



L3



*Life Long Learning*  
Institute



Christian Principles  
Unit 4  
Challenges and  
Opportunities in Spiritual  
Growth

**Xenos Christian Fellowship**  
**Christian Principles Unit 4**

# Challenges and Opportunities in Spiritual Growth

## Instructors

Week	Quiz	Topic	Memory Verses	Assignment	Notes/Handouts	Pages
1 (9/15; 9/17)		Satanology: Origin & Overt Tactics	Deut. 18:9-12** Acts 19:18,19* Ezek. 28:11-19** 1 Jn. 4:4*	Complete assignment #1 on Satanology passages	<a href="#">Lecture notes</a> <a href="#">Exam Review Guide</a>	3-12
2 (9/22; 9/24)		Satanology: Covert Tactics	Eph. 6:10-18** 1 Jn. 2:15,16* Rev. 12:11*	Complete assignment #2 on Satanology passages	<a href="#">Lecture notes</a>	13-22
3 (9/29; 10/1)	<b>Quiz</b>	Satanology: Covert Tactics	1 Pet. 5:8* 2 Cor. 10:3-5*	(1) Begin working on the <i>Ministry Assessment Materials</i> and pass out <i>Observation Assessments</i> to three close Christian friends. (2) Study 2 Cor. 8,9 & record principles of financial giving. (3) Give at least one practical application of each principle.	<a href="#">Lecture notes</a>	23-31
			<b>CHART</b>	End Times Chart	<b><i>Satan's Destiny</i></b>	32
4 (10/6; 10/8)		Biblical Stewardship: Principles of Financial Giving	2 Cor. 8:7* 2 Cor. 9:6-11** 1 Cor. 16:2*	(1) Complete the assignment: <i>Ministry to the Poor</i> . (2) Read Missions articles; write a one paragraph response.	<a href="#">Lecture notes</a>	33-46
5 (10/13; 10/15)		Missions and the Poor	Matt. 24:14* Prov. 14:31* Ps. 140:12*	(1) Respond to questions on the handout entitled <i>Discerning Materialism</i> .	<a href="#">Lecture notes</a>  Missions:  The Poor :	47-60
<b>10/20</b>		<b>NO CLASS</b>	<b>Leadership</b>	<b>Community Meeting</b>		
6 (10/22; 10/27)	<b>Quiz</b>	Biblical Stewardship: Challenge of Wealth	1 Tim. 6:9* 1 Tim. 6:17-19** Lk. 16:9-11**		<a href="#">Lecture note</a>	61-68
<b>10/29</b>		<b>NO CLASS</b>	<b>P.E. in Chicago</b>	<b>For meeting</b>		
7 (11/3; 11/5)		Decision Making and the Will of God	Rom. 12:2* Jn. 7:17* Matt. 13:12*	Complete Evangelism Passages	<a href="#">Lecture notes</a>	69-78
8 (11/10; 11/12)		Evangelism	2 Cor. 5:18-20* Col. 4:3-6**	Answer the three common objections.	<a href="#">Lecture notes</a>	79-87

9 (11/17; 11/19)	<b>Quiz</b>	Evangelism	Matt. 28:18-20*	Complete the <i>Ministry Assessment Materials</i> , transfer results to the <i>Personal Resource Survey</i> , and turn in <u>only</u> the survey (1 page) on week 10.  YOU MUST TURN IN THE PERSONAL RESOURCE SURVEY <u>ON TIME</u> IN ORDER TO PASS THE COURSE.	<a href="#">Lecture notes</a>	88-99
				<b><i>My Impact List</i></b>		100
10 (12/1; 12/3)		Moving into Ministry		Study for the exam!	<a href="#">Lecture notes</a>	101-110
11 (12/8; 12/10)		<b>EXAM</b>				
			<b>Chart</b>	Ministry Connection Funnel		111

- \* memorize the book and chapter reference, *exact* verse quote, and its application.
- \*\* know the book and chapter reference, general content of the verse, and its application.

# Christian Principles Unit 4

## Xenos Christian Fellowship

### Satanology: Origin and Overt Tactics

#### Overview

[Scripture and Satan's Existence](#)

[Origin and Fall of Satan](#)

[Ezekiel 28](#)

[Isaiah 14](#)

[Overt Tactics and Response](#)

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#### Introduction

C. S. Lewis spoke of the two most common errors people tend to make about Satan: "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors, and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight."

Following the naturalism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, liberal and neo-orthodox Christianity rejected Satan's literal existence as primitive superstition. They reinterpreted the biblical accounts of demon-possession in accordance with then-current psychological theories. While evangelicals never went this far because of their high view of scripture, they were sometimes guilty of mere mental assent without maintaining an effective theology of spiritual warfare.

Pentecostals and charismatics, on the other hand, have always emphasized the importance of spiritual warfare. They, however, have often fallen into the opposite error against which Lewis warned. Deeds of the flesh become demons to be exorcised. For example, on the topic of sanctification, some Christian authors emphasize freedom from demonic influence rather than ongoing choices to walk in the Spirit. For some, fear of Satan's plots and powers overshadows Christ's victory over him (e.g. satanic ritual abuse), and superstitious remedies become more popular than solid biblical response (e.g., spiritual mapping; exorcism rituals). Over the last twenty years, our culture has also become much more open to occultic spirituality, so this error is now at least as prevalent as the first one.

This is the first of three lessons on Satanology: the biblical study of Satan, demons and spiritual warfare. Tonight we will consider the "career" of Satan (origin, fall, and destiny) and his overt tactics. The next two weeks will be devoted to his covert tactics.

#### Scripture and Satan's Existence

The biblical testimony for the literal existence of Satan and demons is extensive. The biblical worldview is seriously incomplete without this material. We stand to suffer greatly if we do not understand the reality of Satan and his efforts to attack us (I Peter 5:8,9; Eph. 6:12). It is very dangerous to be in the midst of a war and not realize it.

**The Old Testament:** Mentions Satan and demons less frequently than the New Testament, but its testimony is clear and consistent. See Gen. 3:1 (see also Rev. 12:9 "the serpent of old"); Lev. 17:7; Deut. 32:17; Ps. 106:37; 1 Chron. 21:1; Job 1,2; Zech. 3:1,2 (Vision of Joshua being accused by Satan)..

**(Gen. 3:1)** Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'"

**(Lev. 17:7)** "And they shall no longer sacrifice their sacrifices to the goat demons with which they play the harlot. This shall be a permanent statute to them throughout their generations."

**(Deu. 32:17)** "They sacrificed to demons who were not God, To gods whom they have not known, New gods who came lately, Whom your fathers did not dread.

**(Zech. 3:1-2)** Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.<sup>2</sup> And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, the LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?"

**Jesus Christ:** Speaks more about Satan and demons than any other biblical character. See for example Lk. 4:2-13 (and parallels); Mk. 5:2-19 (and other exorcisms); Jn. 8:44. .

**(John 8:44)** "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies.

The gospel authors are careful to differentiate demonic activity and other sicknesses

**(Luke 4:40-41f)** And while the sun was setting, all who had any sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and laying His hands on every one of them, He was healing them.<sup>(41)</sup> And demons also were coming out of many,...

**(Norval Geldenhuys)** "It is noteworthy that it is distinguished (especially in the gospel of the physician, Luke) from cases of ordinary sickness, insanity, leprosy, blindness, lameness, deafness, and other natural defects and diseases (cf., Matt. 4:23,24; 8:16; 10:8; Mark 6:13; Luke 4:40; 7:21,22). . . .Neither is it only a kind of physical disease, although spiritual and physical disease often accompany it (e.g. Matt 12:22, 17:15; Mark 9:18). (Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary of the Gospel of Luke*, [Grand Rapids, Mi.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ, Co., 1998], p. 174.)

**The rest of the New Testament:** also contain numerous references. Every New Testament author refers to Satan and spiritual warfare (see Eph. 1:21; Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14; 1 Pet. 5:8-10; 1 Jn. 3:8; Jude 1:9).

**(Eph. 1:21)** ...far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come.

**(Col. 2:15)** When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

**(Heb. 2:14)** Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil;

**(1 John 3:8)** ...the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

## Origin and Fall of Satan: Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14

It is evident that the Bible does not provide detailed biographical information about Satan. Yet what it does provide gives us insight into his character. This is the logical beginning for understanding and combating his strategies today.

**Isaiah 14:12-21 — Many interpret this passage as also referring to Satan. Let's look at the reasons and draw conclusions below.**

### Reasons For Satan

Vs 12: "fallen from heaven"

Vs 12: "star of the dawn" = Lucifer = Satan

Vs 13,14: aspiration to equality w/ God

"clouds" & "recesses of the north"  
Vs 16,17,21: has global dominion ("earth;" "world")

### Reasons Against Satan

could be figurative language (taunt; see vs 13)

The Hebrew word is "helel", the Greek, "heosphoros" — neither can be translated "Lucifer". Lucifer is the Latin word for Venus — the "morning star." It wasn't found in the Bible until translated into the Latin (at the earliest in the late 4th century or early 5th AD) (see KJV).

It is circular reasoning to state this word is referring to Satan since nowhere else in the Bible is this word used as a noun!

This can easily refer to mythological gods.

common for kings to claim this (Ezek 28:2)

refers to the dwelling place of the Canaanite gods

Neither "earth" (erets) nor "world" (tebel) are necessarily global (erets is translated "country" in vs 20).

The context is a human king with a human kingdom (vs 3,4,22,23). Unless we can show compelling reasons why we should break context, we should assume that vs 12-21 is about a human king (i.e. of Babylon or more likely Assyria. We know that Assyrian kings referred to themselves as kings of Babylon. He is described as a man:

He dies & is buried (vs 11,19,20). "Sheol" means "the grave" - not the abyss.

He is called a man (vs 16).

He has descendants (vs 20b,21).

### Conclusion:

- **There is insufficient basis for saying that this passage is about Satan.**
- **We could say that the attitude of the king being described is satanic in principle and ultimate origin (Gen 3:5).**

**Ezekiel 28:1-19**

This is a passage that we believe, in part, is about Satan. The first ten verses are parallel to verses 11-19, but there are significant differences between them. We conclude that the first ten verses refer to an earthly leader under God's judgment, while 11-19 refers to Satan and his judgment.

The language gives us the clues that we're not talking about Satan. In verse two, the passage tells us we are talking about a "leader" of Tyre, in verse 12, we are talking about a "king of Tyre". The distinction will be apparent in a moment. Secondly, the description of the "leader" in verses 1-10 clearly describe the life of a human being.

**(Ezekiel 28:1-10)** The word of the LORD came again to me saying, {2} "Son of man, say to the **leader of Tyre**, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Because your heart is lifted up And you have said, 'I am a god, I sit in the seat of gods, In the heart of the seas'; Yet **you are a man and not God**, Although you make your heart like the heart of God—

{3} Behold, you are wiser than Daniel; There is no secret that is a match for you. {4} "By your wisdom and understanding **You have acquired riches** for yourself, And have acquired gold and silver for your treasuries. {5} "By your great wisdom, **by your trade** You have increased your riches, And your heart is lifted up because of your riches—

{6} Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, 'Because you have made your heart Like the heart of God, {7} Therefore, behold, **I will bring strangers upon you, The most ruthless of the nations**. And they will draw their swords Against the beauty of your wisdom And defile your splendor. {8} 'They will bring you down to the pit, And **you will die the death** of those who are slain In the heart of the seas. {9} 'Will you still say, "I am a god," In the presence of your slayer, Although **you are a man** and not God, In the hands of those who wound you? {10} '**You will die the death of the uncircumcised By the hand of strangers**, For I have spoken!' declares the Lord GOD!'"

**In the second part of the passage, the language leads us to conclude the author is describing a different person than he did in the first half.**

**(Ezek. 28:11-19)** Again the word of the LORD came to me saying, {12} "Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "**You had the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty**. {13} "**You were in Eden, the garden of God**; Every precious stone was your covering: The ruby, the topaz, and the diamond; The beryl, the onyx, and the jasper; The lapis lazuli, the turquoise, and the emerald; And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, was in you. On the day that you were created They were prepared.

