5:31-32, 8:16-18, 11:41-42, 12:28, 14:31, 17:23-26, Gal. 4:4; I Jn 4:10).

The Scripture is also clear that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are not the same person (Luke 3:22; John 14:16, 15:26, 16:7; I John 2:1). Likewise, the Father is not the Holy Spirit (John 14:15, 15:26; Rom. 8:11, 8:26-27; 2 Cor. 1:3-4; Gal. 1:1).

WHAT IS THE TRINITY?

While the word "Trinity" does not appear in Scripture, the concept very clearly does. Church father Tertullian (155-220 ad) was the first to use the word trinity. To say that God exists as a Trinity does not mean that there are three Gods, or that one God merely manifests Himself as either Father, Son, and Holy Spirit on various occasions.

To say that God exists as a Trinity is to say that there is one God with a unified essence who exists in three equal persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. By person it is meant that God thinks, feels, acts and speaks. The Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) summarizes the doctrine by saying, "In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost."

- *Isaiah 48:16 b* And now the Sovereign LORD has sent me, with his Spirit.
- *Matthew 3:16-17* As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."
- *Matthew 28:18-20* Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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."
- *Romans 14:17-18* For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.
- *Romans 15:16* ...to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.
- *I Corinthians 2:2-5* For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.
- *I Corinthians 6:11* And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.
- *I Corinthians 12:4-6* There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.
- *II Corinthians 1:21-22* Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.
- *2 Corinthians 13:14* May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
- *Ephesians 2:18* For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.
- *Ephesians 3:16-17* I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love...
- *Ephesians 4:4-6* 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; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

- *Colossians 1:6-8* ... All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth. You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.
- *I Thessalonians 1:3-5* We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake.
- *II Thessalonians 2:13* 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.

Summary:

- All the attributes are knowable in part because they are revealed in scripture.
- Each is fully active and powerful.
- Each is full in harmony with another.
- Each can be fully express simultaneously with another without conflict.
- The capacity to understand how this is possible is incomprehensible. It belongs to God alone.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

What are some names of God?

In Scripture, a person's name is closely linked to the person's character and purpose.

This is true of the names of God in Scripture. All the names of God reveal but a glimpse of God and his character. We know that even with many names of God, there is no name that will ever be able to completely describe or understand the fullness of God and his character.

Primary Old Testament Names.

1. **Jehovah** (YHWH) meaning **Self-Existent One** (from Ex. 3:14, "I am that I am"). The characteristics of this name are in the relationship between the true God and His people and, when used, emphasize God's holiness, hatred of sin, and love of sinners.
2. **Elohim's** meaning is **Strong One** (Gen. 1:1). The characteristics are used of the true God and of false gods. It is a plural word and is the plural of majesty. The plural does allow for the subsequent revelation of the Trinity in the New Testament but does not teach the Trinity per se. This name is often used when pertaining to God's sovereignty and work (Isa. 54:5; Jer. 32:27; Gen. 1:1; Isa. 45:18; Deut. 5:23; 8:15; Ps. 68:7).
3. **Adonai**, meaning **Lord or Master** marks him out as a ruler (Joshua 5:14; Isaiah 6:8-11). The characteristics of this name are used of men and of God and indicate the master-servant relationship.

Compound Old Testament Names.

1. With the name El.

- El Elyon, translated the Most High, exalted one (lit., the strongest strong one, Gen. 14:19; Ps. 9:2; Dan. 7:18, 22, 25; Isa. 14:13-14).
- El Roi, the Strong One who sees (Gen. 16:13).
- El Shaddai, the Almighty God, points to his gracious power (Gen. 17:1-20; 28:3; 35:11; Ex. 6:31; Ps. 91:1, 2).
- El Olam, the Everlasting God, the unchanging God (Gen. 16:13; Isa. 40:28).

2. With the name Jehovah.

- Jehovah Jirah, the Lord will provide (Gen. 22:13-14).
- Jehovah Nissi, the Lord my banner (Ex. 17:15).
- Jehovah Shalom, the Lord is peace (Judg. 6:24).
- Jehovah Sabaoth, the Lord of hosts (1 Sam. 1:3).
- Jehovah Maccaddeshcem, the Lord your Sanctifier (Ex. 31:13).
- Jehovah Raah, the Lord is my Shepherd (Ps. 23:1).
- Jehovah Tsidkenu, the Lord our righteousness (Jer. 23:6).

- Jehovah El Gmolah, the Lord God of recompense (Jer. 51:56).
- Jehovah Nakeh, the Lord who smites (Ezek. 7:9).
- Jehovah Shammah, the Lord who is present (Ezek. 48:35).

NAMES OF GOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

When looking at the names of God in the New Testament, Jesus Christ emerges as the predominant name. Jesus claimed to be the revealed name of God in John 17:6. Jesus is the culmination of the promise that God would dwell with His people.

Jesus: Derived from the Hebrew "Joshua" (Y'shua) or "Je-Hoshua" meaning Jehovah Is Salvation. "I AM": Jesus upset his generation especially when He said, "Before Abraham was, I AM," John 8:58. Note also his claim to be Jehovah in such phrases as "I AM the Light of the world," "the bread of life," living water," "the Resurrection and the Life," and "the Way, Truth and the Life" in John's Gospel. From the Hebrew Old Testament verb "to be" signifying a living, intelligent, personal being. Christ: is equivalent to the Hebrew 'Messiah' (Meshiach), "The Anointed One."

WHAT ARE SOME POETIC IMAGES OF GOD?

There are two areas in which God is spoken of in poetic images:

- human experience (anthropomorphic)
- experiences taken from creation

The anthropomorphic poetic images of God

God is called:

- Bridegroom (Isa. 61:10).
- Husband (Isa. 54:5).
- Father (Deut. 32:6).
- Judge and King (Isa. 33:22).
- Man of War (Ex. 15:3)
- Builder and Maker (Heb. 11:10).
- Shepherd (Ps. 23:1).

The poetic images of God from creation

God is compared to:

- A lion (Isa. 31:4).
- An eagle (Deut. 32:11).
- A lamb (Isa. 53:7).
- A hen (Matt. 23:37).
- The sun (Ps. 84:11).
- The morning star (Rev. 22:16).
- A light (Ps. 27:1).
- A torch (Rev. 21:23).
- A fire (Heb. 12:29).
- A fountain (Ps. 36:9).
- A rock (Deut. 32:4)
- A shield (Ps. 84:11).

The poetic images of Jesus Christ

- Shepherd of the Sheep (1 Pet. 5:4).
- Master (Jn. 13:13).
- King of kings (Rev. 19:16).
- Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16).
- Bishop and Guardian of our Souls (1 Peter 2:25).
- Daystar (Rev. 2:28).
- Deliverer (Rom. 11:26).
- Advocate (1 John. 2:1).
- Second Adam (1 Cor. 15:45,47).
- Ancient of Days (Dan. 7:13).
- Vine (Jn. 15:5).
- Chief Cornerstone (Eph. 2:20).
- Immanuel, God with us (Isa 7:14).
- Firstborn (Rom. 8:29).
- Head of the Body (Col. 1:18).
- Physician (Lk. 4:23).
- Rock and Stone (1 Cor. 10:4).
- Root of Jesse (Rom. 15:12).
- Potentate (1 Tim 6:15).
- Chief Apostle (Heb. 3:1).
- Great High Priest (Heb. 3:1).
- Pioneer and Perfecter of our Faith or Author and Finisher (Heb. 12:2).
- Lamb of God and Lamb Slain before the Foundation of the World (Jn 1:36 & Rev. 13:8).
- Lord God Almighty (Rev. 4:8).

There was an extreme reverence for using or honoring the name of God. That is why we hear Jesus tell us to start our prayer “Hallowed be your name” (Matt. 6:9). Our desire at Element is that people would pray and speak of God in a similar way that is not only honoring to him but also true to his character.

FOR FURTHER READING

God In Three Persons by Millard J. Erickson

Why Should You Believe In the Trinity, An Answer to Jehovah’s Witnesses by Robert Bowman

The Trinity by Edward Henry Bickersteth

The God You Can Know by Dan DeHaan

The Knowledge of the Holy by A.W. Tozer

The Doctrine of God by Herman Bavinck

The Forgotten Trinity by James R. White

The Attributes of God by A.W. Pink

The Pleasures of God by John Piper

Knowing God by J. I. Packer



03: CREATION & SIN

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. – Genesis 1:1

HOW DID THE WORLD COME INTO EXISTENCE?

This question is foundational to all other questions that shape one's worldview and corresponding views of God and human life. While a myriad of opinions exist on this matter, there are five predominant non-Christian categories of thought:

Thought	Central Idea	Emphasis
Deism	God creates but is not present in the workings of His creation.	God's transcendence
Pantheism	God is part of His creation.	God's personal immanence
Panentheism/Monism	All in God. All is one.	God's transcendent nature
Process Theology/Open Theism	God is in process, growing in knowledge with His creation	God's personal nature
Naturalism	Matter comes forth from natural processes, without aid from any supernatural entity. In this worldview, matter and life are created by chance.	Matter is either eternally existent, or it comes into effect "ex nihilo" (out of nothing).

The above views of creation fail both philosophically and biblically. Pantheism/Panentheism both have a god that is part of the creation, making it impossible for Him to be the creator. Their god remains either transcendent (Other) or immanent (Personal), but not both. He is unable to rule the creation he is part of. Matter is usually an illusion; matters of evil and good are seen as relative, and part of the same god nature.

Other systems of belief struggle with how the universe is created. Naturalism and/or Materialism leave us with an infinite regress of cause and effect, or the incredulous doctrine that everything we see came out of nothing with no causal force or purpose.

The biblical creation story tells us that an eternal, necessary first cause (God), created the universe, and all that is in it. The law of causality demands that all effects (Matter) need a cause, and that these changes take place in the current space dimension in which we live. God is eternal (Psalm 90:2) and is subsequently apart from His creation as the necessary first cause.

Evolutionary theory recognizes that man came from matter already existent on the earth, but it is unable to determine how that process took place. Biblically, we realize that God's power was able to do what is naturalistically impossible: bringing forth life from lifeless matter. God created the substance (matter) of the universe ex nihilo (from nothing). The Hebrew word BARA (arb) is used, while the word ASAH (hvu) is used for the creation of man. Genesis 2:7 uses the word YATSAR (rxy) meaning "formed", depicting the formation of a substance already

present (i.e. The earth or dirt). Thus, man's first name is ADAM (mda), meaning red clay or ruddy.

The creation narratives of humanity all have similar elements to them, highlighting God's revelation of Himself to all men of all cultures through the course of time (Psalms 19:1; John 1:9; Romans 1:18-25). It also is a byproduct of oral tradition passed on from generation to generation (Genesis 11:1-11).

WHAT DO THE SCRIPTURES SAY ABOUT CREATION?

The following verses help shed light on the fact of creation and ensuing varieties of opinion.

- Exodus 20:11 *For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.*
- Nehemiah 9:6 *You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you.*
- Job 38:4 *“Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand.”*
- Psalm 19:1 *The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.*
- Psalm 96:5 *For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the LORD made the heavens.*
- Ecclesiastes 11:5 *As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formed in a mother's womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things.*
- Hebrews 11:3 *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.*

For a further study of the Scriptures on creation, a more comprehensive list is included in the following tables to help you mark these sections of Scripture in your Bible for reference.

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis 1:1-28	Genesis 1:31	Genesis 2:1-25	Genesis 5:1-2	Genesis 9:6
Exodus 20:11	1 Samuel 2:8	2 Kings 19:15	1 Chronicles. 16:26	Nehemiah 9:6
Job 9:8-9	Job 10:3	Job 10:8	Job 12:7-9	Job 26:7-13
Job 28:23-26	Job 37:16	Job 37:18	Job 38:4-38	Psalms 8:3
Psalms 19:1	Psalms 19:4	Psalms 24:1-2	Psalms 33:6-7	Psalms 33:9
Psalms 65:6	Psalms 74:16-17	Psalms 78:69	Psalms 89:11-12	Psalms 89:47
Psalms 90:2	Psalms 95:4-5	Psalms 96:5	Psalms 102:25	Psalms 103:22
Psalms 104:2-3	Psalms 104:5-6	Psalms 104:24	Psalms 104:30-31	Psalms 119:90-91
Psalms 121:2	Psalms 124:8	Psalms 136:5-9	Psalms 146:5-6	Psalms 148:5-6
Proverbs 3:19	Proverbs 8:26-29	Proverbs 22:2	Proverbs 26:10	Proverbs 30:4
Ecclesiastes 3:11	Ecclesiastes 7:29	Ecclesiastes 11:5	Isaiah 17:7	Isaiah 37:16
Isaiah 40:12	Isaiah 40:26	Isaiah 40:28	Isaiah 42:5	Isaiah 44:24
Isaiah 45:7	Isaiah 45:12	Isaiah 45:18	Isaiah 48:13	Isaiah 51:13
Isaiah 51:16	Isaiah 66:2	Jeremiah 5:22	Jeremiah 10:12	Jeremiah 10:16
Jeremiah 51:19	Jeremiah 27:5	Jeremiah 31:35	Jeremiah 32:17	Jeremiah 33:2
Jeremiah 51:15-16	Jeremiah 10:13	Amos 4:13	Amos 5:8	Amos 9:6
Jonah 1:9	Zechariah 12:1			

NEW TESTAMENT

Mark 10:6	Mark 13:19	Acts 4:24	Acts 7:50	Acts 14:15	Acts 17:24-26
Romans 1:20	Romans 11:36	1 Corinth. 8:6	1 Corinth. 11:12	2 Corinth. 4:6	2 Corinth. 5: 5
2 Corinth. 5:18	Ephesians 3:9	1 Timothy 6:13	Hebrews 1:1-2	Hebrews 2:10	Hebrews 3:4
Hebrews 11:3	Hebrews 11:10	Revelation 4:11	Revelation 10:6	Revelation 14:7	

THE TRINITY AND CREATION

The Trinity is involved in the creation of the universe. God the Father devises the plan, God the “Word” orchestrates His plan, and God the Spirit brings it forth with the power of His might. That is why the Scriptures clearly teach that Jesus Christ (John 1:3; John 1:10; 1 Cor 8:6; Eph 3:9; Col 1:16-17; Heb 1:2; Heb 1:10; Rev 3:14), as well

the Holy Spirit (Genesis 1:2; Psalms 33:6; 104:30; Isaiah 40:12-14) is the creator of all things

WHAT IS THE FALL?

God created this world in a perfect state and upon the creation of the man and woman God declared His entire creation “very good” (1:31). This intended state of perfect beauty in all things is described in the Old Testament as “Shalom” (Isa. 2:2-4, 11:1-9, 32:14-20, 43:1-12, 60:1-22, 65:17-25; Joel 2:24-29, 3:17-18). Surveying the condition of our planet and human life (including death, suffering, injustice, boredom, annoyances, miseries, fears etc.) it is obvious that something has gone terribly wrong. All of the individual and corporate shortcomings of God’s perfect intentions for all of creation, whether intentional or unintentional or through omission or commission, qualify as sin.