{14} "**You were the anointed cherub who covers**, And I placed you there. **You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked in the midst of the stones of fire**. {15} "**You were blameless in your ways** From the day you were created, Until unrighteousness was found in you.

{16} "By the abundance of your trade **You were internally filled with violence**, And you sinned; Therefore I have cast you as profane From the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the stones of fire. {17} "**Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor**.

I cast you to the ground; I put you before kings, That they may see you. {18} "By the multitude of your iniquities, In the unrighteousness of your trade, You profaned your sanctuaries. Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you; It has consumed you, And I have turned you to ashes on the earth in the eyes of all who see you. {19} "All who know you among the peoples Are appalled at you; You have become terrified, And you will be no more.'"

**Reasons for this referring to Satan:**

**1. There appears to be a meaningful difference between the use of "leader" of Tyre (*nagid*) in v.2 and "king" of Tyre (*melekh*) in v. 12.**

- The Tyrians called Melqart the "king of the city" (i.e. Baal-Melqart was Tyre's primary god, *The New Bible Dictionary*, pg. 109; *The New Bible Commentary*, pg. 678).
- The Bible regards Satan as the spirit behind all idol worship (Lev.17:7, Deut.32:17, 1Cor.10:19-20)

(1 Cor. 10:19-20) What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? (20) No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons.

- Also, Daniel 10:13,20 identifies malevolent spirits with particular nations.

These alone are not sufficient reasons for believing the last 8 verses deal with Satan but, taken with the other evidence, they do seem to support the idea that the latter half of this chapter is addressing the spirit behind Tyre's idolatry rather than the human leader of the city.

**2. The description of the "king" is not human.** God would never have said the following things about the king of Tyre, since the Canannites were very immoral and corrupt.

- **He was perfect in wisdom and beauty** (vs 12).
- **He was in Eden** (seemingly a different Eden than Gen 2 - the word itself just means paradise), **the garden of God** (vs 13).
- **He was on the mountain of God**, in the midst of the stones of fire (v. 14). If this is describing Eden of the verse before, nothing like this is mentioned in Gen 2. Note in vs. 16 that Satan is cast away from the presence of God.
- **He was "the anointed cherub that covers"** (vs 14). Cherubim are angelic beings (Gen 3:24; Ezek 1,10; Is 37:16; Ex 25:20). "Anointed" denotes authority. So does "covers."
- **He was morally blameless** (vs 15).

**Reasons *against* this referring to Satan:**

1. The description in verse 13 seems to be of a physical being.
2. His destruction (vs 18) also sounds physical and permanent, whereas angels do not have earthly bodies and Satan is elsewhere described as being perpetually alive in Hell after the final judgment (Rev. 20:10).
3. Note the substantial parallelism between the first ten verses and the last eight. In both cases the individual is described as the leader of Tyre, wise, wealthy, participating in "trade," and destroyed by God.

RESPONSE: Biblical authors often refer to spiritual beings using physical terminology (e.g.: Daniel 10, Ezekiel 1; commander of the Army of the Lord in Joshua 5:13-15), and in fact angels sometimes take on human form (Hebrews 13:2). As mentioned above, there is precedence in the bible for identifying a human leader with a spiritual being.

**This passage is consistent with other biblical teaching on Satan:**

- 1. Satan was created by God (vs 15).** He is a creature who is inferior to God, so there is no dualism (Col. 1:16).
- 2. He is the highest created being (vs 14),** superior to other angels (Jude 9) and humans in intellect, authority, etc.
- 3. He was originally perfect (vs 12,15a)** as the creature of a perfect God, so God did not make him evil.
- 4. He became evil by exercising his free choice to rebel against God (vs 16)** because of his pride.

This would explain Paul's warning that elders not be "conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil" (1 Tim. 3:6). Elders often receive praise, and they must be careful to give that praise on to God rather than keeping it for themselves.

**Additional biographical information about Satan:**

- 1. He evidently persuaded one-third of the angels to join him in his rebellion against God (Rev. 12:4,9).**
- 2. He then led the first humans into his rebellion (Gen. 3),** after which their dominion over the earth was forfeited to him (this will be an important point to recall in future weeks).
- 3. He seeks, through a variety of tactics, to prevent people from being reconciled to God (Matt. 13:49; 2 Cor. 4:4), and to neutralize believers** from being effective for Christ (Eph. 6:11).

**(2 Cor. 4:4)** ...in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

**(2 Timothy 2:24-26)** And the Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, 25 with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, 26 and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

**4. We don't know his proper name. Satan, Beelzebub, and Devil are all descriptive titles.**

5. He was substantially defeated at the cross (Col. 2:15) and will be completely vanquished at the return of Christ. His doom is sure (Mt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10).

## **Satanology: Overt Tactics**

**Definition:** Overt tactics are visible manifestations of Satan's attacks.

### **A. Demon-Possession**

**Symptoms:** Mk. 5:2-13 (\* signifies symptoms unexplainable psychologically) Someone who is possessed may have some, but not all of these qualities. It would be important to see some of the \* symptoms to conclude that one is demon possessed.

**1. Supernatural strength\*** (vs. 4); Acts 19:16

**2. Paroxysms** (vs. 5); Mk. 9:20 Not to be confused with epilepsy. See Matt. 4:23  
And Jesus was going about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people.  
24 And the news about Him went out into all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, taken with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them.

**3. Self-destruction** (vs. 5); Mk. 9:22

**4. Personality split** (vs. 6-10); Acts 19:15 Contemporary work in this area suggests this may be manifest with multiple voices.

**5. Special knowledge\*** (vs. 7); Mk. 1:24

**6. Resistance\*** (vs. 7); Mk. 1:24 Unique and intense resistance to spiritual input that might include falling asleep, outbursts of rage, inappropriate laughter, fleeing a spiritual conversation, intense distracting thoughts, and possibly hearing voices.  
QUALIFICATION: All fallen people have some resistance to spiritual things and psychotic people may have delusions (hearing voices, etc.).

**7. Transference\*** (vs. 13) The shift of demon presence from one being to another.

**The biblical incidence of demon possession appears to be concentrated around the ministry of Jesus and (to a lesser degree) the apostles.** It is significant that the epistles do not mention demon possession or teach Christians how to exorcise.

**Can Christians be possessed? The Bible seems to answer "no."**

- 1 Cor. 6:19 says **Christians are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and belong to Jesus.**
- 1 Jn. 4:4\* stresses that **Jesus who is "in" us is greater than Satan who is "in" the world.**

**However, scripture clearly teaches that Christians can be adversely affected by Satan if we allow his influence into our lives (see below).**

## **B. Subjection**

**Strong influence of Satan on a Christian secondary to occultic connection or involvement.** This has been consistently observed, but we have no specific Biblical examples.

**Symptoms:** Similar to above, but less pronounced:

- 1. Resistance to Christ and spiritual truth** (difficulty in conversion and growth) **is observed.**
- 2. Character evidences excessive immorality or blasphemy without control.**
- 3. Strong depression after conversion, with no previous history of such depression.**
- 4. Medium and/or occult powers** (visions, telepathy, astral projection, divination) **are present.**

### **Reasons for subjection or possession?**

- **Family practice and power are sometimes handed down by inheritance or transference.**
- **Involvement (past or present) with occult** (charmed, mediums, occult practices, etc.—see Deut. 18:9-13\*\*). These can include: tarot cards, ouija, new age channellers, spirit guides, etc.
- **Open and blasphemous sin** (especially for those previously involved in the occult). See Eph. 4:26,27 where we see ongoing sin connected to giving the devil an opportunity.

## **C. Individual Persecution**

Not connected with occultic activity per se, but often because of progress being made in your walk with the Lord that Satan sees as a threat to his purposes. Again this is not a biblical category, but supported by Christian experience.

### **Symptoms:**

- **Severe depression, especially when there is no apparent reason to be depressed.**
- **Nightmares and night terrors, especially preceding teaching or other spiritual activity.**
- **Voices, visitations, etc.**

**All Christians may experience demonic persecution—especially those who are committed to ministry.**

## **Deliverance from Overt satanic attacks**

## **Victory Is Ours In Christ**

While the New Testament has much material about the destructive power and activity of Satan, it emphasizes Christ authority and victory over him and the believer's consequent spiritual freedom.

### **Christ's victory over Satan**

- **I Jn. 3:8**
- **Col. 2:15**
- **Jn. 12:31**

### **Christian's freedom from Satan**

- **Col. 1:13**
- **1 Jn. 4:4\*** You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.
- **Rom. 8:38,39**

**Deliverance is possible only through Christ and only if the person will turn to him.**

### **Renunciation:**

(Acts 19:18,19\*) Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices. (19) And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of all; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.

- **Confession of all known involvement.**
- **Renunciation of involvement, including destruction of occult objects and breaking of occultic contacts.**
- **Commitment to Christ** (Matt. 12:43-45; Lk. 11:24-26)

### **Counselor's Work:**

- **Prayer and fasting (Mk. 9:29) with other Christians.**
- **Binding through persistent prayer and commanding spirits (Luke 10:17) if there is resistance.**

Binding Satan is not an incantation but a principle in Matt.12:29. There doesn't seem to be much biblical support for the efficacy of saying, "Satan I bind you in the name of Christ." However, it does seem that warring with Satan involves prayer (c.f. Ephesians 6:18) and this would seem to be the proper means of restraining him.

Christ, Christ's disciples (Mark 6:7; Lk.10:17) and even one who was not his disciple (Mark 9:38-40) commanded spirits to leave people. The latter two categories did so in the name of Christ (c.f. Jude 1:9). There seem to be adequate examples in the gospels & Acts for us to do the same thing.

- **After renunciation and/or conversion, announce forgiveness and instruct on security and position in Christ.** Passages like Rev. 12:10; Col. 2:15; I Jn. 4:4 are especially helpful.
- **Stress the necessity of the means of growth** (especially Body-life).

## **Memory Verses**

**Deut. 18:9-12\*\*** - occultic practices forbidden

**Acts 19:18,19\*** - renunciation of occultic involvement

**Ezek. 28:11-19\*\*** - Satan's origins

**1 Jn. 4:4\*** - Christians need not be afraid of demons because of Christ

## **Assignment**

Complete assignment on Satanology Passages #1.

# Xenos Christian Fellowship

## Christian Principles Unit 4

### Covert Tactics and Response: Part 1

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#### Overview

- [Three Key Attitudes](#)
  - Covert Tactics, Part 1
    - [Seduction](#)
    - [Temptation](#)
    - [Accusation](#)
- 

#### Introduction

**(Eph. 6:12)** For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

#### The Bible emphasizes three key attitudes in the are of spiritual warfare:

##### 1) Alertness:

**(1 Pet. 5:8\*)** Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Be a supernaturalist. Assume Satan is at work: anticipate where he is working; pray for discernment; check with fellow-workers, etc.

##### 2) Militance:

**(Rev 12:11\*)** And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death.

Satan loves to intimidate us so that we flee from our spiritual responsibilities. Determining to endure suffering and keep going no matter what the cost is a key to spiritual warfare.

##### 3) Confidence:

**(1 John 4:4\*)** You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

**(Eph. 6:10-18\*\*)** Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. (11) Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. (12) For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. (13) Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. (14)

Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, (15) and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; (16) in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one. (17) And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (18) With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints . . .

Stand on the authority of God's Word and Christ's victory over Satan. This prevents us from becoming paranoid about Satan

**Question: Which of the above attitudes do you tend to lack?**

### **Covert Tactics:**

While the gospels and Acts narrate overt attack and deliverance, the epistles focus on covert tactics and response. We should not conclude from this that overt attack no longer happens, but that covert attack is more normal and should be our area of focus.

- **Guerilla Warfare:** He is often able to move in, do his damage, and leave before we even realize he was here!

(2 Cor. 2:11) . . . in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes.

- In saying this to the Corinthians, **Paul implies that he had instructed the Corinthian believers in Satan's covert tactics** (e.g., division). Can you say "I am not ignorant of schemes?" Can you help younger Christians and fellow workers in this area?
- **Satan is a pragmatist! He will keep going to your weak area(s) until you take it away from him!** For example, until you resist in the area of the *kosmos* (seduction), you probably won't experience many of his other covert tactics.

The goal of the next two weeks is to familiarize you with the main covert tactics discussed in the Bible. We want you to get the BIG PICTURE and think about how you see these operating in your life and in others.

### **Seduction-using distraction to entice us from Christ.**

**Purpose: to steal our affections from Christ through distraction/idolatry**

**Avenues:** The *kosmos*—the whole system of values that is Satan's influence for evil. This is a huge theme in the New Testament! Consider the following representative verses:

**Satan is the creator and ruler of the *kosmos*.**

(1 John 5:19) We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

(2 Cor. 4:4) . . . in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

(Eph. 2:2) . . . in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

**Therefore, the goal of the *kosmos* directly oppose God's goal for our lives.**

**(1 Cor. 2:12)** Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God . . .

**There are two totally different ways of viewing things, and the "spirit which is from the world" is not morally neutral** (see 1 Cor. 3:19; Isa. 55:8,9).

**(Titus 2:11)** For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age . . .

**God's way for a fulfilled and effective life is diametrically opposed to worldly desires.**

**(2 Pet. 1:4)** For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

(Same as Titus 2:11,12)

**(2 Pet. 2:20)** For if after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.

**The world "defiles," "entangles," and can "overcome" people—including Christians.** How sad it is to see people who have been rescued from its bondage to allow themselves to be sucked back into it! (See Isaiah 57:10; Hebrews 3:13)

**(1 John 2:15,16\*)** Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (16) For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

**Loving the world is incompatible with loving God.**

**Key components of the *Kosmos*** (from 1 John 2:15,16):

**The *kosmos* takes areas that are potentially good, but twists them into idols that distract us from coming to Christ and/or neutralize us as Christians.** These are the "things of the world" mentioned in vs 15.

- **"Lust of flesh" (Hedonism):**

There is nothing wrong with physical pleasure in itself. God gave us bodies with the capacity for enjoying pleasure.

The "lust of the flesh" is the inordinate desire for physical pleasure. It includes not only obvious things like DRUG & ALCOHOL abuse, SEXUAL perversion, etc.—but also COMFORT (*indolence* as higher priorities than serving Christ), GLUTTONY; CIGARETTES.

- **"Lust of eye" (Materialism):**

**"Lust of the eye" refers to inordinately desiring things that our eyes see** (see Achan in Josh. 7:21). There is nothing wrong with owning and even enjoying material objects. But this easily becomes a form of idolatry so that we derive our sense of meaning, significance, security, etc. from owning and enjoying them (more in 2 WEEKS).

**Materialism** includes not just people like BILL GATES. It also **is a crucial part of the American dream** ("PERSONAL PEACE & AFFLUENCE").

**We do not need to have a lot of possessions to be materialistic, materialism is a mindset.** We find ourselves consumed with thoughts of wanting more rather than considering how thankful we are for what we have and how we can use our resources to serve others.

Remember that materialism is essentially competitive. It's not important to have a nice car, but to have a "nicer" one than the next guy.

- **"Boastful pride of life" (Egotism)**

**It is an inordinate desire for the praises of men.** There is nothing wrong with having a healthy sense of self—knowing that you are a significant person who can accomplish valuable goals, impact others, etc. But Satan twists this into something very different (Lamech in Gen. 4:19-24).

**As Christians we are significant because we are forgiven, adopted and gifted by God.** Instead of living based on these realities, we try to attain significance based on other humans' approval.

Not just HITLER/ROCK STAR—also justification of selfishness vs. sacrificial, serving lifestyle (CORPORATE LADDER-CLIMBING; SPORT CELEBRITIES; LUST FOR PEOPLES' "RESPECT"; STAY-AT-HOME MOMS WHO FEEL INSIGNIFICANT).

Not only that we seek positive attention, but we fear the censure of others when we make decisions to serve God. EG the stay-at-home parent or the person who declines career advancement to serve his/her family or church.

When we are into this lifestyle, we are enslaved to the opinions of others. Do you want the final verdict on your life to be, "People really admired me?"

**Note: The "law of diminishing returns" operates in all three of these areas!**

The more we pursue and wrap ourselves up into these areas, the less true fulfillment we experience and then we try even harder in these areas. We need a clean break from the beliefs (lies) and practices that say these areas will fulfill us.

**The *kosmos* is effective because of its extreme subtlety** (i.e. — it is easy to be deceived. i.e. — you could be hip deep as we speak and not be aware).

**(Eugene Peterson)** "The world is an atmosphere, a mood. It is nearly as hard for a sinner to recognize the world's temptations as it is for a fish to discover the impurities in the water. There is a sense, a feeling that things aren't right . . . but just what it is eludes analysis." (Eugene Peterson, quoted in Stephen Eyre, *Defeating the Dragons of this World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1987), p. 19)

Satan with the world-system is like a fisherman with a sparkling lure. The lure is the imitation of the real food, and is designed to hide the barbed hook. We follow it along, enticed by our senses, convinced it will satisfy. We find the hook lodged in our throats, and ourselves being reeled in before we are aware of what has

happened. And like the fish, once caught, we have to be willing to endure some pain as we fight to free ourselves.

## **Countermeasures:**

### **1) Do not withdraw from non-Christians or secular culture**

(FUNDAMENTALIST PROTECTIONIST CULTURE) **This response doesn't really protect anyone from *kosmos*, since the *kosmos*' values flourish in religious cultures. More importantly, it betrays our mission to reach the lost.**

(John 17:15) I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one . . . As Thou didst send Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

(1 Cor. 5:9,10) I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; (10) I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters; for then you would have to go out of the world.

(Phil. 2:14,15) Do all things without grumbling or disputing; (15) that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world . . .

### **2) Reject the *kosmos* on an ideological level.**

**Through the revelation of scripture, we need to realize that it is ultimately unfulfilling, temporary, and dehumanizing.**

(1 John 2:17) And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever.

(2 Pet. 2:18-19) For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, (19) promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.

**Consider that desire for things of the world is coveting and leads to lack of contentment and bitterness.**

"Coveting is the negative side of the positive commands (found in Matt.22:37, 39)...there are two practical tests as to when we are coveting against God or men; first, I am to love God enough to be contented; second, I am to love men enough not to envy...A quiet disposition and a heart giving thanks at any given moment is the real test of the extent to which we love God at that moment...*True Spirituality*, Francis Shaeffer, excerpted from pp.8-10.

(Notice in Ephesians 5:3,4 that)...the "giving of thanks" is in contrast to the whole black list that stands above...

### **3) Repentance may be necessary if you realize you have been enmeshed in it.**

(James 4:4-10) You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (5) Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"? (6) But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE." (7) Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. (8)

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. (9) Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to gloom. (10) Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

**Choose to end this spiritual adultery!** This may involve some radical steps. Some may see the need for career changes, a budget overhaul with consultation, a break with a certain group of friends, cessation of sinful habits are just a few examples of changes that may be needed. (WHAT TYPE OF LIFE CHANGES WOULD ONE BE WILLING TO MAKE IF TEMPTED BY LITERAL ADULTERY?) Remember God's grace if you realize you have been an "adulteress."

**(2 Cor. 6:14-7:1)** Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? . . . (1) Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

#### **4) Actively pursue spiritual growth and ministry.**

**Unless we fill the void with God's way of life, we will be drawn back into the *kosmos*.** This includes becoming a faithful financial steward (more in subsequent weeks).

**(1 Tim. 6:11)** But flee from these things, you man of God; and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.

**(2 Tim. 2:22)** Now flee from youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

**As we gain God's perspective we begin to experience true joy and our perspective on the *kosmos* changes.**

**(Romans 12:2)** And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

**C.S Lewis. *The Screwtape Letters*. xiii.**

"It remains to consider how we can retrieve this disaster (his conversion). The great thing is to prevent his doing anything. As long as he does not convert it into action, it does not matter how much he thinks about this new repentance. Let the little brute wallow in it. Let him, if he has any bent that way, write a book about it; that is often an excellent way of sterilising the seeds which the Enemy plants in a human soul. Let him do anything but act. No amount of piety in his imagination and affections will harm us if we can keep it out of his will."

## **Temptation**

**Definition:** existential enticement and suggestion to sin

**Avenues:** Satan tempts us through both thoughts (Acts 5:3) and circumstances (1 Cor. 10:13; Lk. 4:1-13).

**All temptation involves a rejection of God's truth.** Through temptation, Satan tells us (like he told Eve in Gen. 3) that God's way is unfulfilling, unreliable, etc.—and that by choosing to disobey God's moral will we are only doing what we need to do to achieve fulfillment, happiness, security, etc.

**Purposes:** Since Satan knows that sin won't cause you to lose your salvation, what is his purpose in tempting you?

- **He hopes to enslave you (or keep you enslaved) to sin**, which will keep you from being an effective worker for God (Rom. 6:16; Jn. 8:34). Especially if you are responding to God's conviction to get free from a certain sin-habit, expect the devil to heap on the temptation.

- **He hopes to destroy your witness to the world** (Titus 2:7,8 In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.)

If Satan can tempt you to fall in a way that non-Christians see, your credibility and witness can be damaged. (EG Lazy worker, gossip, outbursts of anger at work, self-righteousness, selfishness, etc.).

Of course, we cannot be perfect and therefore must be prepared to admit failures and apologize when necessary to maintain integrity.

- **He hopes to infect the Body of Christ.** If you submit to defeat, this attitude may begin to spread to others (1 Cor 5:6).

- **He hopes to set you up for accusation** (see below).

- **His ultimate goal is to hurt God.** (If an evil man wished to hurt an enemy he may choose to seduce his child and steal his affections.)

**Countermeasures:**

**Question:** "How do you know when Satan is tempting you or it is just your flesh?" We can't always tell the difference—both are probably always involved. It is more important to respond victoriously than it is to discern the primary source.

### **1. Practice prevention by staying actively involved in growth and ministry!**

David was especially vulnerable to temptation because he wasn't in the battle where he belonged. "Idle time is the devil's playground."

(2 Sam. 11:1-5) Then it happened in the spring, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him and all Israel, and they destroyed the sons of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. **But David stayed at Jerusalem.** (2) Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance. (3) So David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" (4) And David sent messengers and took her, and when she came to him, he lay with her; and when she had purified herself from her uncleanness, she returned to her house. (5) And the woman conceived; and she sent and told David, and said, "I am pregnant."

### **2. Don't toe-dangle!**

If you know you are weak in a certain area, stay away from situations where this temptation is likely to occur (SEXUAL TEMPTATION; GOING TO PLACES WHERE PEOPLE ARE GETTING HIGH; INTERNET PORN AND CHAT ROOMS; MALL & CATALOG BROWSING; etc.).

**(Rom. 13:14)** But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

**(Prov. 5:8; 6:25)** Keep your way far from her, And do not go near the door of her house . . . (25) Do not desire her beauty in your heart, Nor let her catch you with her eyelids.

### **3. Remember the consequences of falling to temptation.**

**(James 1:14,15)** . . . each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. (15) Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

**(Prov. 5:9-14)** . . . Lest you give your vigor to others, and your years to the cruel one; (10) lest strangers be filled with your strength, and your hard-earned goods go to the house of an alien; (11) and you groan at your latter end, when your flesh and your body are consumed; (12) and you say, "How I have hated instruction! And my heart spurned reproof! (13) And I have not listened to the voice of my teachers, nor inclined my ear to my instructors! (14) I was almost in utter ruin In the midst of the assembly and congregation."