Scripture teaches that God clearly commanded the first man and woman not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil or they would die (Gen. 2:16-17). The man and woman sinned against God. Because Adam was the head of the human race, when he sinned everyone who would ever live (other than Jesus Christ who had no earthly father) was implicated in his sin (Gen. 3:1-6; Hosea 6:7; Rom. 5:12-21; I Cor. 15:21-22, 15:45-50).

Everyone (except Jesus Christ) is from conception sinful by nature and corrupted to the very core of their being and therefore incapable of doing anything that pleases God (Psalms 51:5; Rom. 3:10-18; Rom. 8:7-8). Thus, everyone (except Jesus Christ) sins (I John 1:8) by breaking God’s holy laws (Ps. 14:1-3; Isa. 53:6; Rom.3:10, 3:23; I John 3:4) because they are sinners by nature and are simply showing forth their hearts (Pr. 4:23, 17:19, 20:9; Matt. 6:21; Luke 6:45).

The fall was the descent of the human race and the rest of God’s creation (Romans 8:18-27) into a state of rebellion against God. Despite his depravity, man continues to have dignity because He still remains an image bearer of God even though that image is marred by sin (Gen. 1:26, 9:6; Jam. 3:9).

IS EVERYONE TOTALLY SINFUL?

Yes, while people are not absolutely sinful (they could do evil things with greater degree and frequency) all people are totally sinful in that their every motive, word, deed, and thought is for their own glory rather than God’s (Ps. 29:2; Romans 3:23, 11:36, 16:27). This is because those who do not belong to God are utterly incapable of pleasing God and doing things for His glory (Matt. 7:17-18; Rom. 8:7-8).

There is a vestige of moral sense, however, in people because of the conscience that God gave them (Romans 2:14-15). However, even the seemingly good deeds done from the moral conscience are mere filth to God if done apart from loving obedience to Him because they are attempts at meriting our own righteousness which is the heart of pride. These attempts are an enemy of the humble grace in which one receives the righteousness of God as a free gift (Is. 64:6).

Man is also totally sinful in the fact that all of his person is marred by sin. This includes the mind (Eph. 4:18), the will (Rom. 6:16-17), the emotions (Titus 3:3), and the physical body (Rom. 8:10).

DOES GOD CAUSE SIN?

The Bible is clear that God is Light and in Him is no darkness at all (I John 1:5). The Bible is also clear that God does not take any delight in sin (Ps. 5:4), He hates and detests sin (Pr. 6:16; Zech. 8:17), He hides His face from sinful people (Is. 59:2, 64:7). Therefore, God does not in any way cause sin and sin is a privation of His good creation and a contortion of His beautiful and glorious perfect works.

WHERE DOES SIN COME FROM?

God does not tempt us to sin, but instead the temptation arises from within our own hearts. Therefore, mere behavioral change is not sufficient to remedy the human condition, but instead we need a new heart and nature if there is to be any true victory over sin in our lives.

- James 1:13-15 *When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted*

by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is fullgrown, gives birth to death.

- Proverbs 27:19 *As water reflects a face, so a man's heart reflects the man.*
- Proverbs 4:23 *Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.*
- Matthew 12:34b *For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.*
- Proverbs 20:9 *Who can say, "I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin"?*
- Jeremiah 17:9 *The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?*
- Mark 7:21-23 *For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance, and folly. All these come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'*
- Luke 6:45 *The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.*

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN?

- Genesis 2:16-17 *And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 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."*
- Matthew 13:14 *In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: "You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving."*
- John 8:43 *Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say.*
- Romans 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
- 1 Corinthians 1:18 *For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*
- Ephesians 2:1 *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins...*
- Colossians 2:13 *When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins.*

HOW SHOULD WE DEAL WITH OUR SIN?

- **Conviction** – recognizing our sin through the ministry of the Holy Spirit and truth of Scripture (John 16:7-11)
- **Confession** – agreeing with the Holy Spirit and Scripture regarding our sin (I John 1:5-9)
- **Repentance** – a turning from the sin and to God and obedience to Him out of love (Luke 17:3; Acts 3:19, 5:31, 11:18)
- **Restitution** – seeking to make amends as much as possible for our sins (Ex. 22:3; Pr. 6:31; Ezek. 33:15)
- **Forgiveness** – asking for grace from those you have sinned against, or giving grace to those who have sinned against you (Matt. 6:12-14, 18:35; Mark 11:25; II Cor. 2:10; Eph. 4:32)
- **Reconciliation** – once all parties have resolved their sins they can be reunited (Matt. 5:24; Eph. 2:14-16; II Cor. 5:18)

WHAT IS THE UNPARDONABLE SIN?

This question has baffled commentators since the days of Jesus and we see this sin mentioned only once in the Scriptures in Matthew 12:31-32. This sin appears to be the rejection of the Holy Spirit of God. Man's proclivity is towards this rejection, and in need of regeneration in order to "choose" God (Acts 16:14). Man freely chooses to reject God.

When the Pharisees were confronted with the choice to attribute Christ's miracles to the Holy Spirit or Satan, in their disbelief they chose Satan. Their choices were congruent with their belief (cf. Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:29). It is the Holy Spirit who testifies on behalf of Christ (John 15:26; 16:14,15), therefore any rejection of Him is a rejection of Christ and the only sin that cannot be forgiven is unbelief in Jesus Christ.

HOW CAN I STOP COMMITTING A SIN?

Rom. 8:13-16 "For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death [mortify] the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry "Abba, Father."

Mortification is Spirit-enabled conviction that man needs to change based upon God's word that results in repentance and grace-centered living (Hebrews 4:12-13).

1. **Repentance** – I want to change. Based upon the good, perfect, and acceptable nature of God's will. (Romans 12:1-2)
2. **Faith** – I can change. Based upon God's faithfulness to His promises made possible by His power. (I Corinthians 10:13)
3. **Worship** – I have a plan to change. A realization that virtue goes beyond merely changing a vice to repenting and doing good works.
 - Clearly identify your goal of replacing a sinful habit with a godly one. (Ephesians 4:28-31)
 - Clearly identify your resources (i.e. prayer, Holy Spirit, Scripture, elders, Christian friends, books, etc.)
 - Clearly identify your plan for using your resources:
Recognize how sin is birthed → external stimulus (world and Satan) + internal reaction (flesh) = sin
Recognize how obedience is birthed → reduced external stimulus (world and Satan) + reduced internal reaction (flesh) = obedience.
4. **Discipline** – I am working my plan.
5. **Perseverance** – I am never going back. Use any failures as learning opportunities to grow in your sanctification.

FOR FURTHER READING

On Creation

Evolution: The Challenge of the Fossil Record by Duane Gish

Darwin on Trial by Phillip Johnson

Scientific Creationism by Henry Morris

Evolution: A Theory in Crisis by Michael Denton

On Man's nature

The Problem of Pain by C.S. Lewis

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made by Paul Brand and Philip Yancey

Created in God's Image by Anthony Hoekema

Man: The Image of God by G.C. Berkouwer

The Christian View of Man by J. Gresham Machen

The Hunger For Significance by R.C. Sproul

On Sin

Not The Way It's Supposed to Be by Cornelius Plantinga Jr.

Original Sin by Henri Blocher

04:SALVATION



WHAT IS SALVATION?

Salvation is defined as deliverance by God from God and His wrath (Romans 5:9-10). God is holy and righteous and our sins against Him cause His wrath to burn against us, which can continue forever (Exodus 34:6-8; Deuteronomy 29:24-29, 32:21-22; Psalm 11:4-7; John 3:36; Romans 1:18-32, 5:5-8; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20; Ephesians 5:6; Colossians 1:21-22, 3:6; Revelation 14:9-11, 14:18-20, 19:11-15).

Salvation is made possible through Jesus Christ alone and there is no possibility of salvation apart from Him (John 1:29, 3:17-18, 4:42, 5:19-23; Acts 4:12; Titus 1:15; I John 2:2; Revelation 5:9). This is because Jesus our Priest laid down His life as the substitute sacrifice for the sins of His people (Isaiah 53:6-12; John 11:50, 15:13; Romans 5:17-19; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, 5:21; Galatians 3:13; Hebrews 10:10, 10:12; I Peter 3:18). Jesus' death and resurrection were a propitiation (appeasing God's wrath, cleansing us from sin, and granting us mercy from God) for His people (Romans 3:25; Hebrews 2:14; I John 2:2, 4:10).

Scripture also uses the concept of redemption in explaining salvation, which means we were enslaved to sin (John 8:34; Romans 6:6) and consequently Satan (Colossians 2:15) and death. But then we are redeemed, or purchased, by Jesus' death and resurrection to belong to God, righteousness, and life (Exodus 6:6; Deuteronomy 7:8, 15:15; 2 Samuel 7:23; 1 Chronicles 17:21).

As a result of Jesus, God's people are now reconciled to God and each other (Romans 5:10-11; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21; Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 1:20-21). God's people are also given Jesus' triumph over the world, sin, death, and Satan/demons (Psalm 110:1; 1 Corinthians 15:21-28; Ephesians 1:20-23, 2:16; Colossians 1:20-21, 2:13-15).

PROCESS OF SALVATION

Salvation is God's process in a believer's life, as Romans 8:28-30 explains:

"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified."

This verse is often thought of as the glorious golden chain of salvation. God initiates, marks out, and secures our salvation, and it cannot be broken. What He begins, He is sure to end (see Philippians 1:6). The underlined words from Romans 8:28-30 are explained further:

- **Foreknowledge** is God's intimate knowledge of events and His people (Acts 2:23; Romans 11:2; I Peter 1:2, 1:20). Predestination literally means "to mark out beforehand" (Acts 4:28; 1 Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 1:5,11)
- **Called** has to do with conversion or a bringing of one to faith (Matthew 22:14; Romans 1:6, 9:24; I Corinthians 1:24, 1:26, 7:18, 7:21; Galatians 1:15; Ephesians 4:1, 4:4).
- **Justified** means to be legally acquitted from wrongdoing (salvation done in past time) (Romans 1:17, 3:21-5:21; Galatians 3:11, Ephesians 2:8-9).
- **Sanctification** (salvation in present time), is the process of maturity as God conforms us to His Son's image (Romans 8:13,29; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 6:11,19,20; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Colossians 1:28; Heb. 13:20-21). Sanctification fuses man's responsibility, God's work, and the church's equipping in the process of a believer's growth in Christ (Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13).
- **Glorification** is the final completion of God's purpose in salvation, which includes our death and resurrection (Romans 8:17, 8:29; I Corinthians 15; Colossians 1:27, 3:4).

This wondrous saving grace of God is given solely because of God's good pleasure, which remains for us a mystery to be adored (Isaiah 53:10; Ephesians 1:3-14; Hebrews 12:2).

WILL EVERYONE BE SAVED?

Simply, no. Hell does exist and sin against an eternal God is an eternal offense requiring an eternal payment to be made by God's enemies (Daniel 12:1-2; Isaiah 66:22-24; Matthew 5:22-30; 10:28; 25:46; John 3:36; Romans 1:18-32; 2 Peter 2:4-22). When the Bible says that God wills that all would be saved (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9) and that Jesus Christ died for all (1 Timothy 2:6; Hebrews 2:9; 1 John 2:2) and that all are invited to salvation (Matthew 28:18-20; John 3:16; Acts 16:31) it cannot mean that all will be saved because the Scriptures are clear regarding the eternal state of punishment for unbelievers.

The Scriptures also teach that Jesus' death is efficient for only particular persons and not everyone in general as indicated by such statements as He died for man and not all (Matthew 20:28, 26:28; Romans 5:17-19). The particulars include:

- His people (Matthew 1:21; Hebrews 13:12)
- Friends (John 15:13)
- Sheep (John 10:15)
- Those the Father appointed (John 17:1-11)
- The church (Ephesians 5:23-26; Acts 20:28)
- Us (Titus 2:14)
- Me (Galatians 2:20)

Also, Jesus' death and resurrection actually does redeem (Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Hebrews 9:12), reconcile (Romans 5:10-11; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20; Colossians 1:22); and propitiate (Romans 3:25; 1 John 2:2). Therefore, if Jesus truly died for everyone, then everyone would be saved. Therefore Jesus' work was particular, or definite for the elect (John 6:38-39, 11:52; Romans 8:32-33).

Some, however, will argue that God should save all people. But God has the right to give grace as He determines (Matthew 20:12-15; Romans 9:20-21), and has done so throughout history (John 15:16; Acts 9:9, 9:15; Romans 3:1-2). Some will accuse God of being unfair, but if God were completely fair and just rather than merciful then *all* would go to hell and none would go to heaven. Also, God has the right to create people for His purposes (Romans 9:22-25).

Therefore, the Scriptures are clear that only some are chosen for salvation (Acts 13:48; Ephesians 1:3-11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13), and salvation is solely a work of God (John 1:13, 6:44, 10:26; 1 Corinthians 1:30, 10:30; James 1:18).

IS SALVATION POSSIBLE AFTER DEATH?

No! Hebrews 9:27 clearly states, "*It is appointed for a man to die once, and then comes the judgment.*" According to Jesus, those that reject Him go into eternal punishment (Matthew 25:46). There is simply no second chance for salvation or reincarnation in the Scriptures.

ABERRANT VIEWS OF THE AFTERLIFE

Many eastern religions and new age teachings try to infuse reincarnation interpretations into verses relating to John the Baptist and the coming of Elijah (Matthew 17:10-12; Mark 9:11-13), yet Luke 1:17 reminds us that John came, "in the spirit" of Elijah. He came with the same prophetic office as Elijah, but he is not in any way Elijah. This idea is contrary to Christ's statement about eternal life and judgment, and Hebrews 9:27. The Bible does not teach reincarnation, but reminds us that we have great confidence in knowing that we have access to God (Ephesians 3:12; Hebrews 10:19-23). Reincarnation is a degrading and hopeless circle of man working toward god/nirvana, etc. on the basis of his own merit/karma. This is the antithesis of God's grace that saves us by faith (Ephesians 2:8-10) through Christ's sacrifice once and for all (Hebrews 4: 14-16; Hebrews 8+9; 1 Peter 3:18).

The Mormons also utilize verses such as 1 Peter 3:19-20 coupled with 1 Corinthians 15:29 to formulate their doctrine of posthumous salvation through the proxy baptism of the dead. Neither practice is biblical, and both are based on very spurious proof text. The 1 Corinthian text is highly suspect, and used in context to prove a point, not dictate a doctrine. The practice was never used in the early church, and is contrary to the rest of the NT teaching about baptism and those who are dead. The 1 Peter reference is also questionable, but most likely refers to Christ preaching through Noah prior to the flood (1 Peter 3:20-22; 2 Peter 2:5), or possibly Christ making proclamation of facts, but there is no indication contextual or otherwise that this refers to a second chance after death.

WHEN WAS OUR SALVATION DETERMINED?

The salvation of the elect was chosen by God in eternity past before the foundations of the world (Matthew 25:34; Romans 8:29; Ephesians 1:5-8; 2 Timothy 1:9; Hebrews 4:3; Revelation 13:8; 17:8).

WHAT IS ELECTION?

Election means to select or choose. The biblical doctrine of election (especially coupled with the doctrine of predestination, see above) means that before God even created, in His foreknowledge He unconditionally selected out those that He determined would be His people and live with Him for eternal life (Rom. 8:28-39; Eph. 1:3-14; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; 2 Tim. 1:9-10). Thus election is an expression of God's free and sovereign will, which is done for His good pleasure and to His glory (Ephesians 1:5,6,9,11,12,14).

This is based on His foreknowledge of the fall of man, and their subsequent rejection of Him. The Bible says that there are none that seek after Him (Romans 3:10-12), and man is completely dead in their sins (Ephesians 2:1-7). Man, on his own, is completely incapable of knowing God (1 Corinthians 1:18-25), which is eternal life (John 17:3). God, in His mercy, by grace reached down and spared those that He "foreknew" of His judgment, and allowed the rest to enter into the judgment because of their rebellion and unbelief. This judgment is fair and deserved. As Romans 9:15,16 reminds us, God spares those people unconditionally based on His gracious love, and righteously allows the rest of humankind to continue in their rejection of Him, resulting in judgment (John 3:36). Either way God is glorified in the perfect exercise of the fullness of His attributes (holy, just, righteous, loving, merciful, compassionate, etc.). Subsequently, God opens the ears in understanding of those that are appointed to salvation (Acts 13:48; 16:14).

Two of the clearest teachings on this matter in the Bible are by Paul and Jesus. Paul writes in Romans 9:15-16 *"For God says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.' It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy."* And in John 15:16 Jesus teaches, *"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last..."*

God's electing radar encompasses people from all nations, as He is drawing men from all tongues, tribes, and nations unto Himself (Genesis 12:1-3; 22:18; Ezekiel 36:22-36; John 3:16; Matthew 28:19,20; Acts 1:8; 1 John 2:2; Revelation 5:9,10). This gives us comfort in knowing that God's Spirit is going into the world before us (John 14-16), and drawing men unto Himself (John 6:44), and formulating a people unto Himself (Ezekiel 36:28; 1 Peter 2:4-10). Because of God's work in the world, those who don't have much information about Jesus come to Him through His miraculous work in their lives. The Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8) gives us insight into how God works in this manner. Joel 2 and Acts 2 are literally seen in many Muslims around the world coming to Christ because of dreams, and Hindus coming to Christ because of the miracles God is doing before them. For further study on this matter you are encouraged to read the following Scriptures, which are not exhaustive:

Exodus 9:16
Joshua 11:20
Job 9:1-35

Exodus 33:19
1 Kings 12:15
Psalm 25:12

Exodus 34:24
Job 1:21-22
Psalm 31:15

Deuteronomy 10:15
Job 23:10-16
Psalm 32:5-11

Psalms 33:8-22
Isaiah 10
Matthew 11:25
John 17:6
Acts 17:24-28
Romans 10:12-18
1 Corinthians 26-29
2 Corinthians 13:9
Philippians 2:12-13
Titus 2:11-14
Hebrews 10:35

Psalms 110:1-7
Isaiah 40:20-23
John 6
Acts 4:28
Romans 4:11
Romans 11:7-8
1 Corinthians 4:7
Galatians 1;1
2 Thessalonians 2:7-15
Hebrews 3:4
Hebrews 13:21

Psalms 115:3
Isaiah 61:10-62:2
John 8:31-47
Acts 13:48
Romans 8:19-33
Romans 11:25-12:2
1 Corinthians 6:19-20
Ephesians 1:4-10
2 Thessalonians 3:3
Hebrews 6:17-19
1 Peter 1:4-5

Proverbs 16:4-9
Matthew 10:22-30
John 10:26-29
Acts 16:14
Romans 9:10-26
1 Corinthians 1:2
2 Corinthians 3:4-6
Ephesians 2:10
Titus 1:1-3
Hebrews 10:14

WHAT IS CALLING?

Calling has to do with conversion or a bringing of one to faith. It is often referred to as the effectual calling as opposed to a common calling of all men (Matthew 22:14). Calling may go out to all men, but salvation comes to those God chooses. Some people see this as an insincere offer of salvation, but this is simply not the case. The common call will always produce only salvation for the elect because man, in his unregenerate condition is dead to God (Ephesians 2:1), and incapable of answering His call apart from God regenerating him. Even if an unregenerate person could know the truth, they would naturally suppress and distort it into a lie (Romans 1:18-32).

It is the privilege and duty of Christians to go into the world and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to everyone and anyone, calling them to repentance of sin and faith in Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; Romans 1:6, 9:24, 10:13-17; 1 Corinthians 1:24, 1:26, 7:18, 7:21; Galatians 1:15; Ephesians 4:1, 4:4, 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14). And, through our witness and proclamation of the truth of the gospel God works out his drawing of the elect to Himself (Romans 10:14-15). In this way, God's sovereignty over salvation extends to not merely the ends (the saving of the elect) but also the means (God's saving and appointing you as His messenger).

WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

Repentance comes as a result of conviction from the Holy Spirit and results in a deep desire to change one's heart and ensuing life by God's grace. This includes repenting of sin and turning to Jesus Christ for forgiveness and salvation (Acts 3:19, 11:21, 14:15, 20:21, 26:18, 26:20; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; James 5:20).

WHAT IS FAITH?

"Faith is the assurance of things hoped for the conviction of things not seen" Hebrews 11:1

Hebrews 11:6 states that *"Without faith, it is impossible to please God."* The word faith is used 232 times in the Bible, and is the primary way that man enters into a relationship with God. God is not found through human reason (1 Corinthians 1:21). Subsequently, faith is the medium by which God is known. This is primarily because man's reason is flawed and incapable of knowing God in this way. So God, rich in mercy, and according to His grace, saved us through faith, a faith that He gave us (Acts 3:16, 14:27; Ephesians 2:8). It is not a matter of the quantity of faith, but the object of faith, which is always God (Ephesians 2:8-10). Proverbs 3:5, therefore, admonishes us to *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding"*

Faith takes us beyond our reason and empirical abilities and allows us to see the spiritual world that God has revealed. He gives us this faith in order for us to experience the world as He sees it and trust Him (Romans 10:9-10). Though this knowledge is not exhaustive (Deuteronomy 29:29; Isaiah 55:8-9; 1 Corinthians 13:12), it is adequate to know God intimately (John 17:3), and it gives us a fuller understanding of reality as it really is, and as it has been revealed by God.

All ultimate knowledge begins in faith. For any system to be coherent, it must presuppose the authority of that system of thought in order to process information consistently. While this is circular, however, all systems of knowing are ultimately circular because they claim authority. There is ultimately no source more authoritative than itself. Subsequently, it can't be proven through empirical or rational methods itself.

So faith is a wider rationality that sees reality in the way that God has revealed and intended men to know. Faith also is not esoteric. It is faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, who is God's "exact representation" here on earth (Hebrews 1:3).

WHAT IS GRACE?

Grace, or "Charis" in the Greek, means a gift from God (Acts 15:11; Romans 4:5, 11:5-6; Galatians 2-3, Galatians 5:1, 5:13; Ephesians 2:1-10; Philippians 1:6) and reminds us that we were saved by God's gift to us, and that our salvation had nothing to do with human works, religious or otherwise (John 1:13; Romans 9:16; Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 3:5-6). God's grace is His continuing gift to His people. It is a completely undeserved act of mercy that He bestows on His people.

We are not only saved by grace, but we are established and empowered by God's grace in our lives (Acts 4:33; 6:8; 13:43; Romans 3:24; 5:15; 12:16; 15:15; 1 Corinthians 15:10; 2 Corinthians 9:8; 12:9). In addition, we are given life and cleansing from sin by God's grace (Romans 6:1, 6:14-17; 2 Corinthians 6:1; Ephesians 1:7, 2:5-8). God's grace also comes to His people by means of spiritual gifts that are unique abilities that enable Christians to serve God fruitfully (Romans 12:6; 1 Peter 4:10). Therefore, Christians know that whatever good comes from their works is ultimately the fruit of God's grace working in and through them (1 Corinthians 15:10).

CAN JESUS LOSE A CHRISTIAN?

Some people wonder if a Christian can lose their salvation. The Bible, however, states that salvation does not belong to Christians but instead belongs to God (Jonah 2:9). Therefore, the question is not whether or not a Christian can lose their salvation, but rather whether Jesus can lose a Christian.

According to Scripture, Jesus does not lose any people that God has given Him (John 6:39; 10:28; 17:12). The doctrine of the "Perseverance of the Saints" (sometimes known as "once saved always saved") is very misunderstood, and intricately tied into the doctrine of election. If we are choosing God, then it is certain that we can choose out too. The traditional Arminian position on the matter is that a believer can "lose his/her salvation." This is consistent with that understanding of salvation. However, if God chooses us before the foundation of the world (see question above about when salvation was determined), then how can we lose it? Jesus does not lose those His Father gave Him, period! So what do we do with verses like Hebrews 6:4-6, or 10:29, which seem to indicate that you can lose your salvation? They must be interpreted in light of the nature of salvation, and the nature of God's role in salvation. It is quite possible that these Hebrew verses reflect individuals that were with us, "but were not really of us" (See 1 John 2:19). Paul is clear that nothing can separate us from God's love (Romans 8:35-39) and that even if or when we are unfaithful to God we are secure because He remains faithful to us (2 Timothy 2:13).

Note: It is imperative to realize that this assurance does not depend on you making a choice towards God in some sort of ritual (i.e. prayer, baptism, communion, etc.), but is secured by the work that God, through His Son Jesus, did on the cross. Assurance comes from knowing that God is at work in you (Philippians 1:6; 1 John). Too often we have assured people they are saved because they grew up in the church, or once said a prayer, but this is simply unbiblical. Assurance comes from trusting in Christ, and realizing that God is growing His love in our lives. It is His Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are His.

CAN A CHRISTIAN BECOME PERFECT?

A lot of the confusion in this area comes from confusion in the areas of the nature of sin and sanctification. Even Christians tend to take a human view of sin, which normally sees sin as systemic or external, and we fail to realize the scope and consequences of sin on the human condition. Man is depraved mentally, spiritually,

emotionally and physically. Sin has touched all areas of the human condition including our reason and will (Total depravity; see Lesson # 3: Creation and Sin). Philippians 3:12-14 tells us that we (through God's sanctifying grace) continue to strive towards the goal of perfection, but we will run short of the goal on earth because of the sin that is still present in our bodies (Romans 7:14-25). This is precisely why we need new (glorified) bodies to enter into the eternal presence of God (1 Corinthians 15). Therefore, anyone who in this life claims to be without sin is deceived and lying (I John 1:8).

As an example, the apostle Paul, through the course of his writings, seemed to view himself not as more nearly perfect, but instead more continually aware of his sin, as he grew to more fully know and love the one true and holy God. Early in his ministry, Paul tells us that he is the least of the apostles (I Corinthians 15:9). Later, he tells us that he is the least of all the saints (Ephesians 3:8). And yet later he tells us that he is the chief of sinners (I Timothy 1:15). Paul is abundantly clear that he did not even achieve anything nearing perfection near the completion of his ministry (Philippians 3:12-14). For anyone to suggest that they have become perfect would be an arrogance no less than claiming to be more holy than the man through whom God wrote at least twelve books of the Bible (Hebrews may have also been penned by Paul).

HUMAN UNDERSTANDING OF SALVATION

FROM AN EMPHASIS ON → → → → TO AN EMPHASIS ON WHAT
 MAN'S WORK IN SALVATION GOD DOES IN SALVATION

	Non- Christian Theology of Universalism	Christian Heresy of Pelagianism	Christian Arminianism	Christian Lutheranism	Christian Soft Calvinism	Christian Hard Calvinism
Adam's Sin	Not given to us, we are born perfect like Adam	Not given to us, we are born perfect like Adam	Given to us, we are born with a sin nature, but to not have his guilt	Given to us, we're born sinful	Given to us, we're born sinful	Given to us, we're born sinful
How Saving Grace Is Given	To all people	To those who choose It	Through common grace to those who choose It	Through faith, baptism & communion	From God alone	From God alone
Who Jesus Died For	All people and all religions	All people	All people	All people	Sufficient for all people, but only applied to the elect	Limited for the elect only
How Someone Is Elected to Salvation	Everyone is elect and saved	People elect themselves	God elects those He foreknows will choose Him	God chooses who is saved and goes to heaven	God chooses who is saved by electing before time began	God chooses who is saved by electing before time began
Salvation and Heaven	Everyone is saved and goes to heaven	Everyone can be saved and go to heaven if they choose	Everyone can be saved and go to heaven if they don't resist God	God chooses who is saved and goes to heaven	God chooses who is saved and goes to heaven	God chooses who is saved and goes to heaven
Damnation and Hell	No one is damned and goes to hell	For those who choose it	For those who reject Jesus	An uncertain mystery who goes to hell and how it is decided	God determines who will be damned	God alone determines who must be damned and sends them to hell
People Who Have Not Heard the Gospel	Go to heaven	Likely go to hell	Likely go to hell	Unknown, God may save some	God likely saves some	God likely saves some

These first two views are heretical and counter sound Christian theology; they may not be held by Element Christian Church members	These two views are debated views within Christian theology and may be held by those desirous of church membership.	These two views are where Elements elders stand on salvation; while you may hold the previous two views, you must know where your pastors stand on the issue and agree not to be divisive.
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FOR FURTHER READING

The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination by Lorraine Boettner

The Five Points of Calvinism by Edwin Palmer

Easy Chairs, Hard Words by Douglas Wilson

Putting Amazing Back Into Grace by Michael Horton

Back To Basics by David Hagopian

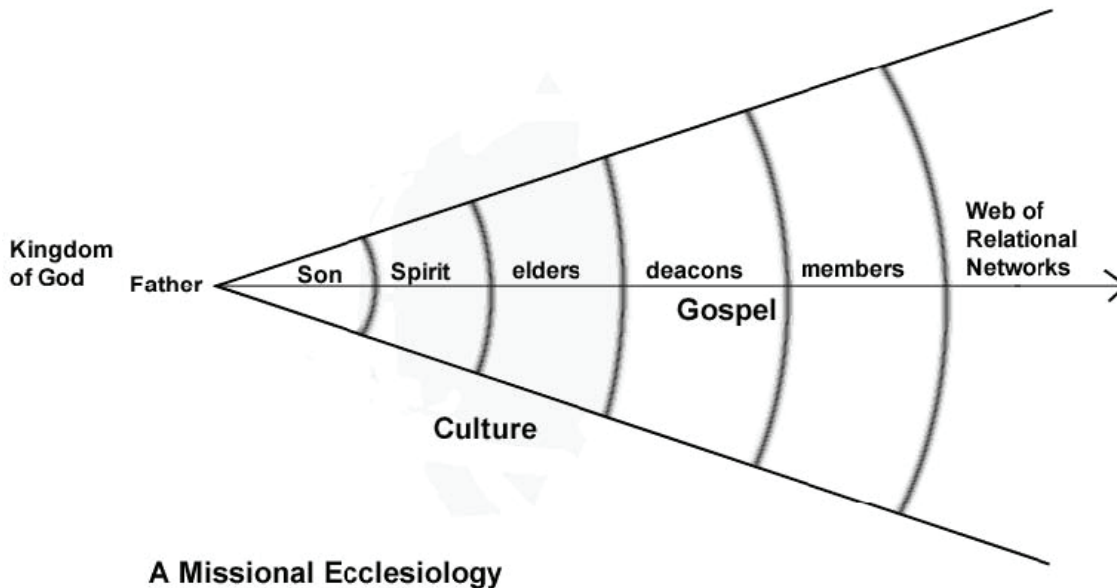
Chosen By God by R.C. Sproul

Faith Alone by R.C. Sproul

Grace Unknown by R.C. Sproul

Willing To Believe by R.C. Sproul

05: MISSIONAL CHURCH



WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her... Ephesians 5:25

The church is the community of Christians for all time who have been loved and saved by Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:25). The church includes the people of the Old Testament (i.e. Deuteronomy 4:10; Acts 7:38; Hebrews 2:12 cf. Psalm 22:22). In every church, there are people who are not Christians (Matthew 13:24-30), including wolves sent by Satan to lead people astray (Acts 20:29-30). While it is possible for Christians to know who else is a Christian (i.e. the frequent references to Christian brothers and sisters), ultimately only the Lord knows exactly every person who is and is not a Christian (2 Timothy 2:19).