**(Prov. 6:26-29)** For on account of a harlot one is reduced to a loaf of bread, and an adulteress hunts for the precious life. (27) Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? (28) Or can a man walk on hot coals, and his feet not be scorched? (29) So is the one who goes in to his neighbor's wife; whoever touches her will not go unpunished.

**What consequences have we seen?**

**What consequences have you experienced in this area?**

**What have you learned by observing others?** Learn vicariously! Only beasts have to learn everything the "hard way!"

**(Psalm 32: 8,9)** I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you. (9) Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, Whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check, Otherwise they will not come near to you.

**Be willing to alert those who are being tempted—Wake them up!**

### **4. Remember God's sovereignty over Satan in the midst of temptation.**

**God is sovereign and he limits Satan's temptations to what we can bear.** He uses Satan's temptations to strengthen our faith. This is why the Greek word *peirasmos* is translated both "trial" and "temptation."

**(1 Cor. 10:13)** No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.

**Through all adverse situations, Satan wants to work through them to destroy your faith—but God wants to work through them to strengthen your faith.** Proper response to temptation, therefore, results in greater stability, increased faith and confidence, proven character, etc.

**(1 Pet. 5:8-10)** Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. (9) But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

(10) And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

**(Luke 22:31,32)** Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; (32) but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.

## **5. When under sustained temptation, share this with your close Christian friends.**

Since sin thrives in secrecy, bringing the issue out into the light helps to break its power. This also makes you more accountable to handle the situation righteously.

**(1 John 1:6,7)** If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; (7) but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

## **6. Pray for God's help when you are being tempted.**

**Pray for the spiritual strength to resist, for God's reminder of the truth, and to see the "way of escape."**

**(Heb. 4:15,16)** For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. (16) Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.

**(Matt. 26:41)** Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

## **Accusation**

**Definition:** personal denunciation based on real or alleged sins in order to alienate from God and demoralize.

**Example:** You have succumbed to a temptation. You've gotten angry, again. Now you are confronted with the accusation that you are completely ill-suited for ministry, and that there is little hope for significant change. You find yourself defeated and depressed. Satan is the source of this accusation.

**(Rev. 12:10)** And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for **the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down**, who accuses them before our God day and night.

**Avenues:** both directly and through other people

## **What is the difference between *accusation* and *conviction*?**

**Note:** Both work through the conscience, by registering a painful or discomfoting verdict on your actions. Accusation will commonly follow on the heels of conviction. You must accept conviction while rejecting accusation.

- **Conviction draws us near to God** while accusation alienates us from God.

- **Conviction focuses on our actions** while accusation uses our actions as an inappropriate basis for undermining our relationship with God. (EG we feel unworthy, inadequate, judged, rejected, etc. )
- **Conviction will normally be clear and specific**, while accusation tends to be vague and generalized.
- **Conviction is constructive and forward-focused** while accusation is destructive and backward focused. God wants us to learn from our failures, and as soon as we have learned he wants us to move forward. Satan wants to keep hammering us about past actions even if we have repented.

#### Levels:

- **Satan will attack new Christians' assurance of salvation** ("And you call yourself a Christian?").
- **Older Christians will be accused about their identity, ability to change &/or minister.** ("You'll never change. You'll always be \_\_\_\_\_." "You are completely ineffective in evangelism—why even try?" "After being in the flesh all week, what makes you think you can teach with spiritual impact?")

#### Countermeasures:

##### 1) If untrue:

- **Affirm what God has promised you, what he has done through you.**
- **Get objective input and affirmation from others.**

##### 2) If true (And it often is):

- **Don't defend yourself as righteous.** RATIONALIZING, MINIMIZING, and BLAME-SHIFTING are all ways of doing this. The answer to this kind of accusation is God's grace, not your righteousness!
- **Confession:** Agree with God about your sin, and take full responsibility for what you have done (Ps. 51 & its relationship to Ps. 32).

You should also agree with God about your forgiveness.

**Note:** Sometimes you will not get relief until you confess to others.

- **Action:** Choose to draw near to God (Heb. 10:22), and choose to step out to serve.

(**Heb. 9:14**) how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

**Note: If you can't tell whether it is true or not, get objectivity from a mature Christian who knows you well.**

#### Memory Verses

**Eph. 6:10-18\*\*** - Our real battle is against the schemes of Satan. Our primary armor and weapons are our position in Christ, the Word and prayer.

**1 Jn. 2:15,16\*** - Loving the *kosmos* is antithetical to loving God. The key components of the *kosmos* are the lust of the flesh (HEDONISM), the lust of the eye (MATERIALISM), and the boastful pride of life (EGOTISM).

**Rev. 12:11\*** - Christians overcome Satan's accusations through grace, his deception through the Word, and his persecution through radical commitment to Christ.

#### Assignment

Complete assignment on [Satanology passages, part 2](#).

**Don't forget the quiz next week**

# Xenos Christian Fellowship

## Christian Principles Unit 4

### Covert Tactics and Response: Part 2

#### Overview

[Introduction](#)

[Division](#)

[Deception](#)

[Doubt](#)

[Persecution](#)

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#### Introduction

Remember that we are involved in spiritual warfare. The enemy is fierce and God equips us to gain victory in the battle. See Eph. 6.

#### Division

**Definition:** Christians (especially workers\*) in the same fellowship turn against each other.

\* A worker is a Christian who is committed to advancing God's kingdom by sharing their faith with people who don't know Christ, by cooperating with God as He transforms their character, and by helping other believers move forward in their relationship with God.

Scripture emphasizes this kind of unity **among coworkers** rather than organizational unity between denominations or functional cooperation between local churches.

**Purpose:** "Divide and conquer" - Satan understands better than we do the importance of the church in spiritual warfare. As long as we are united, we will be effective (Roman Maniple; John 17:20-21; Matt. 12:25; Eph. 4:1-3; Col. 2:5 - "ordered array"). But if he can get the workers filled with suspicion, selfish ambition and negativity toward each other, or if he can discredit leaders, he can have a heyday (*Home church failures' common factor; 1993 Xenos Division* - up to 1200 people lost).

#### Results of division:

- Young Christians don't understand and leave into the world.
- Workers get deeply demoralized and quit working; others who stay are neglected.
- Leaders are so caught up in dealing with division that they don't/can't lead proactively. The whole group becomes more reactive and focused on the problems.
- The world has another reason to discredit Christianity

#### Avenues:

**Passive division:** Workers are disengaged, not initiating consistent encouragement and

appropriate admonition. There are no outward problems, but there is no desire to relate. The unity has already been weakened so that the group is ripe for the outbreak of active division.

**Active division:** Workers are openly alienated from each other. Division usually masquerades as...

**Issue-oriented conflict** (e.g., doctrine and methods). Issue-oriented conflict is good, it's normal, and even important because it produces positive change. But when issues never seem to get resolved, or new issues emerge as rapidly as old ones are resolved, this usually signals that the real problem is...

§ Luke records an example of this kind of conflict between Paul and Barnabas in Acts 15:36-41 (read). They disagreed over an important strategic issue—personnel on a hazardous mission. The word "sharp disagreement" (paroxusmos) means a vigorous debate! Is this a terrible defeat? There is no hint in Luke's narrative that it was. They couldn't agree on personnel, so they split into two mission teams, divided the mission, and went on. In his letters, Paul speaks favorably of both Barnabas and Mark in his later letters.

§ We have issues-oriented conflicts in this church. We have lots of committed leaders and workers who sometimes strongly disagree on how to best accomplish the work God has given us. Sometimes we have to defer to those in leadership over us. Sometimes we need to give each other some elbow room to work in our chosen way. Sometimes we even need to go to another church that is better suited to what we are called to do. All of these things can happen without being divided in the biblical sense.

**Affective Conflict:** suspicion, negativity, bitterness, etc. (Jas. 3:13-18). See Ken Sandy, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, Second Edition, Baker Books, 1997, p. 24-26,71.

(James 3: 13-18) Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. (14) But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. (15) This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. (16) For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. (17) But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. (18) And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

**Christians often deny that they are engaged in affective conflict.** They may realize that sustained affective conflict is wrong and consciously or unconsciously connect their bad feelings to an issue.

**Consider the following tip-offs:**

- **A clear memory of offenses committed against you by them.** When you aren't resentful, you remember that the situation was a bummer, but you tend to forget the details.
- **A focus on the negative aspects of the person.** When you aren't resentful, your perspective is "He has a few irritating idiosyncrasies, BUT he is basically a great guy, etc." When you are resentful, this perspective is exactly reversed.
- **A habit of mentally rehearsing telling the other person off.** This may be about specific hurts received, or about other unrelated issues. This is simply the punitive desire being expressed.

- **An aversion to being around the person**, especially in situations that are one-on-one or personal.
- **Being angry/unable to rejoice when he has good fortune**, succeeds or is honored, and being (secretly) glad when he has bad fortune, fails, or is criticized.
- **Using "humor" to express your negative feelings.** (Prov. 26:18,19)
- **Gossiping about the other person.**

### Countermeasures:

#### 1. Prevention:

- Make sure you engage in regular, positive interactions with fellow workers. (*Encouragement and Admonition Quadrant*)
- Work together to advance God's purposes. (Phil 1:27-2:2)
- Resolve conflict as it occurs, quickly and in a healthy way. (Eph 4:1-3,26,27).
- **Teach and model that forgiveness** and respect for delegated authorities are fundamental biblical priorities. |
  - a. Contra society's view that forgiveness is dysfunctional >> Eph 4:32
  - b. Contra society's cynicism toward authority >> Heb. 13:17; 1 Tim. 5:19
 This provides them with a biblical framework for responding when conflict arises, rather than automatically defaulting to their fleshly perspective.
- **Call on alienated members to resolve their affective conflicts and help them to do this.** This communicates a group ethic in this area that members usually learn and practice.

The above preventative steps set the tone for the entire group.

#### 2. Resolving division:

**Saturate with prayer** against Satan for protection as you take steps to resolve.

**Talk with the people with whom you are in a divisive conflict.** We cannot expect that it will go away by itself. However, as you go to talk, be sure you **have the following attitudes:**

- **Look to your own sin first** (Matt. 7:1-5)! Get before God and ask him for insight here! Take the initiative to go and confess, ask forgiveness (Matt. 5:23,24). If you can't come up with anything, ask what you may have done . . .
- **Forgive** (2 Cor. 2:10)! This is a unilateral decision, not contingent to their repentance.

If you are **unable to resolve the conflict, consider one of the following measures:**

- **Consider calling in help** (Phil. 4:2,3 >> *Leaders first* >> *Home Group Consultant* >> *Grievance and Mediation Board*)..
- **If unresolvable because of their unwillingness**(Matt. 7:6 - *Pearls before swine*), turn a deaf ear and go on reaching out, focusing on the responsive (*DAWS- Trotman realized that someone in conflict with him was unwilling resolve conflict. Since that person was unwilling Trotman had to turn away from it*).
- **Discipline the factious person** (Titus 3:10).

**EXAMPLE: Dealing with division is like dealing with a serious disease. Health depends on prevention, early detection, and aggressive treatment.**

**Remember: You'll never stop all divisive conflict in the church.**

The key is to promote and model unity, and go about dealing with it in a godly way. If you do this, God will protect you from being destroyed by division. Instead, he will use it to polarize the group so that the righteous and evil people are evident. (*Xenos Today: greater unity, agreement about our mission, financial support, etc. after persisting through a division*. 1 Cor 11:18,19). Ken Sande's book, "The Peacemaker" provides excellent practical guidance in helping us to resolve conflict before division even becomes an issue.

## **Deception**

**Definition:** distortion of biblical truth to neutralize active, zealous Christians

**Avenues:**

- **False religions and philosophies:** We see this used most actively against non-Christians. Satan presents "spiritual" alternatives to lure people away from Christ.

(Col. 2:8) See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

- **Heresy and false teachers:** More for new Christians who don't have access to teaching (*New Testament letters; Russia, China, and elsewhere today*)

(2 Cor. 11:13-15) For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. (14) And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. (15) Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their deeds.