SHOULD ALL CHRISTIANS BE VITALLY INVOLVED IN A LOCAL CHURCH?

Hebrews 10:25 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.

The Old and New Testaments were written to communities of God's people who regularly gathered together for such things as teaching, fellowship, worship, etc. The Bible is clear that every Christian is a part of the larger church body and is expected to participate in the life of a local church with the gift(s) God has given him or her (I Corinthians 12:1-31).

It is therefore a sin for someone who claims to be a Christian not to be actively loving his or her Christian brothers and sisters (I John 1:7, 3:17-18, 4:21) and seeking to build up the church (I Corinthians 12:7, 14:6, 14:12, 14:26b).

WHO IS THE ULTIMATE HEAD OF THE CHURCH?

The Scriptures are clear that Jesus Christ is the head of the church (Ephesians 1:9, 1:22-23, 4:15, 5:23). Jesus is the Apostle who plants a church (Hebrews 3:1). Jesus is the Senior Pastor who builds the church (Matthew 16:18). Jesus is the Senior Pastor who rules the church (I Peter 5:4). And, it is ultimately Jesus who closes churches down when they have become faithless and/or fruitless (Revelation 2:5). Therefore, it is absolutely vital that a church loves Jesus, obeys Jesus, imitates Jesus, and follows Jesus at all times and in all ways according to the teaching of His Word (Colossians 3:16).

WHAT ARE ELDERS, DEACONS, AND MEMBERS?

Philippians 1:1 *Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons...*

Elders are the male leaders of the church who are also called pastors, bishops, and overseers (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11; I Peter 5:2). The elders are men chosen for their ministry according to clear biblical requirements (I Timothy 2:11-3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). The elders are always spoken of in plurality because God intends for more than one man to lead and rule over the church as a safeguard for both the church and the man.

The elders' duties include ruling (I Timothy 5:17) managing (I Timothy 3:4-5), tending (I Peter 5:2-5), giving account (Hebrews 13:17), living exemplary lives (Hebrews 13:7), using authority (Acts 20:28), teaching (Ephesians 4:11, I Timothy 3:2), preaching (I Timothy 5:17), doctrinal instruction (Titus 1:9), and discipline (Matthew 18:15-17).

Deacons are the servants of the church who are also qualified for their ministry of overseeing and caring for God's people by qualifications that are nearly identical to the elders minus the teaching and preaching abilities (I Timothy 3:8-13). Unlike elders, deacons can be either male or female (I Timothy 3:8-13 especially 3:11), as with the example of the woman Phoebe (Romans 16:1-2). The deacon ministry may have officially begun in the early church in Acts 6:1-6.

Members are the Christians who are actively participating in the life of the local church so that it is built up for God's purposes (I Corinthians 12:1-31 especially 12:24). The early church had a notion of membership that included numerical record (Acts 2:37-47), records of widows (I Tim. 5:3-16); elections (Acts 6:1-6), discipline (Matt. 18:15-20; I Cor. 5; Gal. 6:1), accountability (Heb. 13:17), and an awareness of who was a church member (Rom. 16:1-16)

WHAT ARE THE SACRAMENTS?

Baptism occurred through the immersion of a person completely under water and then raising him up (Mark 1:5, 1:10; John 3:23) to show that he was united with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:1-7; Colossians 2:11-12). Baptism is to be done in the name of the Trinity (Matthew 28:19). Baptism is to be done for Christians who demonstrate saving faith (Acts 2:41, 8:12, 10:47-48; Galatians 3:27). Baptism does not save anyone, but instead shows that God has saved him or her solely by His free grace (Galatians 1:10, 5:4; Ephesians 2:8-9). Baptism is commanded for God's people (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38).

Communion was instituted by Jesus at the Last Supper as a means by which God's people could continually remember and celebrate His body (shown in the bread) and His blood (shown in the wine) shed for the forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:26-29). The final communion for God's people will be at the Wedding Supper of the Lamb with Jesus at the end of history in His Kingdom (Revelation 19:9). The church is to celebrate communion with a sober confession of sin and recognition of why Jesus died and rose (I Corinthians 11:17-34) and partake together to show that they are unified by Jesus (I Corinthians 10:17).

Therefore, communion is only intended for Christians (I Corinthians 11:29-30). It was the custom of the church, until a schism at the time of the reformation for the church, to partake of communion each week. The elders

of Element have chosen to partake of communion every week as a reminder to confess our sins to Christ, be cleansed and transformed by Him, and celebrate the goodness of the gospel in our lives and church.

WHAT IS MISSIOLOGY?

I Corinthians 9:22b-23 - I [Paul] have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do this all for the sake of the gospel that I may share in its blessings.

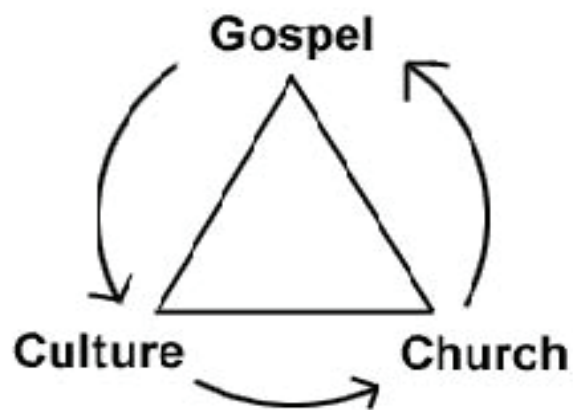
Christianity is comprised of three basic groupings:

- The gospel of Jesus Christ which is the heart of the Scriptures and the revelation of God, and which must be kept in the forefront of every Christian's life.
- The cultures in which people live their lives. These lives both shape and are shaped by those cultures and the gospel must be fitted (not altered) to particular people, times and circumstances so that evangelism can effectively occur.
- The church, or gathering of God's people -- which does include people who are not Christians (Matthew 13:24-30) – where people are built up in their faith and knitted together in loving community so that they can faithfully engage people in the culture with the gospel.

If this process fails to continually occur, the focus moves from the gospel to either cultural agendas or church agendas that are often different than God's agenda, which is the gospel.

Missiology is simply an unwavering commitment among God's people to the gospel in the culture as the church.

LESSLIE NEWBIGIN'S TRIANGULAR MOVEMENT OF THE GOSPEL



Adaptation courtesy of The Gospel and Our Culture Network (www.gocn.org)

WHAT IS CULTURE?

“It (culture) takes in media, advertising, information technology, fashion, ritual, worship, academic disciplines, public symbols, lifestyles and everyday practices such as automobile commuting or childbearing... Culture lends significance to human experience by selecting from and organizing it. It refers broadly to the forms through which people make sense of their lives, rather than more narrowly to the opera or art museums. It does not inhabit a set-aside domain.... From the pirouettes of classical ballet to the most brute of brute facts, all of human conduct is culturally mediated. Culture encompasses the everyday and the esoteric, the mundane and the elevated, the ridiculous and the sublime.” – Rodney Clapp

“When we speak of culture in its broadest sense, we are speaking about the sum total ways of living that shape (and also are shaped by) the continuing life of a group of human beings from generation to generation. We are speaking about the language that enables them to grasp, conceptualize, and communicate the reality of their world; about law, custom, and forms of social organization, including marriage, family, and agriculture. These

things shape the life of each member of the society. They are also shaped, modified, and developed from generation to generation by the members of the society. From the point of view of the individual member they are given as part of the tradition into which he or she is born and socialized. But they are not changeless absolutes.”
– Lesslie Newbigin

When we speak of culture, we are speaking of an enormous framework within which people live the entirety of their lives. Ours is also a multicultural and pluralistic society in which there are a seemingly endless number of cultures, subcultures, and tribes. For example, in the Scriptures at the time of Jesus we see the varying cultures of Jews, Romans, and Greeks. But even among the Jews, there are varying cultures of Jews such as the Pharisees and Sadducees; the differences between these groups is vast and a frequent source of conflict.

For the purpose of simplicity, we will speak briefly of three categories through which we can view culture.

- The cognitive aspect of culture includes the broad and varied ways of thinking and subsequent beliefs that people hold. This includes such things as their view of truth, science, history, experience, etc.
- The evaluative aspect of culture refers to the values that govern what people deem important as demonstrated by what they do and what they make sacrifices for. The clues to uncovering the values are discovered by assessing how they invest their time, energy, money, and passion. What do people talk about? What do they rally around? What shared values build their social network?

When unearthing values it is important to note that values are not ideals. Ideals are things people wish they valued and care for in theory but not in practice (i.e. a “Christian” who doesn’t pray, read the Bible, or attend church).

- The affectual aspect of culture is the range of experiences that have shaped people either because they have chosen them or have had the experiences forced upon them. These experiences range from exhilarating and public to devastating and private. These experiences both shape and reflect a person and his or her culture and are greatly varied and include everything from sexual practices, entertainment pleasures, recreational activities, tragedies, etc.

All of these factors (cognitive, evaluative, affectual) combine to compose a local culture and each component can be weighted more heavily by people under varying circumstances for a milieu of reasons that makes culture very fluid and unsettled.

WHAT ARE SYNCRETISM AND SECTARIANISM?

Syncretism

Romans 12:2 – *Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world...*

Syncretism is the elevation of culture above the gospel of Jesus Christ and the pollution of the clear teachings of the Scriptures with the muddled agendas and beliefs of the world. This sin is commonly known as “liberal Christianity” and includes everything from the golden calf the Hebrews worshipped in the Old Testament to the sexual immorality and drunkenness the Corinthian church was supporting, and to the common “Christian” teaching in our own day that says that the Bible is a myth, Jesus was merely a good man, everyone will ultimately go to heaven, politics is the purpose of the church, homosexuality is acceptable, sin is an outdated idea, etc. etc. etc.

A syncretized “Christianity” always elevates people, reduces God, and neglects the offensive parts of the Bible in an effort to be more culturally acceptable. The continual failure of syncretistic thinking is to believe that the gospel can actually transform people and cultures so that they do not merely need to be affirmed but instead redeemed. In Jesus’ day, this type of thinking among the Jews was championed by the Sadducees.

Sectarianism

John 17:15 – *My prayer is not that you take them out of the world...*

Sectarianism is the elevation of the church above the gospel of Jesus Christ and the pollution of the clear teachings of Scripture to love our neighbors and preach the gospel to every person (Mark 16:15). This is because it is wrongly believed that if a Christian befriends a non-Christian he or she will somehow catch their sins as if

sin were the flu. Such a person prefers to spend all of his or her time hidden in the Christian subculture, naively believing that all the sin and wicked people in the world are exclusively outside of their church.

To justify their extreme sectarianism they will misquote I Thessalonians 5:22 as the KJV does and command that we avoid every appearance of evil when it says that we should avoid every kind of evil, which is a different matter altogether. This is one of the reasons why the Pharisees crucified Christ. Though Jesus never committed any evil (Hebrews 4:15), he did not avoid the appearance of evil and was condemned as a drunkard and glutton because some of the lost people he befriended for the sake of redemption were (Luke 7:34).

The continual failure of sectarian thinking is the belief that the gospel cannot keep a Christian from sin and bring a sinful person from death to life. In Jesus' day, this type of thinking among the Jews was championed by the Pharisees.

WHAT IS CONTEXTUALIZATION?

Though the gospel of Jesus Christ never changes (I Corinthians 15:3-8), it must be contextualized (or fitted) to the culture it is brought to. This includes making sure the gospel is spoken in a language people can understand with concepts that were faithful to the Bible and simultaneously understandable by the hearers. This kind of ministry takes great wisdom and careful scrutiny by God's people to ensure neither syncretism nor sectarianism occurs.

Every church has a contextualized gospel and therefore must continually undergo reform to continue the missiological work of the gospel in their time and place. When churches fail to reform, they inevitably begin to die and become increasingly disconnected and irrelevant to the people and cultures around them. The problem is that God's people often wrongly assume that everyone in the world is basically like them. This is why every time the gospel crosses from one culture into another (usually solely by God's doing as was the case with Cornelius in Acts 10) there ensues a rigorous debate to sort out what is gospel, what is sin, and what is simply baggage added to the gospel as it was contextualized in a culture.

In Paul's day, this included such things as the eating of meat sacrificed to idols, day of worship, circumcision, dietary restrictions, sexual immorality etc. (Acts 10, 15; Romans 14-15; I Corinthians 10:14-33). In fact, much of the content of the New Testament epistles is the apostles sorting out the issues that arose as the gospel reached new people and cultures. In our own day this includes such things as day and time of worship, body modification (i.e. piercings, tattoos, breast implants, plastic surgery), musical style in worship, styles of dress, sexual preference, authority, language etc. that require apostles who can faithfully and wisely sort out the issues as they arise in each cultural context to determine what is sin and what is cultural freedom that God permits.