- **Cultural conformity:** *Selfism in Christian counseling; prosperity teaching; Postmodern hermeneutics ("it is impossible to know what the author intended"), moral relativism.*

**(2 Tim. 4:2-4)** Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. (3) For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; (4) and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.

- **Doctrinal imbalance:** Tongues, and experience getting center-stage over truth and love; ritual over ministry

**(Heb. 13:9)** Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings; for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, through which those who were thus occupied were not benefited.

## **Countermeasures:**

### **1. Learn the whole counsel of God.**

This **guards you against imbalance** as well as heresy. This is why we emphasize personal study; expository teaching; inductive study. We also should emphasize what the Bible emphasizes.

**(Acts 20:20,27)**. . . how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house . . . (27) For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.

### **2. Develop the ability to think critically from a biblical perspective.**

You can be biblically knowledgeable and still be deceived if you don't develop this. Especially when interacting with "Christian" material, clarify the presuppositions and compare them to the Bible (***"Christian" counseling which accepts inner child; self-esteem***).

**(Heb. 5:14)** But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

### **3. Stand firm in the grace of Christ.**

As long as we approach God and others on that basis, we create a situation that Satan cannot defeat. He is always trying to move us onto the ground of works. Grace is the message that attracts the non-Christian, and motivates the believer to love.

This helps us make decisions based on God's word rather than the opinions of others (including Christians who may be judging us). We are able to think clearly about finding God's will because we're not short-circuited by concern about others' opinions.

**(Acts 20:32)** And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

**(2 Tim. 2:1)** You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

#### 4. Be open to corrective input from other Christians.

If even apostles needed correction from time to time (Gal. 2; Acts 15), how much more do we! Some are more gifted in discernment; others are more mature—so take advantage of their contribution. Elders have a special responsibility to discern doctrinal error and protect the church through exposing it (Titus 1:9 >> "power religion" and "counterfeit spirituality"). But because any group can engage in "group-think," we should also look for this from outside our own group (*conferences; books; bringing other workers in*).

(Prov. 27:17) Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.

#### 5. Watch for the "pendulum swing."

When Christians realize they have been imbalanced in one area, they commonly overreact to the other extreme. "It is always easier to go to the consistent extreme than to remain at the point of tension." (*Spiritual experience; ministry vs. sanctification; home involvement vs. church life*)! Strengthen the complementary truth—don't denigrate the original truth (1 Cor. 12:21-25).

### Doubt

**Definition:** seeks to erode a Christian's confidence in God

**Avenues:**

**External:** secular "authorities" (*college professors:* "You can't be a biblical Christian and have intellectual credibility"); religious "authorities" (*clergy; seminary profs:* "You can't take the Bible that seriously.")

**Internal, existential doubts:** ("What if this whole thing is just something we're making up?"). Some are more temperamentally inclined to this. It often accompanies periods of trial (*ministry failure: early buzz wearing off; dark night of the soul; tragedy*).

**Note:** James 1:6 uses this word to mean one who is "double-minded" (vs 8) which is later defined as a Christian who has compromised his commitment to Christ by loving the world (Jas. 4:8). In other words, "doubter" here means one who is in volitional unbelief.

**Countermeasures:** It is not a sin to have doubts; it is what you do with doubts when they emerge that matters.

#### 1. Share your doubts with God and other Christians!

This diffuses the accusation that no other Christians wrestle with doubt. They can also often provide answers to your doubts.

#### 2. Study the biblical passages where God's people express their doubts.

Job, Lamentations, many psalms, etc. are very helpful. The fact that others (including biblical authors!) have had similar doubts is encouraging. The fact that they eventually resolved their doubts is also encouraging and sometimes instructive.

### **3. Check your personal walk.**

Lack of spiritual feeding and ministry will rob us of subjective personal assurance and make us more vulnerable to doubt. Willful rejection of God's moral discipline may also make us vulnerable to doubt.

### **4. Expose yourself to answers regarding theological/philosophical doubts.**

You're not the first one to ever have this kind of doubt! One of the main values of apologetics is to strengthen Christians against doubt. Many suffer needlessly from doubt because they are too lazy to do this work.

We run the risk of suppressing our own doubts with self-soothing behavior.

Good reading: Guinness. *Doubt*. Yancey. *Disappointment with God*. Schaeffer. *True Spirituality*.

### **5. Monitor your thought-life and take doubtful thoughts captive to Christ (2 Cor. 10:3-5\*).**

Satan will accuse God to us (e.g., that he will abandon you), and unless we respond aggressively by rejecting such thoughts on the basis of scripture, they will tend to grow into serious doubts.

**Consider:** "Doubt is to faith what fear is to courage."

## **Persecution**

**Definition:** attacks on Christians (individually and corporately) to wear them down and/or intimidate them into backing off from radical commitment to Christ

**Note-** This is not the same as persecution discussed under overt attack, because in this case, Satan is using human agents rather than directly attacking.

**Avenues:**

**Secular society:** (Rev. 2:10; 1 Pet. 5:8 in context) >> *bad press; community rumors; members threatened; mocking and/or mistreatment on the job*

(Rev. 2:10) Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tested . . .

**Religious community:** (Jesus and apostles with Jewish leaders; Anabaptists; Wesleyan Movement) >> *Today we find persecution in many Islamic, Hindu, and Marxist nations.*

**Countermeasures:**

#### **1. Make sure you aren't guilty of wrongdoing! (1 Pet. 4:15)**

Beware of the immature tendency to cry "Persecution!" when you are only receiving the consequences for your poor choices. If you are guilty, clean it up! Only when we have done this can we expect the Lord's protection; otherwise, we are under God's discipline (*1982,1983 problems*).

(1 Pet. 4:15) By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler;

## **2. Don't be surprised.**

Because Satan is the ruler of the world, we can expect persecution. The majority of Christians have always suffered persecution. The relative absence of persecution for American Christians is the exception, not the rule—and this situation may well change for the worse.

**(1 Pet. 4:12)** Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you;

**(John 15:18-20)** If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. (19) If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. (20) Remember the word that I said to you, "A slave is not greater than his master." If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

**(2 Tim. 3:12)** And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

**(Luke 6:26)** Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for in the same way their fathers used to treat the false prophets.

## **3. Rejoice, because this is the proof that you are being effective.**

Bombers get lots of antiaircraft fire when they are flying over strategically important targets. Likewise, persecution usually signals that we are inflicting enough damage on the enemy that he feels it necessary to mount a counterattack. Stated conversely, what does it mean if we are never persecuted?

**(1 Pet. 4:14)** If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you . . . but if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God.

**(Matt. 5:11,12)** Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. (12) Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

**(Phil. 1:29)** For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake . . .

## **4. Determine to continue serving Christ (especially evangelism) no matter what the cost.**

**(Acts 4:19,20)** But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; (20) for we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard."

**(Acts 5:40-42)** And they took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them to speak no more in the name of Jesus, and then released them. (41) So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name. (42) And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

**(1 Pet. 5:10)** And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

**(Rev. 2:10)** Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

(Rev. 12:11) And they overcame him because . . . they did not love their life even to death.

**5. Stand with other Christians who are undergoing persecution.** (Contrast Heb. 13:3, Matt 25:35,36, and 1 Peter 5:9 with 2 Tim 4:16ff)

## Opposition

**Definition:** specific actions designed to hinder Christian ministry

### Circumstantial barriers:

(1 Thess. 2:18) For we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, more than once—and yet Satan thwarted us.

**Examples:** car breakdowns on the way to minister; circumstances preventing new people from coming; distractions when preparing to teach (fight with spouse)

### Agents:

(2 Tim. 2:25,26) . . . those who are in opposition . . . (26)... having been held captive by (the devil) to do his will.

Acts: Simon Magus (8); Elymas (13); Fortuneteller (16)

**Examples:** Meeting disrupters; new attendees who sabotage evangelism and follow-up with sex, materialism, etc.

### Countermeasures for circumstantial barriers:

Anticipate and eliminate where possible. Educate people to expect them and how to overcome. Pray for protection.

### Countermeasures for agents:

(2 Thes. 3:2) . . . and (pray) that we may be delivered from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith.

(2 Tim. 2:25,26). . . with gentleness **correcting** those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, (26) and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

(1 Tim. 1:20) Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have **delivered over to Satan**, so that they may be taught not to blaspheme.

Delivered over to Satan is probably a reference to church discipline taken against Hymenaeus and Alexander for false teaching. For another example of church discipline, see 1 Cor. 5:2,5.

## Memory Verses

**1 Pet. 5:8\*** - Be on the alert for Satan's attacks!

**2 Cor. 10:3-5\*** - A crucial part of spiritual warfare is being able to critique Satan's lies (cultural ideologies and your own thought-life) in light of scriptural truth.

## Assignment

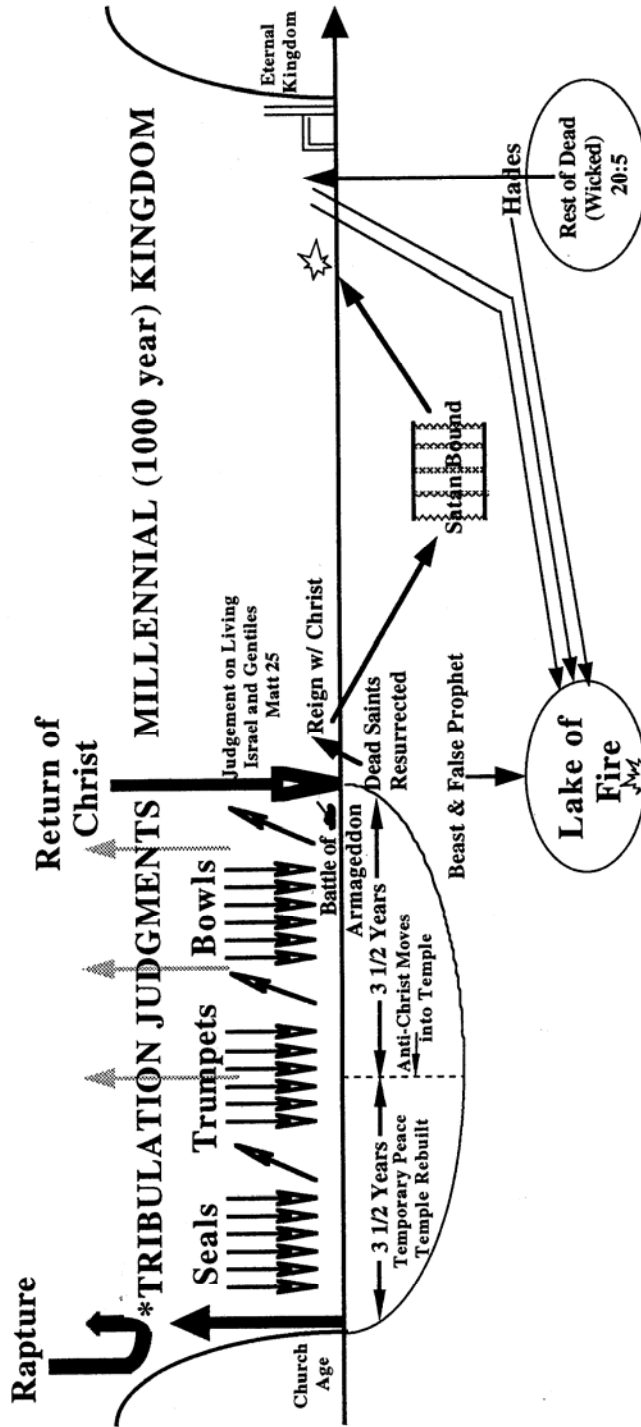
Read the Missions Article and write a one-paragraph response.

Complete the assignment *Ministry to the Poor*

# MAP OF END-TIME EVENTS



Rev 4-5



\*Note: This shows judgement content only, not sequence or time of occurrence.