Fortunately, the four gospels in our Bible show us exactly how this kind of gospel contextualization should occur. While each gospel is absolutely unified in their central teachings, each gospel also emphasizes some various truths to best speak to varying cultures of people.

Gospel	Author	Primary Audience	Contextualization of Jesus	Missiological Features
Matthew	Jewish tax collector, disciple and eyewitness (Matt. 10:3)	Jews	Messiah/King who fulfills the Law	Genealogy to Abraham and David w/sinful women included, roughly 60% is Jesus words, numerous Old Testament references (over 30 Old Testament prophecies fulfilled), God called Father 46 times,
Mark		Romans	Servant	Briefest gospel, divides into Jesus deeds & death at 10:45, fewer Old Testament quotes, action abounds (over 150 present tense verbs), over 40% is Jesus words, 18 of Jesus' 35 miracles, no genealogy and little attention to first 30 years of Jesus' life
Luke	Brilliant Gentile Doctor (Col. 4:14)	Gentiles	Perfect Man to whom all of the Old Testament pointed	Most historical detail and chronological ordering, Jesus' genealogy traced to Adam (humanity), about half of the gospel is Jesus words', 13 women mentioned that are omitted from other gospels, Jewish traits explained (i.e. 4:31, 8:26), emphasis on grace, most detail of Jesus' youth, Jesus' emotions highlighted
John	Beloved and youngest, part of Jesus' inner circle, eyewitness, longest living	Greeks	God Incarnate who came that we might believe and have eternal life	Few Old Testament quotes, many Old Testament allusions, over 90% of John is unique, no parables given, I AM statements of Jesus clarify divinity, key words include know and believe, reappropriation of Greek philosophical concepts

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE AT ELEMENT?

In his book *The Celtic Way of Evangelism*, George Hunter re-appropriates the ancient Celtic means of evangelizing in contrast to the Roman mode of evangelism that has largely dominated

American Christianity. Roman evangelism has been popularized by faithful men such as Billy Graham, and codified by programs such as Campus Crusade's Four Spiritual Laws. In the local church it can be seen in the large events (i.e. concerts, community fairs, felt needs lectures, tent revivals, etc.) that are intended to draw large crowds to hear a gospel presentation and call to decision by a recognized spiritual authority.

While this mode has proven faithful in the past, and remains fruitful in many cultural contexts, people in our culture live lives filled with entertainment, sales pitches, marketing, self-help seminars and large, emotionally moving events of various sorts and are therefore unimpressed by a large church event and unlikely to give up a precious evening or weekend to attend a church event. So, the Celtic model of getting the church people out to them is more likely to be both faithful and fruitful.

Behave, believe, belong

Belong, believe, behave

Roman Evangelism (bringing people in)	Celtic Evangelism (sending Christians out)
Presentation of Gospel Information	Spiritual friendship between a Christian and non-Christian
Call to a decision	Participation in ministry and church
If an affirmative decision is made, the person is welcomed into the church	Ongoing presentation of gospel in word and deed
Friendship extended	Faith and conversion
Training for service in ministry	Church celebration and continuing ministry

In the Roman model, the gospel is presented as a series of factual statements that when intellectually accepted, allows one to flip a switch within the hearer that gives them faith and passes them from death to life. The obstacle to the "flipping of the switch" is seen as the human will which needs to be prodded toward a decision with such things as emotional appeals, touching music, and frightening threats of hell to move the hearer toward a decision. If a person walks forward, stands up, raises their hand, or indicates by some other means their decision they are deemed a convert and told to assimilate into a church. Whether or not they were truly converted is highly debatable, and their odds of assimilating into a church are highly unlikely unless they already have a trustworthy friendship with someone connected in a church.

In the Celtic model, people are called to come and see before they are called to repent and believe (John 1:35-51). The gospel is presented first as a genuine friendship with someone who is a Christian who does not hide his or her faith or push it rudely. The non-Christian is actively ushered into the web of relationships among the church and welcomed to be involved (though not leading) in the activities of the church that interest them (i.e. helping run the concerts, helping guide a rock climbing expedition, playing on a softball team, managing the web site, joining a Bible study) and the missionary members of the church continue in prayer for the person and seek to demonstrate the love of God in practical ways (i.e. bringing meals to moms who have just had a child, helping a young band record their album, giving a band a place in the church to practice, housing people needing help, giving Bibles and books of interest etc.) not to complete strangers, but instead people who by all accounts do not know God but are in genuine friendship with missionary members of the church who do. In this way the non-Christian is not connecting with the church in terms of events and large programs, but instead smaller face-to-face ongoing contact with people who love and speak truthfully to them.

Over time, the non-Christian's social circle begins to include more and more Christian friends and they participate in the church (i.e. serving but not leading in a ministry, poking around the web site, attending church, having meals in people's homes, attending a Bible study on basic Christianity, going through biblical premarital counseling etc.) as a byproduct of being part of the social network of the church.

The non-Christians see the very natural and practical outworking of the gospel in people's lives and begin to identify themselves with the church before they identify themselves by speaking of "our church" and "my church"—which we do not believe indicates faith but is a good step along the journey to speak of "our Jesus" and "my Jesus". As trust builds with their friends and the church, they have become accustomed to hearing about Jesus Christ often and at some point God gives them faith and they pass from death to life. This precise moment is often unknown to us and what we are less concerned about is the exact moment of salvation and more concerned about their understanding of the gospel and love for Jesus Christ that changes them as they become new creations in Christ.

The non-Christians are not pressured to confess Christ, but are well aware that Christian friends are praying for them and desire for them to be saved. So, when they do become Christians, they confess Christ to their friends who are overjoyed and spread the good news throughout their social network in the church that results in great joy and celebration. The new Christian then usually asks to be baptized so they can make a public profession of faith. We encourage them to invite their friends and family to their baptism so that they can begin their work as a missionary who is to remain in those relationships for the purpose of bringing the gospel as it was brought to them.

MISSIOLOGY OUTSIDE OF SANTA MARIA

There are various church planting networks around the world. Element has long term plans to continue to plant locally on the central coast and to support not only missionaries to other parts of the world but church planting agencies that align with our goals as well.

One organization we like is Acts 29. The Acts 29 Network trains, funds, and sends pastors into varying cultures with the gospel to do the missiological work of the Scriptures by beginning new churches in North America and around the world.

Roughly 80% of church planters in the U.S. fail because they have the tough job of beginning a church from nothing. In our future you will hear of new churches being planted.

FOR FURTHER READING

The Open Secret by Lesslie Newbigin

The Gospel in a Pluralist Society by Lesslie Newbigin

The Celtic Way of Evangelism by George Hunter

The Missional Church by George Hunsberger

Radical Reformation by Mark Driscoll

The Church Between Gospel and Culture by George Hunsberger

Church History in Plain Language by Bruce Shelley

The Master's Plan for the Church by John MacArthur

The Church Between Gospel and Culture by George Hunsberger

Biblical Eldership by Alexander Strauch

Other great articles and books are available at www.GOCN.org.

06: MISSIONAL CHURCH II

GOSPEL COMMUNITIES & CHURCH PLANTING



Matthew 28:18-20 “And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”



WHAT ARE GOSPEL COMMUNITIES?

Gospel Communities (G.C's) are smaller groups of people committed to each other (discipleship) and to the lost (mission) – their desire is to see the gospel transform lives. Thus, G.C's open their lives to one another (Acts 2:42-46) and are inviting to those who do not know Jesus. G.C's are simply ordinary people doing ordinary things with a Gospel mindset, *together*.

G.C'S AND DISCIPLESHIP

We believe that we are called to do more than just attend Church, but to be the Church – we are to love one another, to seek unity with one another, to serve one another, to encourage one another, to correct one another, to forgive one another, etc. (Mat 22:37-50; John 13:34-35; Rom 12:10, 14:13, 15:7; Gal 5:13; Eph 4:2, 4:32, 5:21; 1 Thess 5:11; 1 Pet 4:9). Sharing your life with fellow believers throughout the week in a G.C family provides the opportunity and context to live out those commands as we grow as disciples of Jesus. As a church grows wider, it is important it also grows deeper. Receiving the message at Element on Sunday is very important, but it is hard to apply the message to your life if you aren't engaging with other believers at other times, and it is difficult to connect with others while sitting in a service. A Gospel Community is where Scripture, the message, and convictions can be flushed out, together.

SIMPLY ANOTHER SMALL GROUP?

We believe that Gospel Communities are where 'Church' really happens. Discipleship (Titus 2), mission (1 Peter 2:11-12), pastoral care (Ephesians 4), teaching and instruction (Acts 2:42), rebuke (Matthew 18:15-

18; 2 Timothy 3:16), and making sure needs are met (Acts 2:42) – all takes place within the G.C. These Communities are NOT just primarily: a small group, a Bible study, a support group, a social activist group, or a weekly meeting. This means that Gospel Communities go beyond what we know as Small Groups:

<i>Small Groups</i>	<i>Gospel Communities</i>
Small Groups often tend to be a weekly meeting. People talk about 'small group night' –the evening in which they 'do' small group by attending a meeting.	A Gospel Community is about a shared life, a network of relationships, a genuine community of people.
Small groups are often centered around a Bible Study.	The Bible is central to the life of a Gospel Community, but the Bible is read, discussed and lived throughout the week in the context of a shared life.
Small groups are often insular and focused on the mutual care of the members.	Pastoral care is a feature of Gospel Communities, but they are also groups with a strong sense of mission. They can articulate their vision for mission and identify the specific people they are trying to reach.
Small groups are normally managed centrally by the church leadership.	Gospel Communities are given a mandate to reproduce organically and understand that they ARE the church.

GOSPEL IDENTITIES

Family:

- **We are children of God who live and care for each other as a family.**
- *Through Jesus we believe we are children of God and brothers and sisters with each other. As family we see it as our obligation to personally care for the needs of one another - both physically and spiritually. We disciple, nurture and hold each other accountable to this Covenant life together.*
- Genesis 12:1-3; John 1:12-13; Romans 12:10-16

Servants

- **We are servants of God who serve each other as a way of life.**
- *Jesus took on the posture of a servant. He gave His life, even unto death, so that others could experience salvation, peace and restoration. Jesus said, "I am among you as one who serves..." All those who follow Jesus are called to serve in the same humility. For us this means joyful submission to God, leadership and to each other, as we serve whomever God brings into our lives.*
- MT 20:25-28; 25:31-46; Jn 13:1-17; Ph. 2:5-11; 1 Peter 2:16

Learners

- **We are disciples of Jesus who take responsibility for our own development and the development of others.**
- *Jesus called others to follow His ways, to be His disciples and live in obedience to all that God commands. He then sent these followers out to make new disciples. We believe we are also called to be followers of Jesus who take responsibility for our own development and the development of others.*
- Luke 2:52; Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 4:11-13; 2 Timothy 2:2

Missionaries

- **We live actively as missionaries sent to make disciples.**
- *God sent His son, Jesus, to Earth to take on human form and live within the culture. He worked, ate and interacted among the people; living in such a way that those around Him could see and experience what God was truly like.*
- We are sent by God to restore all things to Himself.
- John 1:14; 20:21; Colossians 1:19-20; 2 Cor. 5:17-21

G.C'S AND MISSION

Both our individual lives and the collective life of the church should point others to Jesus (1 Peter). G.C's are where we can demonstrate how the gospel is truly 'good news.' G.C's are where we try to give the world a glimpse of heaven – a distinctive, diverse, phenomenal community of love, joy, peace, forgiveness, humility, service, celebration. They seek to engage our culture, and actively look for opportunities to speak the Gospel in word and deed. They are a 'hermeneutic of the gospel' – that is, the way we live our lives together helps people understand the gospel.

SHOULD I BE INVOLVED IN GOSPEL COMMUNITY?

Yes. We believe that we are called to do more than to just *attend* Church, but to *be* the Church – and that is done through one-anothering (Matthew 22:37-50; John 13:34-35; Romans 12:10, 14:13, 15:7; Galatians 5:13; Ephesians 4:2, 4:32, 5:21; 1 Thess. 5:11; 1 Peter 4:9) which happens best within a community where all members are involved in learning to become disciples of Jesus.

For the health of each member and the church overall, we believe it is absolutely crucial for every member of Element Christian Church to be connected in a Gospel Community Group.

CHURCH PLANTING

The Bible clearly teaches that we must evangelize. In addition, Scripture shows that those who are evangelized should be brought into the church. By far, the most fruitful way to evangelize is to plant new churches among those who respond.

Why is Church planting a value at Element?

- New churches grow faster than old churches
- Church planting can give life and vitality to an existing church
- Church planting can facilitate better relationships in an existing church
- More types of churches are needed
- Church planting is the best way to fulfill the great commission
- Church planting can stimulate the growth of existing churches
- Church planting is the best way to reach the unreached
- Church planting is the major activity in the new testament
- Church planting provides a rewarding ministry for ordinary members
- Church planting is the most effective evangelistic method under heaven

Scott Thomas, who heads up the Acts 29 Church Planting Network says *“Church planting is the most effective way to evangelize and make disciples. So much great fruit comes out of church-planting. So, our goal is to make disciples, not necessarily to make a church. But in order to make disciples we see that creating new churches is a great tool to accomplish that.”*

ELEMENT'S MISSION STATEMENT:

TO GLORIFY GOD BY TEACHING AND LIVING OUT THE SCRIPTURES,
TRANSFORMING COMMUNITY INTO GOSPEL COMMUNITY,
AND PLANTING CHURCHES.

FOR FURTHER READING

Total Church by Steve Timmis & Tim Chester

Disciple by Bill Clem

Planting Missional Churches by Ed Stezer

God's Missionary People: Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church by Charles Van Engen

07: STEWARDSHIP/GIVING



WHO OWNS EVERYTHING?

- *Deuteronomy 16:16 Three times a year all your men must appear before the LORD your God at the place he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles. No man should appear before the LORD empty-handed...*
- *1 Chronicles 29:14 But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.*
- *Exodus 19:5b ...the whole earth is mine...*
- *Job 41:11 Who has a claim against me that I must pay? Everything under heaven belongs to me.*
- *Ecclesiastes 5:19 Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work--this is a gift of God.*
- *Psalms 50:10 ...for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills.*
- *Haggai 2:8 'The silver is mine and the gold is mine,' declares the LORD Almighty.*
- *Philippians 4:18 I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.*

WHAT IS A STEWARD?

- *Romans 1:6 And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.*
- *1 Corinthians 4:7 For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?*

A steward is a person who by God's grace belongs to God. And, because they belong to God they recognize that ultimately everything they are and have belongs to God and has been given to them as a gift. Therefore, they then seek to both enjoy the gifts God has given them as well as invest those gifts in others and the future by distributing them wisely. This includes everything from time, money and skills.

WHAT IS TITHING?

In the Old Testament, God's people paid no taxes while they were under a theocracy, though they did have to pay taxes when they had kings (I Samuel 17:25; II Kings 23:35; Ezekiel 4:13, 20; Nehemiah 5:4). At the time of Jesus, the combination of state and religious tax was roughly 40% (Sweet).

Jesus also paid His taxes (Matthew 17:24-27, 22:15-22) and Christians are to do likewise (Romans 13:7).

In addition to taxes, God's people in the Old Testament had various other tithes (basically religious obligations) that are listed below:

- 10% Funded the Levite priests' ministry (Numbers 18:21-16, 27:30).
- 10% Paid for the festivals to build community & celebration (Deuteronomy 12:10-11, 12:17-18, 14:22-27)
- 3.3% Helped the poor (Deuteronomy 14:28-29)
- Additional money was given as gleanings for the poor and alien (Leviticus 19:9-10)

Plus, there were occasional additional tithes (i.e. Nehemiah 10:32-33)

**SUMMARY: THE TOTAL MANDATORY OLD TESTAMENT TITHE WAS
OVER 25% OF GROSS INCOME**

There were also offerings that were not required but to be given above and beyond the tithe out of love for God and particular needs that arose (i.e. Exodus 25:1-2 cf. 36:2-7; Numbers 18:11-13).

Nowhere in the Old Testament is there a punishment for not tithing, so tithing is not technically a law. However, God does speak of consequences for His people who do not help fund His ministry in the world.

- Malachi 3:8-10 says, *“Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, ‘How do we rob you?’ In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse--the whole nation of you--because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.”*
- Proverbs 11:24 says, *“One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty.”*

“While many Christian churches teach the biblical principle of tithing – that is, giving 10% of one’s income to the church – relatively few people follow the practice. One out of every six adults (17%) claims to tithe, but a comparison of the amount that people gave to churches and their household income revealed that just 6% actually donated one-tenth of their income (pre-tax or post-tax) to churches. The level of misreporting among born again Christians was just as prolific: 32% reported tithing, yet only 12% actually did so in 2000,” (Barna). “16% of born-again Christians gave no money to his/her church during 1999,” (Barna). Church members give on an average of 1.6 to 2.5 % of their income (Sweet).

The Average American loses \$100 per year in change and 23% of church members give less than that(Sweet). The more money a person makes, the less likely he/she is to tithe (Barna).

ANSWERING COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT TITHING

1. My finances are completely out of order, what should I do?

First, you should repent to the Lord for any sins that may have caused our situation. Then, you should seek wisdom about how to remedy your situation. To do this you can schedule a meeting with one of Element’s Elders for a referral to someone who can help you organize your finances and get yourself back on track. Element will also host free seminars a few times a year that will help you learn to budget wisely. You can also find some very helpful information at www.Crown.org, a Christian ministry committed to helping people grow in financial wisdom. If you check periodically at our website www.ourelement.org you may find sermons that deal with money management.

2. What Should I Do if I Cannot Afford to Tithe?

You should do what you can and seek to grow in financial wisdom. If your financial situation is strained because of an unusual need (i.e. injury, elderly, single parent etc.) then the church may need to assist you.

- 2 Corinthians 8:1-4 *And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.*

3. Should Non-Christians Tithe?

The Bible is clear that non-Christians are welcome in church and are not expected to give any money.

4. Should I Tithe Off My Gross or Net Income? Should I Tithe Off All My Income or Only My Salary?

- Proverbs 3:9 *Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops...*

5. Can I Get A Tax Deduction For Tithing?

Yes. If you give in a way that we can record (i.e. check, online using a credit card, cash in a marked envelope) then our church bookkeeper will keep accurate totals of your giving. We will send you a receipt letter at the beginning of the year certifying the amount of your total contributions that are tax deductible from the previous calendar year.

6. How Can I Tithe At Element?

By check or cash placed in the giving boxes located throughout the church building or mailed in to the office (contact the office if you do not have our mailing address). We also have online debit card contributions available at www.ourelement.org.

7. How Much Should I Tithe?

This matter is between you and Lord.

- 2 Corinthians 9:6-8 *Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 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.*

Our churches goal is to eventually give 10% of its income to fund missions and the planting of other churches around the world.

FOR FURTHER READING

Tithing and Budgeting

Visit www.Barna.org, www.leonardsweet.com under “the archives”

There is a wealth of helpful books from Larry Burkett, a good one to begin with on a breadth of financial issues is Money Matters

Helpful tips on money:

Visit www.crown.org, and www.money.crosswalk.com, www.daveramsey.com



08: STEWARDSHIP/TALENTS

WHAT IS THE PRIESTHOOD OF BELIEVERS?

- I Peter 2:4 *As you come to him, the living Stone--rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him-- you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*
- I 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.*
- Revelation 1:6 *To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father--to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.*

The priesthood of believers is the Scriptural teaching that every Christian is in full-time ministry serving the Lord in all they do. This means that vocations other than paid ministry are still ministry and that God has scattered His people throughout varying times and places so that they could honor Him in all of life. Practically, this means that everyone from a Christian elementary school student to her stay-at home mom and electrician father can be holy servants of God honoring Him in their respective vocations.

WHAT ARE NATURAL TALENTS?

Out of His common grace, God gives talents to all people. Since we are created in His image and likeness (Gen. 1:26-27) all people possess at least one aspect of His abilities in a very limited and incomplete manner. When we become Christians, He gives us a special means of grace called spiritual gifts. While the two differ, they can both be used to reflect His character and extend His kingdom. Oftentimes, our natural talents and spiritual gifts complement each other to give us unique ministry opportunities.

Natural Talents	Spiritual Gifts
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Source: Common grace of the Spirit from God through parents. Received: At birth Purpose: To benefit mankind on the natural level Process: Must be recognized, developed, exercised. Function: Instruction, entertainment, inspiration on a natural level. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Source: Special grace of the Spirit from God independent of parents. Received: At new birth Purpose: To benefit mankind on the spiritual level. Process: Must be recognized, developed, exercised. Function: Spiritual growth of Christians; Christian service on a spiritual level.

I. RELATIONSHIPS

(one predominant capacity)

1. Multi Relational
2. Familiar Group Relational
3. Singular Relational

II. COMMUNICATION

(at least one predominant capacity)

A. Using Words

1. writing
2. conversing
3. public speaking
4. teaching
5. broadcasting: telephone, TV, radio
6. poetry
7. advertising
8. song writing or playwriting

B. Performing

1. acting
2. moderating
3. singing or playing an instrument
4. giving presentations

C. Being Artistic

1. designing
2. painting
3. colors and patterns
4. shapes and forms
5. handcrafts
6. music
7. architecture
8. cooking
9. graphic design
10. video production

III. FUNCTIONAL CAPACITIES

(at least three capacities)

A. Organizing Time and Personal Space

1. time and priorities
2. order of space

B. Being Creative

1. creating
2. imagining
3. inventing

C. Leading Others

1. developing
2. planning
3. managing

D. Using Body, Hands, Fingers

1. physical coordination
2. hand-arm coordination
3. operating or driving
4. hand-fingers coordination

E. Helping Others

1. tutoring
2. being of service
3. counseling
4. reassuring and supporting

F. Being Persuasive

1. negotiating
2. selling
3. promoting

G. Observing Details

1. physical environment
2. printed documents
3. special perception

H. Using Details

1. calculating
2. recording, auditing
3. accounting
4. automotive

I. Problem Solving

1. trouble shooting
2. problem solving

J. Researching for Information

1. researching-investigating
2. remembering
3. classifying

K. Reasoning - Contemplating

1. analyzing
2. evaluating
3. synthesizing

L. Making Decisions

1. decisiveness
2. taking risks

M. Using Intuition

1. people's character
2. future projections

HOW DO YOU GET A SPIRITUAL GIFT?

Spiritual gifts are given by the Holy Spirit to Christians and every Christian has at least one spiritual gift, and some people may have many (I Corinthians 12:11,18; Hebrews 2:4; I Peter 4:10). Christians are given their spiritual gift solely by God's grace and can do nothing to earn or get a different gift (Romans 12:6; I Corinthians 12:4-7, 11). God has appointed people in churches the specific gifts that are needed for the overall health of the church. If people are dissatisfied with their gift, they are sinning by coveting the gift of their Christian brother or sister. They are being selfish and thinking solely about their wants rather than the needs of the entire church, which requires all gifts to be in operation.

WHAT ARE THE PURPOSES OF A SPIRITUAL GIFT?

- Ephesians 4:11-16 *It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*

The Scriptures often refer to the interrelatedness and mutual need for every person in a church like the parts of a human body connected together in purposeful unity ((Col. 1:18, 1:24, 2:19; Eph. 1:22-23, 4:4, 12, 16, 5:30; I Cor. 12:12-31; Ro. 12:5). Therefore, the Scriptures are clear that every Christian is vitally important to the work of the gospel in and through the local church. Therefore, using of your spiritual gift will accomplish the following:

- help build up the church (Ephesians 4:12,16)
- establish fellow Christians (Romans 1:11)
- encourage fellow Christians (Romans 1:12)
- enhance the effectiveness of the whole church (Corinthians 12:7)
- expand the mission of the church beyond its present state (Ephesians 4:16)
- honor the senior pastor of the church, Jesus Christ (I Peter 4:11, 5:4).

WHERE ARE THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS LISTED IN SCRIPTURE?

Six separate lists of gifts appear in the New Testament: I Corinthians 12:8-10, I Corinthians 12:28, I Corinthians 12:29-30, Romans 12:6-8, Ephesians 4:11, I Peter 4:11.

APOSTLES

Place in Scripture: I Co. 12:28; Eph. 4:11

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: Hebrews 3:1

Defined: An apostle is someone who has a mixture of gifts that enables him or her to proclaim the gospel with boldness and plant new churches (Acts 13:3-4). This gift also includes the capacity to minister crossculturally (Acts 10:34-35, Eph. 3:7-8).

General makeup: These people often have a number of gifts, such as; evangelism, teaching, leadership, faith, and exhortation and are motivated by difficult new tasks.

Illustrated Biblically: Paul (see Acts 14:21-28, Acts 13-28 and many of the epistles trace Paul's numerous missionary/church planting journeys).

Illustrated Historically: Hudson Taylor. He did not have a theological degree. He was physically small, weak and frail. He was young, merely 19 when he began his ministry. He gave up a well-paying and respected career as a physician in England to live in poverty, obscurity and controversy in China. He refused to let money get in the way of ministry, to the point of even refusing to take an offering at meetings and funding ministry out of his own pocket. He worked at a feverish pace, at one point preaching in 58 Chinese cities in 25 days, 51 of which had never been visited by a Protestant missionary. Despite his critics, he adopted the clothing and cultural styles of China. Today, every Christian in China can trace their spiritual roots back to the efforts of Hudson Taylor.

Do you have this gift?: 1. Do you meet the biblical qualifications to be an elder? 2. Can you start a ministry from nothing by raising such things as leaders, money, etc.? 3. Are you burdened for lost people? 4. Do you love the church? 5. Are you able to work well in chaos and uncertainty? 6. Are you unashamed of the gospel? 7. Are you a gifted leader that people naturally follow?

Dangers to be aware of: The failure rate among church planters is staggering and it is imperative that you be assessed, trained, and sent by mature and experienced church planters.

PROPHETS/PROPHECY

Place in Scripture: Romans 12:6, I Corinthians 12:10, 12:28

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: Jesus is the Word of God through whom the Father speaks (John 1:1-2, 14; Hebrews 1:1-3)

Defined: A prophet has a twofold ministry. First, they foretell the future (Jer. 35:15a). This function ended when the church was built and the Bible was completed (Eph. 2:20). Second, a prophet foretells God's Word, and this aspect of the prophet continues today (Jer. 35:15b-19). A prophet has the ability to recognize sinful behavior and a driving compulsion to confront individuals, groups, and/or cultures by proclaiming God's Word without compromise. In our present day, the prophet is called a preacher.

General makeup: They will easily spot compromise, sin, & error, and desire immediate change and action for Christ. They tend to be bold, sensitive to sin, and place a very high value on biblical behavior.

Illustrated Biblically: John the Baptist (Matthew 11:7-11), Judas and Silas (Acts 15:27-35), Paul (Acts 28:30-31; 2 Timothy 4:2), Agabus (Acts 21:10-11).

Illustrated Historically: Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892) is one of the greatest preachers in the history of the church. The combination of his clear voice, his mastery of language, his sure grasp of Scripture and a deep love for Christ produced some of the finest preaching of any age. Spurgeon was converted at age 16 and entered his first pastorate at age 17. At age 19 he was called to a prominent church which seated 1,200, but had deteriorated to 200 members. He pastored that church for 38 years, growing the congregation to over 6,000 and

then moving to a new facility which grew to over 20,000 members. At age 26 he preached from John Calvin's pulpit in the Geneva cathedral. He often preached ten times a week. His funeral lasted for five days and at least 100,000 people attended.

Do you have this gift?: 1. Do you delight in the Word of God? 2. When you see sin or errors do you feel compelled to confront them? 3. Do you tend to see more evil, sin and error than others? 4. Are you capable of detecting and refuting false teachings? 5. Are you bold for Christ? 6. Do you love people and seek their best in Christ?

Dangers to be aware of: Remember that not all issues are not equally important and that you must stick closely to the gracious gospel of Jesus at all times. Remember not to neglect the love of God as you confront others. Remember not to become too critical and judgmental.

EVANGELISTS

Place in Scripture: Eph. 4:11

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: Luke 19:10

Defined: The gift of evangelism is the ability and desire to boldly and clearly communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:16-17; I Co. 15:1-4).

General makeup: Evangelists often care passionately about lost people and have a strong desire to see them come to faith. They feel compassion for the lost and seek to earnestly understand their questions and doubts. An evangelist often prefers being with people in the world rather than in meetings, an office or dealing with paperwork.

Illustrated Biblically: Philip (Acts 21:8), Timothy (2 Tim. 4:5).

Illustrated Historically: George Whitefield lived from 1714-1770. About 80 percent of all American colonists heard him preach at least once. He would travel from town to town on horseback to preach the gospel, often more than a dozen times a week. During his lifetime, Whitefield preached at least 18,000 times. He addressed perhaps 10,000,000 hearers in person, before modern media! God also gave him the natural talent of a strong voice, he could be heard by up to 30,000 at one time without a microphone. Whitefield once said, "God forbid that I should travel with anybody a quarter of an hour without speaking of Christ to them."

Do you have this gift?: 1. Do you enjoy being with non-Christians and sharing the gospel? 2. Are you able to effectively communicate to non-Christians? 3. Does the conversion of a soul bring you profound joy? 4. Do you feel frustrated when you have not shared your faith for a long time? 5. Do you enjoy teaching others how to share their faith? 6. Do you find it easy to direct a conversation toward the topic of Jesus Christ? 7. Have you been fruitful in witnessing and seeing people become Christians?