Indicates other possible times of the rapture

# Xenos Christian Fellowship

## Christian Principles Unit 4

### Biblical Principles of Financial Giving

#### Overview

- [Giving is Motivated by Grace](#)
- [Christians Are Stewards](#)
- [Giving is an Index of our Spiritual Vitality](#)
- [Give according to what you have](#)
- [The needs of others should have a moral bearing](#)
- [God Abundantly Blesses the Gracious Giver](#)
- [Responsibility to Support your Local Church](#)

#### Introduction

If we want to avoid becoming enmeshed in materialism, we not only need to cultivate a lifestyle of spiritual growth and ministry; we also need to cultivate a godly manner of dealing with our money and material possessions. The Bible describes this as a habit of consistent, sacrificial financial giving to God's work.

HERBERT KANE: "The last part of the person to convert is the wallet." How true we've seen this to be! Therefore, we need to form deep biblical convictions about this area as soon as possible in our Christian lives.

Remember the connection between our perspective on material things and spiritual things.

Matt. 6:21 "...for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

The main text for tonight's study is 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. The historical setting had Paul taking up a collection for the Jerusalem church (1 Cor. 16:1-3). It was most likely for famine relief.

**(1 Cor. 16:1-3)** Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. {2} On the first day of every week let each one of you put aside and save, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come. {3} And when I arrive, whomever you may approve, I shall send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem;

The Corinthians had evidently pledged a certain amount to this (2 Cor 8:10). . .

**(2 Cor. 8:10)** And I give my opinion in this matter, for this is to your advantage, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do this, but also to desire to do it.

. . . but now they were not coming through on their commitment. This is one more symptom of the carnality that had plagued the Corinthian church.

Therefore, Paul writes this reminder which is designed to motivate them to give. This passage contains many important principles of giving for the Christian. The first, and perhaps most important biblical principle is...

## 1. Giving is motivated by grace ( 2Cor. 8:1-4,9; 9:15)

(2 Cor. 8:1-4) Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, {2} that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. {3} For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability they gave of their own accord, {4} begging us with much entreaty for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, {9} For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

(2 Cor. 9:15) Thanks be to God for His [emphasis ours] indescribable gift!

Paul holds up the Macedonian Christians as an example. They viewed giving as a *privilege* which they begged to have even in the midst of great persecution and *poverty*--because their motivation was "the grace of God." Why does grace motivate giving?

They were so thankful for Christ's sacrifice for them (8:9), and so vitally aware of what they had received in Christ (forgiveness, eternal life, growth, new family, etc.) that they were motivated out of gratitude to give as much as they could (e.g. Scrooge - someone who eventually saw what he could be rescued from and responded with generosity; Lk. 7:47). This is the foundational motivation for *all* forms of Christian giving (e.g. O.T. Thank-Offering >> Rom. 12:1 >> Phil. 4:18). This is probably why Paul "bookends" the imperitives of the section from 2 Cor. 8:1 through 9:15 with grace.

(Rom. 12:1) I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

(Phil. 4:18) But I have received everything in full, and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.

### Attitudes toward giving under grace vs. under law

- **Acceptance before God**

**Under law:** "I give *in order to be* accepted by God." This motive is characteristic of other religions. They usually make giving one of the good works by which we earn God's acceptance (ISLAM: alms as one of 5 PILLARS; CATHOLIC INDULGENCES IN THE MEDIEVAL CHURCH; MASSES FOR THE DEAD TODAY). In other words, we give in order to be accepted by God.

INDULGENCES in the medieval Catholic church...

Medieval people had a very real dread of the period of punishment they faced in purgatory... The church taught that before they reached heaven they had to be cleansed of every sin committed in mortal life and they feared purgatory's pains. Indulgences were a way of shortening the punishment in purgatory.

Luther and others charged that indulgences turned men away from God's forgiveness.

John Hus and others (e.g. John of Wesel) were persecuted (in Hus' case, burnt at the stake) for opposing the sale of indulgences and other unbiblical practices.

In other words, we give in order to be accepted by God.

**Under grace:** We give *because* we have been accepted by God.

- **Duty vs. Privilege**

**Under law:** "My giving is a duty which I resent." This is the natural consequence of a works-righteousness mentality.

**Under grace:** "My giving is a privilege which I enjoy."

- **Amount Given**

**Under law:** "I give the least I can to keep God and others off my back." Stinginess always flows from law-living. Warning signs include hearing yourself ask AND focus on, "What's the **right** amount to give?" "I don't want to be irresponsible toward my obligations to the family!" C.S. Lewis gave about two-thirds of his income away. (introduction to *Letters to an American Lady*).

**Under grace:** "I give as much I can to express my gratitude to God for his love."

**Qualification:** Many Christians misinterpret or misapply 2 Cor. 9:7 (Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver.) **Misinterpretations include** the following ideas:

- It is wrong for us to call on or remind each other as Christians to make giving commitments.  
**Response:** This isn't Paul's point--he called on them to give in 1Cor. 16 and he reminds them to give in this very passage!

- We should not give if we do not *feel* generous.  
**Response:** My sin-nature does not naturally desire generosity toward the things of God. Paul's point is that **God wants us to give with the right attitude**. We should give voluntarily and cheerfully because we are the recipients of God's lavish grace. If I find that I am viewing giving as a distasteful duty which I do only grudgingly, **the answer isn't to stop giving**. It is to **change my perspective and attitude** by prayerfully reflecting on how much God has blessed me and how much the world needs Him (spiritually and materially). Then I can step out in faith (sometimes in spite of lingering negative feelings) and give in response to His grace.

The second biblical principle of financial giving is...

## **2. Christians Are Stewards (2 Cor. 8:5)**

Blue defines stewardship as "the use of God-given resources for the accomplishment of God-given goals." (Ron Blue, *Master Your Money* (New York; Thomas Nelson), p. 23.)

**(2 Cor 8:5)** and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.

Paul emphasizes that the Macedonians "first . . . gave themselves to the Lord . . ." They recognized that their entire lives belonged to the Lord and *then* were generous with their money. Often times the stingy person has not given himself completely to the Lord.

**(Rev. 5:12)** saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing."

The Lord is worthy of our commitment. Our stewardship should be our response to what he's done on our behalf.

Paul urges this type of commitment in Romans.

**(Romans 12:1)** I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

Giving should be an expression of our identity **as God's stewards**. When the biblical affirmation of private property is not tempered by this truth, the result is autonomous materialism (Acts 5:4; 2 Thess. 3:12-- both demonstrate recognition of private ownership in the NT).

### **Biblical implications of stewardship**

- **Everything we have is God's and not ours.**

**(Psa. 24:1)** The earth is the LORD'S, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it.

**(1 Cor. 4:7)** For who regards you as superior? And what do you have that you did not receive? But if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

NOTE: The matter of stewardship extends to spiritual gifts, family, and all earthly possessions.

- **We should manage God's money to advance his kingdom.** We are stewards of God's money; everything we have is to be held in trust to advance his kingdom. We should be ready to part with whatever is needed (Lk. 14:33), and we should find creative ways to serve God financially (Lk. 16:9).

**(Luke 14:33)** So therefore, no one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.

**(Luke 16:9-11)** And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the mammon (money) of unrighteousness; that when it fails, they may receive you into the eternal dwellings. 10 "He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. 11 "If therefore you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous mammon (money), who will entrust the true riches to you?"

The context of this passage is the parable of the unrighteous steward.

Jesus makes the point that one can use temporal resources to advance God's kingdom.

- **We will give an account to God for how we spent his money.**

(**Mat. 25:19, 21**) Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them...**21** "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy of your master.'

(**1 Cor. 3:13**) ...each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work

(**Rom. 14:12**) So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God.

### **Attitudes toward giving as an owner vs. as a steward**

As stewards, God has all the rights; we have all the responsibilities. There are key distinctions to know and understand:

- **Owners ask** "How much of my money will I give to God?"

**Stewards ask** "How much of God's money will I keep for myself?"

It is appropriate for the steward to have enough to live on and provide for his family--but never to live luxuriously while the owner's affairs are neglected. Yet statistics reveal that as most Christians' income goes up, their percentage of giving goes down.

- **Owners ask** when purchasing "things" -- "Will I enjoy this?" and (sometimes) "Can I afford it?" or "Can I make the monthly payment?"

This mentality often results in big debt with the availability of consumer credit. A substantial debt burden often limits a Christian's ability to give and/or minister more. Married couples cite money issues as one of the most common reasons for marital problems.

**Stewards ask** "How will this purchase affect my ability to advance God's purposes?"

Certainly, being able to afford something is a necessary but not sufficient reason for buying something.

- There are the needs of other Christians to consider. (see 8:13-15)
- The needs of those who don't know Christ (spiritual and physical; here and abroad).
- We have the chance to lead by example.  
We may give up an affordable purchase so that we would not tempt others who

don't have the financial means to live at the same level. We should also consider the affect that our purchases have on shaping our children's perspective on materialism. We should consider our motivation in providing for our children. Our society tells us that we are good parents if we give the "best" stuff to our children, but we must realize that we are teaching them to derive their identity from what they own. They feel better about themselves because they wear the right label. I don't want my kids to grow up thinking that way. When we give all "the best" to our kids, rather than providing them freedom and a good self image, we enslave them to the opinions of others.

### **This is why stewards are committed to spending less than they make.**

When we live with a grace-motivated attitude and a steward mentality, we are able to enjoy our giving and the possessions and pleasures God grants us.

**(1 Chr. 29:6-22)** Then the rulers of the fathers' households, and the princes of the tribes of Israel, and the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, with the overseers over the king's work, **offered willingly**; (7) and for the service for the house of God they gave 5,000 talents and 10,000 darics of gold, and 10,000 talents of silver, and 18,000 talents of brass, and 100,000 talents of iron. (8) And whoever possessed precious stones gave them to the treasury of the house of the LORD, in care of Jehiel the Gershonite. (9) **Then the people rejoiced because they had offered so willingly, for they made their offering to the LORD with a whole heart**, and King David also rejoiced greatly. (10) So David blessed the LORD in the sight of all the assembly; and David said, "Blessed art Thou, O LORD God of Israel our father, forever and ever . . . (12) **Both riches and honor come from Thee**, and Thou dost rule over all, and in Thy hand is power and might; and it lies in Thy hand to make great, and to strengthen everyone . . . (14) **For all things come from Thee**, and from Thy hand we have given Thee . . . (16) **and all is Thine** . . . (20) And all the assembly blessed the LORD, the God of their fathers, and bowed low and did homage to the LORD and to the king. (21) And on the next day they made sacrifices to the LORD and offered burnt offerings to the LORD, 1,000 bulls, 1,000 rams and 1,000 lambs, with their libations and sacrifices in abundance for all Israel. (22) **So they ate and drank that day before the LORD with great gladness . . .**

- **Owners** say "My finances and giving are my private business." They tend to resent questions or challenges from others in this area as intrusive.

**Stewards** say "I will seek wise counsel so I can be faithful with God's resources."

Instead of viewing our finances and giving as our private business, we will begin (as with all important decisions) to see what God's Word says about it, and ask counsel from other more mature Christians (light from Word; unforeseen implications).

Each of us is ultimately responsible for the use of our finances. Therefore we should approach financial decisions with a spiritual perspective and with sobriety. If we find ourselves troubled in this area, we may need to ask ourselves if we have truly given ourselves fully to God as in Romans 12:1 and 2 Cor. 8:5.

The third biblical principle of financial giving is...

### 3. Our financial giving is an index of our spiritual vitality and maturity (2 Cor. 8:7).

How would you respond to someone who insists they are spiritually mature because they tithe despite the fact that they don't know the Word, rarely pray, and aren't in fellowship? We recognize that the absence of any one of these robs us of spiritual vitality. We need to recognize also, that the absence of a sacrificial giving ministry robs us of spiritual vitality.

(Luke 12:34) For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Xenos Christian Fellowship has had the opposite problem historically: For example one might say, "Since I know some scripture and I'm busy with God's work, I am spiritually mature even though I don't give sacrificially." Paul's point in 2 Cor. 8:7 is that *giving is just as much a part of the profile of spiritual maturity* as the other things they boasted about.