Dangers to be aware of: Remember that you'll want to see people not only connected to Jesus but also to the local church where they can be trained and grow. Remember to spend time with non-believers and bring other Christians along so that you can train them.

PASTOR-TEACHER

Place in Scripture: Ephesians 4:11

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: I Peter 5:1-4

Defined: The gift of pastor-teacher is associated with the office of elder (Acts 20:17,28, I Peter 5:2) and the qualifications of bishop (Acts 20:17,28, I Peter 5:1-4, Titus 1:5-9). The pastor-teacher shepherds a local flock (church) and oversees its growth by teaching the Word of God.

General makeup: The pastor-teacher must have a love for both studying God's Word and caring for God's people. They find great joy in the spiritual growth of others by equipping them to do ministry.

Illustrated Biblically: Paul (Acts 20:17-35)

Illustrated Historically: Puritan Richard Baxter lived from 1615 to 1691. He entered vocational ministry at the age of 23 without any formal education. He pastored in a small English town of 2000 people. He took these "ignorant, rude and reveling people" and turned them into a worshipping church of 1000 people. He viewed teaching as his primary task and focused on the basics of the Christian faith. Each year he would personally visit the homes of each member of his congregation and did a great amount of counseling. He held a weekly pastor's forum for discussion and prayer in which he encouraged and trained numerous pastors. His gifted training of other pastors culminated in his classic book, *The Reformed Pastor*, which is one of his 200 writings.

Do you have this gift?: 1. Do you diligently study God's Word? 2. Do you desire to shepherd God's people? 3. Can you teach? 4. Are you qualified to be an elder? 5. Do you enjoy developing other leaders? 6. Is your family

a good model for the church? 7. Do you enjoy mentoring others?

Dangers to be aware of: Remember to train others to do the work of serving, rather than doing it all yourself.

TEACHING

Place in Scripture: Romans 12:7, I Corinthians 12:28

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: John 3:2, 13:14

Defined: The gift of teaching is the God-given ability to understand and communicate biblical truth in a clear and relevant manner so that there is understanding and practical application.

General makeup: Learning, researching, communicating, and illustrating truth are qualities that an individual will manifest when exercising the gift of teaching. These people enjoy studying and learning new information, and find great joy in sharing it with others.

Illustrated Biblically: Paul (I Tim 1:6-7, 4:16, 2 Tim. 2:24-26, 3:15-17, 4:2-3), Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:26), Apollos (Acts 18:24-28).

Illustrated Historically: John Calvin (1509-1564) was one of the greatest and most significant teachers in all of history. Converted around age 23, he published his now famous Institutes for the Christian Religion at the age of 26. It was the first most thorough and significant outline of what has come to be known as Calvinistic theology. At age 28, Calvin settled in Geneva and soon established schools with intense academic teaching throughout the city. He later founded a university for more academic instruction. Calvin's passion for teaching has made him the father of modern education in numerous countries, including America. Wherever Calvinism spread, it brought with it schools and teaching. Calvin promoted education for everyone, which was a revolutionary concept that has now become a pattern throughout the world. By the turn of this century his impact was clearly seen worldwide. In pagan nations, such as China and India—with little exposure to the Word of God—the literacy rate ranged from 0 to 20 percent. Roman Catholic countries ranged from 40 to 60 percent. In Protestant influenced countries, the literacy rate ranged from 94 to 99.9 percent. In America, the first 123 colleges and universities had Christian origins that were directly influenced by the teachings of John Calvin.

Do you have this gift?: 1. Do you enjoy intense studying and researching? 2. Do you enjoy imparting biblical truth to others? 3. Do others come to you for insight into scripture? 4. Do you love to answer questions about the Bible? 5. When you see someone confused in their understanding of the Bible do you feel a responsibility to speak to them about it? 6. Do you enjoy speaking to various sizes of groups about biblical issues you have strong convictions about?

Dangers to be aware of: Remember always to be a student who is learning from others. Remember to teach only what the Bible says without reading your own thoughts into it. Remember not to be thrust into other areas of leadership (leading/apostle) simply because you have a broad understanding of issues and principles underlying a ministry.

ENCOURAGEMENT

Place in Scripture: Romans 12:8

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: 2 Corinthians 2:16-17

Defined: The gift of encouragement involves motivating, encouraging, and consoling others so they mature in their walk with Christ.

General makeup: Christians with this gift have unusual sensitivity for and are attracted to those who are discouraged or struggling. People tend to pursue them for counsel. These people also tend to have a high degree of patience and optimism. They may also have the talent of singular relationships and prefer working with an individual or small group.

Illustrated Biblically: Barnabas, whose name means "Son of Encouragement." He encouraged Paul (Acts 9:27) and John Mark (Acts 15:39).

Illustrated Historically: The Great Reformer Martin Luther sought to purify the church and in doing so split the church into Catholicism and Protestantism. Involved in continual opposition and controversies, his life was in constant danger; his friends and church rejected and opposed him. As a result Luther struggled mightily with deep depression. The ill health of his final ten years further contributed to his depression. His wife, Katherine, was a gifted encourager who strengthened, supported and counseled her husband as he spearheaded the Reformation. Without her gift of encouragement it is doubtful whether Luther would have had the strength and will to continue pressing forward with his calling from God.

Do you have this gift?: 1. Do people seek you out for advice and encouragement? 2. Do you enjoy walking with someone through difficulties? 3. Are you attracted to those who are hurting and needy? 4. Do you enjoy working closely with people who have personal and emotional problems? 5. Would you rather speak personally with someone about their problems rather than sending them to someone else for help? 6. Do you find it easy to express joy in the presence of those who are suffering?

Dangers to be aware of: Remember to give biblical answers and solutions. Remember not to take on more needy people than you can handle.

WORD OF WISDOM

Place in Scripture: I Corinthians 12:8

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: Colossians 2:2-3

Defined: The gift of wisdom is the ability to have very practical insight into people and situations that is not obvious to the average person, combined with an understanding of what to do and how to do it. It is the ability not only to see, but also apply the deep mysteries of God.

General makeup: These people often have an ability to synthesize, the capacity to design, and a love of studying. When they speak people recognize their insight as being from God and specifically needed in that moment.

Illustrated Biblically: Joshua (Dt. 34:9), Solomon (I Kings 3:5-28), Jesus (Lk. 2:40-52, I Cor. 1:24,30).

Illustrated Historically: A.W. Tozer was born into a poor home in the hills of western Pennsylvania. Forced by his home situation to forfeit education, Tozer entered the ministry without either high school or college training. Tozer came to Christ at age fifteen, after hearing a lay preacher speaking at a street meeting at Akron, Ohio. He went on to a lifetime of faithful pastoral ministry. Thousands regularly listened to his preaching on the Moody Bible Institute radio station. He became a very gifted writer and spent a number of years editing the Alliance Witness magazine. Tozer's only education was years of diligent study with a constant prayerful pursuit of the mind of God. For example, when he desired to understand the works of Shakespeare, he read them through on his knees, asking God to help him understand their meaning. He wrote dozens of books, including *The Pursuit of God* while on his knees. With no teacher but the Holy Spirit and good books, Tozer became a theologian, a scholar, and a master craftsman in the use of the English language. His teaching was intensely practical as he taught how to integrate deep theological truths into practical daily living.

Do you have this gift?: 1. When studying God's Word with others, do you find that you discover the meaning and its implications before others do? 2. Do you seem to understand things about God's Word that other believers with the same background and experience do not seem to know? 3. Are you able to apply deep biblical truth to practical daily living? 4. Does God give you profound insights into people and circumstances?

Dangers to be aware of: Remember to maintain a broad exposure to people and ideas. Remember to study Scripture and maintain a biblical worldview. Remember to remain humble. Remember to remain in continual prayer and walk in holiness so that God can speak to you clearly.

WORD OF KNOWLEDGE

Place in Scripture: I Corinthians 12:8

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: Luke 2:47

Defined: The Word of Knowledge is the ability to seek out, remember, synthesize, and make effective use of a variety of information on a number of diverse subjects.

General makeup: These people enjoy studying a wide variety of information and ideas. They also enjoy sharing that information with others, though they are often weak at implementing plans they create.

Illustrated Biblically: Daniel (1:17-20; 2:19-23).

Illustrated Historically: Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) was a French scholar whose short 39 years produced brilliant insight into a variety of academic disciplines. Pascal was a master of mathematics, probability science, physics, and philosophy. He created the first working barometer, first working calculator, laid the academic foundation for differential and integral calculus, conducted the basic research on vacuums and hydraulics. He also had a profound personal love for God and published one of the finest apologetic defenses of the Christian faith, the *Pensees*.

Do you have this gift?: 1. Have you found that you have a good memory that retains and compiles lots of information? 2. Have others frequently pointed out your ability to know and understand God's Word? 3. Do people often come to you with difficult problems and questions from the Bible, seeking your insight? 4. In studying God's Word, have you found that new insights and understandings of difficult subjects are simple for you? 5. Are you

able to synthesize information with ease?

Dangers to be aware of: Remember not to become proud because you know what others do not. Remember to balance your time in study with the sharing of your insights with others.

HELPS

Place in Scripture: I Corinthians 12:28

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: Luke 7:16

Defined: The gift of helps is the remarkable ability to work alongside another and help that person complete the task God has given them.

General makeup: These people tend to demonstrate a servant attitude, loyalty, attention to detail, and responsiveness to the initiatives of others. They function well in positions of detail and assistant leadership. People with this gift often prefer to work behind the scenes and are encouraged to see other people succeed because of their help.

Illustrated Biblically: Epaphroditus Ex. 18:22, Nu. 11:17, I Tim. 6:2, Acts 20:35, Acts 6:1-3, 9:36

Illustrated Historically: Billy Graham has preached the Gospel to more people in live audiences than anyone else in history -- over 210 million people in more than 185 countries and territories -- through various meetings, including Mission World and Global Mission. Hundreds of millions more have been reached through television, video, film, and webcasts. Since the early days of his ministry a faithful team of helpers with gifts varying from music to administration have tirelessly labored behind the scenes to help Billy Graham in his very fruitful evangelistic ministry. Without their help, he could have not had the impact that God has given him.

Do you have this gift?: 1. Do you enjoy helping others become more effective in their work? 2. Do you prefer to labor behind the scenes? 3. When someone is doing a job poorly is your first instinct to help them, or criticize? 4. Do you prefer to work in a supportive rather than leadership capacity? 5. When you hear of someone with needs do you offer your services if possible? 6. Do you feel a burden to relieve others of their tasks so they are free to do their most important work? 7. When someone asks for your help, do you have difficulty saying no? 8. Do you look for opportunities to serve others? 9 Are you humble?

Dangers to be aware of: Remember not to be afraid of criticism from others. Remember not to take on more work than you are able to accomplish. Remember to serve God first and not unquestionably comply with another person's wishes.

SERVING

Place in Scripture: Romans 12:7

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: Matthew 20:28

Defined: The gift involves the capacity to recognize and joyfully provide assistance in meeting practical needs, thus making life a little easier for others, particularly those who cannot help themselves.

General makeup: These people generally like to work behind the scenes. They also tend to find joy in helping alleviate the burdens and responsibilities of others. This gift is usually accompanied with an attitude of humility and sacrifice, as well as an ability to perceive the needs of others.

Illustrated Biblically: Ex. 18:22, Nu. 11:17, Romans 16:1-2, Acts 20:35, I Tim. 6:2

Illustrated Historically: Souls in search of final blessing often came to the temple of a powerful Hindu goddess in Calcutta. But nearby, many discovered another source of solace: a small woman, wrinkled and bent, a willing companion to the dying. She tenderly cared for the abandoned and the sick, washing their wounds, soothing their sores, preparing them for death. "They must feel wanted, loved," Mother Teresa said. "They are Jesus for me." "People think we are social workers," she once told one of her spiritual advisers, Father Edward Le Joly. "We are not. We serve Jesus. I serve Jesus 24 hours a day." She was not some saintly relic but a willing servant of her God: "I am like a little pencil in [God's] hand. He does the thinking. He does the writing. The pencil has only to be allowed to be used." Today some 4,000 sisters of the Missionaries of Charity, clad in white saris with blue borders, pursue her rigorous path, along with 450 brothers in a separate men's order. Mother Teresa created a network of 569 missions spread across 120 nations that operate workshops for the unemployed, food centers, orphanages, leprosariums, and refuges for the insane, retarded and aged.

Do you have this gift?: 1. Are you drawn to those in need? 2. Do you prefer to labor behind the scenes? 3. Are you burdened to relieve the needs of others? 4. When someone asks for your help, do you have difficulty saying no? 5. Do you look for opportunities to serve others?

Dangers to be aware of: Remember to learn to say no when you need to. Remember to learn to receive the service of others.

LEADERSHIP

Place in Scripture: Romans 12:8

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: Matthew 4:19, 2 Corinthians 2:14

Defined: The spiritual gift of leadership is found in people who have a clear, significant vision from God and are able to communicate it publicly or privately in such a way that they influence others to pursue that vision.

General makeup: These people tend to gravitate toward the "point position" in a ministry. Others tend to have trust and confidence in their abilities. They best serve others by leading them. They tend to operate with a strong sense of destiny.

Illustrated Biblically: Examples abound, including Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Daniel, Josiah, Paul, Peter, James etc.

Illustrated Historically:

The ministry of The Navigators began in the 1930's through the call of God to a young Californian, Dawson Trotman. He began to teach high school students and local Sunday school classes. Then in 1933, he and his friends began to extend their work among sailors in the U.S. Navy. Many hours were spent with individual sailors in Bible study, Scripture memorization and prayer with an emphasis on each teaching another what he had learned. By the end of World War II, thousands of men on ships and bases around the world were learning the principles of spiritual multiplication. At the same time, the high school students whose lives Dawson had touched went on to reach out to others around them in Southern California. Today, nearly seventy years later, they minister not only in the military and with students on college campuses, but in the marketplace with businessmen and women, among homemakers, ethnic groups, international students, in countries around the world—wherever there are people who need Christ.

Do you have this gift?: 1. Do others have confidence in your ability to lead? 2. Do you enjoy being the "final voice" or the one with the overall responsibility for the direction and success of a group or organization? 3. When a difficult situation arises, do others look to you for input and leadership? 4. Do you usually take leadership in a group where none exists? 5. Do you find leadership enjoyable rather than frustrating and difficult? 6. Do others look at you to make the major decisions for a group or organization?

Dangers to be aware of: Remember to learn to train other leaders and delegate responsibility and ownership to them. Remember to avoid being placed in a position that requires devotion to details and the implementation of particulars. Remember that leadership is service and requires humility.