(Ron Blue) "Your checkbook reveals all that you really believe about stewardship . . . A person who has been a Christian for even a short while can fake prayer, Bible study, evangelism, going to church, but he can't fake what his checkbook reveals. Maybe that is why so many of us are so secretive about our personal finances." (Ron Blue, *Master Your Money* (New York; Thomas Nelson), p. 20.)

#### Applications:

- This is why we require [Servant Team](#) members to demonstrate a record of consistent and generous giving (1 Tim. 3:3b,8b >> elders' giving requirement of 10% minimum to general fund; Fiscal Support Team requirement for being on the Servant Team)--just as we require a record of other qualifications (e.g., biblical knowledge, ministry, etc.).

(1 Tim. 3:3,8) [Elders must be] . . . free from the love of money . . . (8) Deacons likewise must be men of dignity . . .

- We should talk about this area with one another and in our discipleship work. It should not be "off limits" like it is in the world. Xenos has the [GIFT Ministry](#) (Generous Investment in Future Treasures) which can assist in budget management.

The fourth biblical principle of financial giving is ...

### 4. Give according to what you have (8:12).

(2 Cor 8:12) For if the readiness is present, it is acceptable according to what a man has, not according to what he does not have.

Because our financial situations vary widely according to many factors (earning power, family size, previous money management, etc.), it is **impossible** and **unscriptural** to set a monetary standard for what constitutes significant giving. God sets a different standard. **2 Cor. 8:12** says it is our **readiness** to give, not the amount we give, that God prizes. It is our **willingness to sacrifice** for him that pleases God more than the actual amount. This is what Ron Blue calls the "could give" level. This is why Paul holds up the Macedonians as models, just as Jesus holds up the widow in Mk. 12:41-44. **We may give significantly no matter how little we may have.**

(Mark 12:41-44) And He sat down opposite the treasury, and began observing how the multitude were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums. (42) And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent. (43) And calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the

treasury; (44) for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on."

**(Oswald Sanders)**"This is. . . the new mathematics, the arithmetic of heaven. God estimates our gifts not so much by their financial value, as by the sacrifice involved, the love that accompanies it, and the amount that is left. The supreme value of the widow's gift lay in the fact that she `out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on' - while the others gave `out of their surplus' (Mk. 12:44). Here is a searching test of our giving, but that incident should greatly encourage those who have only a little to give, but give it gladly." (Oswald Sanders, *Enjoying Intimacy With God* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), p. 155.)

**Applications:** What does this look like?

### **1. Start giving now.**

Many Christians do not give because they think what they can afford to give right now is so small it doesn't matter (e.g. students; adults digging out of debt: "I'll wait until I'm making more, get out of debt, fund my retirement, etc., then I'll start giving.").

However, unless we take specific measures, we will tend to spend our disposable income on ourselves, whatever it is. Those who do not start giving when they have little left never seem to have anything but little left!

Even if the amount can only be very small initially, establishing this *habit* will begin to bring you joy and motivate you to get in a position to be able to give more.

### **2. Choose an amount that affects your lifestyle.**

If you can't feel it, it isn't sacrificial--and this is a reflection of our view of God. This is why God rebuked Israel for only offering crippled animals (Mal. 1:6-14). They weren't really thanking God; they were going through a tokenistic religious show. Remember too that in giving the "best" of the flock that they exercised faith, trusting God to provide more.

**(Mal. 1:6-14)** "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect?" says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests who despise My name. But you say, 'How have we despised Thy name?' (7) You are presenting defiled food upon My altar. But you say, 'How have we defiled Thee?' In that you say, 'The table of the LORD is to be despised.' (8) But when you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you present the lame and sick, is it not evil? Why not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you kindly?" says the LORD of hosts. (9) "But now will you not entreat God's favor, that He may be gracious to us? With such an offering on your part, will He receive any of you kindly?" says the LORD of hosts. (10) "Oh that there were one among you who would shut the gates, that you might not uselessly kindle fire on My altar! I am not pleased with you," says the LORD of hosts, "nor will I accept an offering from you. (11) For from the rising of the sun, even to its setting, My name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense is going to be offered to My name, and a grain offering that is pure; for My name will be great among the nations," says the LORD of hosts. (12) "But you are profaning it, in that you say, 'The table of the Lord is defiled, and as for its fruit, its food is to be despised.' (13) You also say, 'My, how tiresome it is!' And you disdainfully sniff at it," says the LORD of hosts, "and you bring what was taken by robbery, and what is lame or sick; so you bring the offering! Should I receive that from your hand?" says the LORD. (14) "But cursed be the swindler who has a male in his flock, and vows it, but sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord, for I am a great King," says the LORD of hosts, "and My name is feared among the nations."

An excellent mindset to have is that you want to live NOW in such a way that if the Lord called you to full-time ministry, you could do it.

Although the tithe is no longer in force, 10% is a good rule of thumb and feasible for many of us as a starting point. We can give that off the top, and then if we prosper more at the end of the month/year, we can give more. Certainly, since the tithe was given under the Law, grace should out-produce the Law in its giving!

Make this a matter of family discussion. Parents shouldn't automatically answer kids' financial requests with "We can't afford it." Rather, we should say, "We could do/buy that--but we have chosen not to so we can serve the Lord and others . . . or because we would have to work so much more that we couldn't spend enough time with you as a family."

### **3. Incorporate your giving as a definite part of your budget.**

**Give "off the top" (like our bills) at the beginning of the month, pay-period, etc.** (Prov. 3:9; 1 Cor. 16:2). Do not view your giving commitment as disposable income, but rather like your rent/mortgage, food and utility bills, etc. "Wants" should always wait until this commitment has been honored.

**(Prov. 3:9)** Honor the LORD from your wealth, and from the first of all your produce . . .

**(1 Cor. 16:2)** On the first day of every week let each one of you put aside and save, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come.

Giving sporadically according to dramatic needs is inadequate, because ministry needs are very regular. Big needs require financial preparation. Church leaders need to plan financially, which requires regular income. Our giving will also be lower than if we commit ourselves to a regular amount. This is Paul's point in 9:5--good giving intentions are often sabotaged by covetousness.

The **Xenos pledge program** facilitates this: signed commitment, reminder, accountability.

**Qualification:** It is not a blood-oath--we can revise it if we run into financial trouble.

**Be faithful to this commitment even when unexpected needs arise (unless impossible).** This gives God the opportunity to show you his faithfulness (PERSONAL EXAMPLES).

Some may object to a pledge with the statement, "**But it seems so impersonal.**" But the Bible insists that we can and should give regularly *and* with the right heart attitude, just like we should assemble with other Christians regularly *and* with the proper attitude (**Heb. 10:24,25**). If you give regularly but heartlessly, the solution is not to cease giving, but to get before God and change your heart! Those who wait until their heart attitude is right to start regular giving never seem to get there.

**"What about windfalls (bonuses; gifts; inheritances)?"** Unless we plan in advance how we will deal with unexpected income, our flesh just takes over and we will spend it selfishly. We must remember that financial abundance is not necessarily a blessing and in fact, may lead to one's spiritual demise. On the other hand we could bless others with our riches and receive a blessing from God.

Shouldn't we expect to give more than 10% of windfalls?

**"What about faith giving?"** Individuals are free to give even "beyond their ability" if they believe God wants them to and can trust him to meet their financial needs in extraordinary ways. The Macedonians did this (8:3), and Paul holds them up as an example much like Jesus did the widow. If you choose to do this, you should accept full responsibility for the outcome and look to the Lord for your help, not expecting other Christians to make up the short-fall.

## 5. The needs of others should have a moral bearing on our finances (2 Cor. 8:13-15).

2CO 8:13-15 For this is not for the ease of others and for your affliction, but by way of equality-- 14 at this present time your abundance being a supply for their want, that their abundance also may become a supply for your want, that there may be equality; 15 as it is written, "HE WHO gathered MUCH DID NOT HAVE TOO MUCH, AND HE WHO gathered LITTLE HAD NO LACK."

"Equality" here means that every Christian has sufficient resources. God gives me an excess of money (in part) so I can make up for the lack of another Christian (Eph. 4:28). The situation may well be reversed at another time. God has a special concern for the poor (Prov. 14:31).

**(Eph. 4:28)** Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share with him who has need.

**(Gal. 6:10)** So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

**(Prov. 14:31)** He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker, but he who is gracious to the needy honors Him.

- This passage teaches that **we have no right to hoard money or possessions when we are aware of others in legitimate need.** This is an implication and application of stewardship. This principle applies to the Body of Christ, since we are the family of God and brothers and sisters of each other--and also to the non-Christian poor.

What would you think of a father who spent all his paycheck on golfing when his wife and children were going hungry and ill-clothed? His right to spend it on himself is limited by the needs of his family. Some Christian professionals believe that their witness to their peers would be damaged if they lived a simple life-style. They fear that secular peers will think they are weird. Why not answer that they have better things to do with their money, realizing the significant needs of others.

Qualification: We should not let lazy Christians take advantage of the generosity of others. Instead, we should confront them about their irresponsibility, call on them to pull their share of the load, and even excommunicate them if they persist.

**(2 Thess. 3:6-12)** Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us. (7) For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, (8) nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we might not be a burden to any of you; (9) not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, that you might follow our example. (10) For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone will not work, neither let him eat. (11) For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. (12) Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread.

**(1 Tim. 5:8,16)** But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever . . . (16) If any woman who is a believer has dependent widows, let her assist them, and let not the church be burdened, so that it may assist those who are widows indeed.

Acts 4:32-35 teaches charity on a *local* level. 2 Cor. 8:13-15 also applies it on an *extra-local* level. Passages like Gal. 6:10 remind us that we also should help *non-Christians* who are poor (although the Christian poor take priority).

## **Application:**

### **1. Simple Lifestyle**

Because of the obvious and ongoing need of other Christians locally and globally, this principle of generosity argues for a *simple lifestyle* so that as God prospers us in our earning power, we may give more and more (proportionately) to his purposes (RALPH WINTER'S "WARTIME LIFESTYLE" from *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* Chapter 84).

Compare SIDER'S "GRADUATED TITHE" (from Ronald Sider's *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*) to BLUE, p. 141 and his advice to "get rich slowly." This contradicts Paul's warning in 1 Tim. 6:9. If you allow your spending habits to increase proportionately to your income, then it will be very difficult for you to take advantage of ministry opportunities which require a smaller income. But if you learn to live simply, you will be able to take advantage of these opportunities. There are many examples of people who have done this in the church.

This applies to DINKS (Duel Income, No Kids) as well. If you unnecessarily put yourself in a position that requires both incomes, even when beginning to have children, the integrity of your family and your walk with God may be compromised.

**Qualification:** Some people due to their job situations are unable to hold the family together financially without both spouses working. However, even they should review their expenses and see possible unnecessary expenditures. Again, the [GIFT Ministry](#) (Generous Investment in Future Treasures) may help people in this situation.

### **2. Learn the plight of the poor.**

Many of us never associate with the poor and therefore don't have any appreciation for their struggles. Here are a few ways we can learn how the other half lives:

- Volunteer for Urban Concern or the west side Youth For Christ ministry
- Read books by Ron Sider, John Perkins and other authors who write about poverty
- Go on a short term missions trip
- Stay on top of the news

### **3. Xenos General Fund supports Urban Concern, missions and other ministries to the poor.**

You can also direct United Way funds to U.C. Your personal Xenos missions giving gets at this to some degree. Other organizations like World Vision, Samaritan's Purse, and Compassion International enable

you to help support a child. Before you give to an organization, check it out for integrity, amount of overhead, etc.

## **6. God abundantly blesses the gracious giver (2 Cor. 9:6,8-14).**

**(2 Cor. 9: 6ff, 8-14)** Now this I say, he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully... {8} And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; {9} as it is written, "HE SCATTERED ABROAD, HE GAVE TO THE POOR, HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ABIDES FOREVER." {10} Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food, will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; {11} you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God. {12} For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God. {13} Because of the proof given by this ministry they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all, {14} while they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you.