ADMINISTRATION

Place in Scripture: I Corinthians 12:28

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: Colossians 1:17

Defined: The gift of administration is the God-given ability to give direction and to make decisions on behalf of others that result in efficient operation and accomplishment of goals. Often the mark of an administrator is the ability to accomplish things in a "fitting and orderly way" (I Cor. 14:40).

General makeup: Administrators often have a keen eye for detail. They may also possess the natural talents of organization, observing and using details, problem solving, and reasoning.

Illustrated Biblically: Joseph, Jethro, Titus (Titus 1:5)

Illustrated Historically: William Carey was born in England in 1761 and served as a pastor before going to the mission field where he served the Lord for 41 years preaching the gospel and translating the Scriptures. Carey served at a time when there was some indifference and even hostility to missionary effort. But, his strategic plan for missions titled Enquiry clearly laid out a means by which the world could be evangelized. In this masterpiece on missions, Carey answered arguments, surveyed the history of missions from apostolic times, surveyed the entire known world as to countries, size, population and religions, and dealt with the practical application of how to reach the world for Christ!

Do you have this gift?: 1. Do you find it easy to make decisions? 2. When you give advice to someone, do you seem to emphasize more in the area of "how" it should be done rather than "why"? 3. Do you find yourself frequently thinking of decisions that need to be made in giving overall direction to a group or organization? 4. Do you like to oversee the distribution of resources? 5. Are you organized and efficient?

Dangers to be aware of: Remember that you have to make decisions quickly and decisively. Remember to seek wise counsel before making major decisions.

GIVING

Place in Scripture: Romans 12:8

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: Matthew 7:7-12, 20:28

Defined: The gift of giving is the ability to give eagerly, wisely, generously, and sacrificially to meet the needs of others.

General makeup: Regardless of the amount, people with this gift genuinely view their treasures, talents, and time as on loan from God, and not their own. They are often moved to meet the needs of others. They enjoy giving of themselves and what they have. Even if they do not possess the resources to help, they earnestly pray for those needs to be met.

Illustrated Biblically: Tabitha (Acts 9:36).

Illustrated Historically: Throughout the history of the church, people with this gift are rarely seen. They tend to operate with great humility and prefer to do their work in quiet and secret by funding and supporting God's works with their monies and other resources.

Do you have this gift?: 1. Do you tend to see the needs of others more than other people you know? 2. Do you enjoy giving your time, talent and treasure to others? 3. Do you see giving to a worthwhile project as an exciting honor and privilege? 4. When you give some money to someone, do you find that you did not expect any appreciation in return? 5. Do you sense a great deal of joy in giving? 6. Do you find yourself looking for opportunities to give your money in response to needs?

Dangers to be aware of: Remember to give out of pure motives with joy.

SHOWING MERCY

Place in Scripture: Romans 12:8

Defined: The gift of mercy is the capacity to feel and express unusual compassion and sympathy for those in difficult or crisis situations and to provide them with the necessary help and support to see them through these times.

General makeup: They have the ability to "walk in another's shoes" and to feel the pain and burdens they carry. They desire to make a difference in the lives of hurting people for Christ without being judgmental. They run the risk of being hurt and used. They may have a difficult time evaluating the intentions of others.

Illustrated Biblically: Dorcas "was always doing good and helping the poor" (Acts 9:36). The good Samaritan Lk. 10:30-37

Illustrated Historically: Amy Carmichael was a missionary of the Dohnavur Fellowship with a compassionate heart for those in need. In India she witnessed many "child widows:" young girls who grew up to be temple prostitutes. In the 20th century, Amy fought this practice by weaning many girls out of this situation and into the Christian community. She elevated the status of women, showing them that Jesus loved and had compassion for them.

Do you have this gift?: 1. Do you enjoy visiting people who are sick or disabled? 2. Do you often think of ways to minister to those who are suffering physically? 3. Do you sense a great deal of compassion for people having personal and emotional problems? 4. Would you enjoy a regular ministry to those who are suffering physically? 5. Do you find that when visiting those who are suffering physically that it brings you joy rather than depressing you?

Dangers to be aware of: Remember to be honest with people in confronting sin. Remember to balance God's mercy with his justice.

DISCERNING OF SPIRITS

Place in Scripture: I Corinthians 12:10

Defined: The spiritual gift of discernment is the ability to give an immediate evaluation of what was spoken and the person who said it, as to whether it is of God or Satan.

General makeup: This person will have a solid understanding of God's Word and a sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. They easily detect insincerity and wrong motives in others. They tend to be perceptive, sensitive to moral issues, and personally steadfast.

Illustrated Biblically: John (I Jn 4:1), Paul I Corinthians 14:29

Do you have this gift?: 1. Have you felt a special responsibility to protect the truth of God's Word by exposing that which is wrong? 2. Have you often made an evaluation of someone or something that was said that others

did not see, but yet proved to be correct? 3. Do you sense often that what is being said is produced by the devil rather than God, and has your judgment been correct?

Dangers to be aware of: Base your feelings on God's Word. Remember to have the courage to speak up when you know something is wrong. Remember to judge to correct and not to condemn.

FAITH

Place in Scripture: I Corinthians 12:9

Defined: The gift of faith is the ability to envision what needs to be done and to trust God to accomplish it even though it seems impossible to most people.

General makeup: Those with the gift of faith have a strong sense that God is going to accomplish something important through them or their ministry whether others see it as significant or not. They trust God in difficult, even impossible situations, when others are ready to give up. These people are often visionaries who dream big dream, pray big prayers and attempt big things for the Savior.

Illustrated Biblically: Caleb & Joshua who led Israel in conquering and possessing the Promised land. Nehemiah who got permission from a pagan king to rebuild Jerusalem. The poor widow who gave practically all she had to God (Luke 21:2-4). Stephen was a "man full of faith" (Acts 6:5). See especially Hebrews 11.

Illustrated Historically: George Mueller (1805-1895) said, "God delights to increase the faith of his children." Mueller was a man who lived by faith and prayer alone. Charles Dickens' Oliver Twist motivated Mueller to open the United Kingdoms first orphanage for orphaned boys and girls. He began without finances and throughout his life never asked anyone for financial support. His first orphanage began with 30 children. He would often pray with the children before meals, trusting God to somehow bring the meal they were to eat within a few minutes. Over his lifetime he cared for over 10,000 orphans and printed Bibles and books, supported over 130 missionaries, and opened a Bible college. He taught in over 30 countries on faith and prayer and died in poverty having never kept anything for himself over the course of his life.

Do you have this gift?: 1. Do you view obstacles as opportunities? 2. Do you trust God for the impossible? 3. Do you have the ability to believe God for things other believers do not? 4. Do you find yourself feeling opposed to anyone who expresses that something cannot be done or accomplished? 5. Do you find other believers coming to you when they face a seemingly overwhelming trial or task? 6. Have you seen God accomplish things in your life that others said could not be done but which you believed He could do? 7. Do you have an effective prayer ministry with many wonderful answers to prayers that were impossible from the human point of view?

Dangers to be aware of: Remember not to merely look at the problems and trials in life. Remember not to worry. Remember to pray with others who have the gift of faith.

HOSPITALITY

Place in Scripture: Romans 12:13

Defined: The spiritual gift of hospitality is the ability to entertain guests in your home with great joy and effectiveness.

General makeup: These people tend to have an "open home" where others are welcome to visit. This gift is often combined with the natural talent of cooking and provides a natural ministry in a loving home environment.

Illustrated Biblically: It is a qualification of the bishop I Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:8

Illustrated Historically: In the turbulent social chaos of the 1960's and 70's, God raised up a loving couple to address a lost and rebellious generation with the truth of Jesus Christ. Francis Schaeffer was a widely known apologist, theologian and evangelist. What is not as widely known, though, is the impact his wife had on his ministry. As their renowned pupil Os Guinness said, "Mrs. Schaeffer is the secret of Schaeffer." Together, they built an international ministry in the Swiss Alps called L'Abri, which means shelter. With modest beginnings, their ministry grew quickly as lost university students, eastern mystics, rebellious church kids, hippies and adherents to other faiths from around the world came to visit L'Abri. Francis would teach, debate and give answers for the faith. Edith illustrated it with a life of hospitable service. Over a hundred students would live with them at a time. Edith provided clean bedding, home cooked meals, fresh flowers, neat decor, paintings, sculptures, sketchings, music, endless hot cookies and artful table settings. She even published a book titled "The Hidden Art of Homemaking" to teach others in hospitality.

Do you have this gift?: 1. Do you enjoy having people in your home? 2. Do you enjoy serving behind the scenes? 3. Is your home the kind that most people feel comfortable in and drop by to visit unannounced? 4. Do

feel that something is really missing in your life when you cannot have guests into your home? 5. When you think of your home do you view it from the perspective of guests who will visit? 6. Do you consider your home as a place of ministry? 7. Do you like to connect people together for friendships?

Dangers to be aware of: Remember to maintain some closed time for your immediate family's needs. Remember to always check your motives and maintain a good attitude.

HOW CAN I DISCOVER MY SPIRITUAL GIFT?

- First, you should seek the counsel of church leaders and mature Christians who have wisdom (Acts 13:1-4, I Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6).
- Second, you should begin serving in various areas to discover what seems like a good fit for you (Romans 12:1, Isaiah 6:8).
- Third, you should think through your areas of burden and joy because those may be areas that God is leading you for a ministry opportunity.
- Fourth, you should seek to recall in what ways God is already using you to bear fruit since that may be an indication of your gift(s).
- Fifth, though serving the Lord can always be tiring you should expect to have a sense of accomplishment, energy, and enthusiasm if you are serving in your area of gifting.

FOR FURTHER READING

Spiritual Gifts

Maximizing Your Effectiveness : How to Discover and Develop Your Divine Design by Aubrey Malphurs



SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

The Element Membership Covenant (which includes the Financial Pledge as covered in the chapters on Stewardship).

You can get copies of all class notes as well as a copy of the covenant form online at www.ourelement.org/connect/classes/gospel-class for your records and personal reference.

MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

"When you make a vow to the Lord, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools. Fulfill your vow. It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfill it." (Ecclesiastes 5:4-5)

PURPOSE

When anyone enters into relationship with God by grace from, and faith in, the person and work of Jesus Christ they are entering into two covenants. The first is to journey with God for the rest of their lives and love Him fully. The second is to journey with His other children in the community of the local church. Your membership in a church is an official recognition of this, and the purposes of the Element Christian Church Membership Covenant are:

1. To join the Spirit in forming authentic community that reflects the relationship between the Father, Son & Spirit
2. To clarify the ongoing blessings & responsibilities of each member.
3. To encourage consistency, accountability and loving unity within the church family.
4. To accomplish God's call for the Element church family.

This agreement does not imply that you will never fall short of the goals, but that the desire of your heart is to fulfill each of the responsibilities stated to the best of your ability. We trust that your commitment will be a personal blessing to your own journey in Christ, as well a blessing to those around you.

THE FACTS OF MEMBERSHIP

- A numerical record was kept (Acts 2:37-47)
- Records were kept of widows (I Tim. 5:3-16)
- Elections were conducted (Acts 6:1-6)
- Discipline was carried out (Matt. 18:15-20; I Cor. 5; Gal. 6:1)
- Elders will be held accountable for members (Heb. 13:17)
- There was an awareness of who was a church member (Rom. 16:1-16)

WITH THE HELP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE CHURCH LEADERSHIP COVENANTS

THE FOLLOWING:

1. We commit ourselves to lovingly caring for you and seeking your growth in Christ (Heb. 13:17; I Thes. 5:12).
2. We covenant to provide teaching and counsel from the Scriptures (Gal. 6:6; I Tim. 5:17-18).
3. We commit that this teaching will span the whole counsel of God's Word (Acts 20:27-28).
4. We commit to helping you in times of need (Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-35, Jm. 2:14-17).
5. We covenant that your elders and deacons will meet the criteria assigned to them in the Scriptures (I Tim. 3:1-13 & 5:17-22, Titus 1:5-9, I Pt. 5:1-4).
6. We covenant to pray for you regularly, particularly when you are sick (Jm. 5:14).
7. We covenant to be on guard against false teachers (Acts 20:28-31).
8. We covenant to exercise church discipline when necessary (Matt. 18:15-20; I Cor. 5; Gal. 6:1)
9. We covenant to help you become equipped to serve Christ (Eph. 4:11-13).
10. We covenant to seek God's will for our church community to the best of our ability as we study the Scriptures and follow the Spirit (Acts 20:28, I Peter 5:1-5).
11. We covenant to set an example and join you in fulfilling the duties of church members (1 Co. 11.1, Philip. 3:17, I Tim. 4:12).

WITH THE GUIDING HELP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, I, THE UNDERSIGNED,

COVENANT THE FOLLOWING:

1. I am a Christian who has been saved from my sins by the grace of Jesus Christ. I have been baptized to give testimony of my identification with the body of Christ & obedience to the Scriptures.
2. I have read and understood the Element doctrinal statement and agree to not be divisive to its teaching. I also understand the importance of submission to church leadership and will be diligent to preserve unity and peace (Hebrews 13:7, 17; Ephesians 4:1-3)
3. I will endeavor to maintain a close relationship with the Lord through regular personal Bible reading, prayer, fellowship and practice of the other spiritual disciplines. My journey in Christ will be evident through my regular participation in the corporate worship services, and involvement in a small group or class (Ps. 119:97, 105; Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:23-25).
4. I will strive to properly manage the resources God has given me, including my time, body, gifts and talents, attitudes, finances and possessions (Eph.5:15-18; Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 4:1-16; Gal 5:22-26; Proverbs 3:9-10). This includes regular giving to Element that is sacrificial and cheerful (2 Corinthians 8&9).
5. I commit myself to the Element church family and agree to aid in fulfilling its missional purpose to both be and bring the gospel to Santa Maria. I recognize that his will be accomplished by pursuing Element's core values of following Christ.
6. I commit to using the spiritual gift(s) God has given me for the building up of the church, both at Element and universally (I Pt. 4:10-11; Romans 12:1-8, 1 Corinthians 12:7-31).
7. I covenant to practice the humility and sacrificial attitude of Christ by considering the needs of others (Philippians 2:1-11), not gossiping (Pr. 16:28, Matt.18: 15-17), and seeking spiritual friendships (Pr. 17:17).
8. I covenant to follow the biblical procedures of church discipline, and submit myself to discipline if the need should ever arise (Matt. 18:15-17,Gal. 6:1-5).
9. I covenant to submit to the authority of the Scriptures as the final arbiter on all issues (Psalm 119, 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

God enabling me, I will strive to consider my commitment to this Membership Covenant on a yearly basis. I understand that it is an evaluative tool, as well as an affirmation of my continuing conviction and purpose. My responsibility will be to notify the Element leadership if at any time I can no longer commit to this covenant, or if I have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding Element Christian Church.

Your Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Printed Name (and names of family members, sign if over 16 and attended gospel class)

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____