This principle has been so abused by "Health and Wealth" preachers that many Christians have "thrown the baby out with the bath water." Religious hucksters misapply vs 6 as an incentive to give in order to get rich, thus violating 1 Tim. 6:5-10. But Paul undeniably teaches in this passage that godly financial giving *does* result in blessing to the giver, and the more bountifully we sow, the more bountifully we will reap. He clearly holds this out as an incentive to give.

### **What will we reap?**

#### **A. We may reap increased financial resources to enable us to give more (vs 10a).**

God *may* bless us financially if we give bountifully. Other New Testament passages teach this (Lk. 6:38; Mk. 10:28-30; Matt. 6:33; Phil. 4:18,19). Of course, this may not mean staggering wealth. Neither are we to hoard this, but rather continue to be a "conduit" to bless others. Vs 8 and 11a seem to broaden this promise out to include every kind of needed resource ("everything").

#### **B. We will reap increased effectiveness for God (vs 10b).**

This phrase is difficult to interpret. It may mean we will reap the privilege of greater involvement and results in God's work. Faithfulness in money matters allows God to entrust us with greater ministry opportunities.

**(Luke 16:9-11\*\*)** And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when it fails, they may receive you into the eternal dwellings. (10) He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. (11) If therefore you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous mammon, who will entrust the true riches to you?

Christ shows that we cannot "compensate" for poor giving by other forms of ministry. Rather, he clearly states that money is a "very little thing" in his view. If we don't handle it appropriately, what indication is there we'll be good stewards of "true riches" -- like unsaved people, that he would like to place in our lives?

**(Acts 4:32-34)** And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own; but all things were common property to them. (33) And with great power the apostles were giving witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. (34) *For* there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales,

If we want to have eternal impact on people's lives through evangelism and discipleship, first look to this area.

### **C. We will reap the privilege of seeing others affected for Christ (vs 11b-13).**

It is a wonderful thing to see that God has worked through you to bless other people (bringing friend to Christ; discipling those who are now solid workers for Christ; providing these classes; missions fruit; Urban Concern kids; Xenos baptisms. Because of salaries & facilities, many of these ministries thrive and grow; Xenos' future growth because of increased new facilities (Main Campus; Campus Bible Study; new Youth Building).

### **D. We will reap increased friends who love us and pray for us (vs 14).**

Paul greatly valued this, and we should, too.

### **E. We will reap increased eternal reward (1 Tim. 6:19).**

God will point out the people reached (in part) through your giving to missions, etc.--and praise/reward you for it!

**(1 Tim. 6:17-19\*\*)** Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. (18) Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, (19) storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.

Note: The Corinthians evidently responded to Paul's exhortation (see Rom. 15:26,27).

## **7. Our first responsibility is to support our local church.**

There is a moral obligation to support those from whom you regularly benefit spiritually (contra GIVING BOYCOTT if one doesn't agree with a particular leadership decision).

**(Gal. 6:6)** And let the one who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches.

**(1 Tim. 5:17,18)** Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. (18) For the Scripture says, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages."

**Pledge program & Fiscal Support Team:** We would like to see all Christian Principle grads in this! Get in the habit now! Go through Pledge and FST rationale (tie together the principles above).

## **Pledge and FST**

We are in a big church. Employees, many at a big paycut, leave their jobs, come work at Xenos and this is how they support their families.

e.g. In this old days we had a paid staff of two and could fly by the seat of our pants

Big needs require financial preparation. Church leaders need to plan financially, which requires an estimate of a yearly giving budget. So we use a pledge program.

The pledge program facilitates this: signed commitment, reminder, accountability.

FST: FST is a group of consistent givers in our church. Joining is voluntary. You have to give 5% or more of your income. (5% is low and it frees people up to give to missionaries and other causes outside of Xenos) FST members attend a yearly retreat in December to set the budget priorities for the church.

This is very unusual, but we feel people committed to supporting this ministry should have a say in how the money is spent.

Div coordinators prioritize their needs in modules. People vote on their proposals.

FST has a lot to say about which new ministry ideas will be pursued and it giving them a sense of ownership.

I heartily recommend you get on the FST and check out one of these retreats.

**Building program:** You have the opportunity to begin, extend &/or increase your pledge to this. The job is not done yet! Have a say in the future of this fellowship's ministry.

**Missions:** Part of your Xenos Christian Fellowship pledge to the general fund subsidizes our missions teams support. You should also give directly to specific missionaries through WorldTeam.

## **Memory Verses**

**2 Cor. 8:7\*** - Consistent, sacrificial giving is a non-optional component of spiritual vitality and maturity. We cannot be true disciples of Christ without this.

**2 Cor. 9:6-11\*\*** - God blesses bountiful financial giving in a variety of ways.

**1 Cor. 16:2\*** - Our financial giving should be regular and consistent.

## **Assignment**

Respond to questions on the handout entitled *Discerning Materialism*.

Begin working on the *Ministry Assessment Materials* and pass out *Observation Assessments* to three close Christian friends.

# Xenos Christian Fellowship

## Christian Principles Unit 4

### Missions and the Poor I

#### Overview

- [Missions](#)
- [The Poor](#)

#### Missions

**Goal:** To motivate missions mobilization by demonstrating the centrality of missions in the Bible. To challenge students with the question, Where do I fit into God's missionary purpose for the world?

**Thesis:** God is a missionary God, the Bible is a missionary book

**Antithesis:** Having a small world, thinking: missions is peripheral.

#### I. Introduction

What we think we know about missions Identify some myths about missions

Video clip from the movie: Hawaii We need an answer to the impression or accusation that missions is about cultural imperialism!!

#### II. What we should know about missions

**What is the Bible about, in a word?** Redemption. The outgoing God reconciling people back to himself. In Principles class we study theology, breaking it down to various areas. Tonight we're going to look at the big picture, how it all fits together. THE theme.

#### Quiz:

**Q1** - How many verses can you name on God's global purpose? Was it an afterthought of JC?

There are several thousand throughout the Bible!

**Q2** - Why did JC come to earth? To save us? Yes, but that's rather man-centered...what did Jesus get out of it?. Dying for our sins was not the ultimate goal. Jn 17:4--glorify God. JC came to glorify the Father. JC said "as the father sent me, so send I you"(Jn 20:21). He came to glorify the Father and so should we. What does it mean to glorify the Father? One way is to bring unity out of diversity. Think about an International Bible study. This is like a picture of heaven. Bringing many diverse people together in Him.

**Q3** - Ps 46:10 Fill in the blank: "Be still and \_\_\_\_\_" WHY did we only know the 1st half of this verse? Because of: Yearbook Theology Looking for myself in the Bible. Missed half of the Bible!!

### **III. Short overview of the whole Bible.**

#### **3-part story:**

A. Intro: Beginning of Genesis=God ruling, everything in harmony.

B. Story: Genesis-Revelation=Battleground- God moving to redeem mankind, through Israel then the church.

C. Conclusion: End of Revelation=God ruling and all in harmony again. See: God is a missionary God and the Bible is a missionary book.

#### **A. Intro:**

- Gen 1:28 God's original plan: 'be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth'.
- In Genesis 3, the plan was marred by the fall.
- Gen 11:1,4 Babel, they said 'let's make a name for ourselves'. God brought diversity through 70 people groups.

See the incredible PRIDE, man continued to seek meaning on his own terms by questing for a "name". God made it known that they would not frustrate His purpose to have peoples...and if diversity could not come about through the natural process, He would bring it about supernaturally. After Babel, the major characters are:

God in heaven, and 70 different groups of people on earth waiting to be unified for God's greater glory.

#### **B. Story:**

- Gen 12:1-3 GOD gives a name to Abraham. He was blessed SO THAT he would be a blessing.

Top Line--Blessed,

Bottom Line--to BE a blessing, our responsibility

#### **Abraham**

Q4 - why is he the God of Abraham Isaac Jacob? Why not David or Moses? Not because they were especially "good". God made a commitment to reach the whole world to each of these 3 men. His calling card: I'm the One who made a covenant with these 3 to redeem all distinct ethnic groups.

#### **Promised Land**

Israel was a land flowing with milk & honey. This refers to the top line blessing. With every top line blessing, there is a bottom line responsibility. Israel was a strategic piece of property Ezek 5:5 major trading route. See 1 Chron 16:8, 24

The bottom line responsibility was to share about God with those who travelled through the land.

## **Exodus from Egypt**

What was the lesson from this event? See Ex. 5:1-2 One application was to establish God's reputation Ex 19:4-6

## **Joshua**

Q5 Josh 4:19-24 What was the lesson from the memorial stones? :5 top line--teach children about blessings 24 bottom line--responsibility to let the nations know about God

## **David & Goliath**

Was this lesson to trust God and take on giants? That would be the top line blessing. The bottom line responsibility is in 1 Sam 17:45-46...that all the earth may know there is a God in heaven.

## **Psalm 67**

See :1=top line blessing :2 we only know half the story! See :7!

## **Solomon's Wisdom**

See 2 Chron. 9:22-23-top line and bottom line

## **Daniel in the Lions Den**

Is the lesson: trust God and He will take care of you? That is a top line emphasis. In Dan 6:25-26 we see the process at work in Darius (who was not Jewish). The nations had some light even though Israel basically failed in their mission.

Will you start reading the Bible in a new light?

## **Jesus Christ**

- Birth Lk 2:30-32 Simeon understood the 2-fold purpose

Q6 - Mt 22:37 Which one of the commands, he was looking for one answer. Jesus gave him 2--top line/bottom line

\*\*note: love your neighbor is not necessarily cross-cultural...but what does Jesus say when asked 'who is my neighbor'? The Good Samaritan which was a cross-cultural example!!

- After the Resurrection In Lk 24 Jesus was having a (OT) Bible study with the disciples. He broke it down to 2 themes. Shouldn't we be intimately acquainted with them? :46=top line, :48=bottom line

**Acts:** Paul GOT it! He had spiritual claustrophobia--he longed to take the good news of Christ to the regions beyond... 2 Cor 10:16

## **C. Conclusion**

Rev 5:9, 7:9: Picture of heaven with all people groups represented.

God is a missionary God. The Bible is missionary Book. God's only son was a missionary.

All are called on to play a role in God's global purpose.

We were blessed to be a blessing! 1 Pet 2:9

Contrast pea-sized Christianity, shrinking world

Not all are called to go, but all are called to play a part in God's global purpose

#### **IV. What is missions?**

**Important Note:** The information in the next section is taken directly from: *Worldwide Perspectives: Understanding God's Purposes in the World from Genesis to Revelation*; Meg Crossman, Editor, 1996

We need to understand what the goal of missions is, as well as what are the strategies and issues regarding missions today - so we can effectively play our role in God's global purpose.

#### **A. The Goal of missions is: the evangelization of the World**

Matt 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations

Aren't we all missionaries? Myth: I'm a missionary here in my own country You might be, but you probably are not. I hope you are all evangelists.

#### **B. Defining Our Terms: Evangelism vs. Evangelization**

There is a difference between evangelism, missions & evangelization Evangelism - sharing the gospel & inviting people to accept Christ for themselves Missions - involves crossing cultural barriers to evangelize & plant churches

#### **Types of evangelism**

E = evangelism; # = of cultural barriers such as language, geography, economic/class or caste, religion

**E-1** evangelism is reaching out to people within one's own language and culture. The only barrier is church. Someone like you who is unchurched. · Most powerful because the messenger understands the culture of the people trying to reach.

**E-2** evangelism is reaching out to a culture that is somewhat different but with some similarities.

**E-3** big jump in culture. It requires penetrating & engaging a culture that is distant & very different from the messenger's. It is the most difficult, but most needed type of evangelism.

**Missions** involves E-2 & E-3 evangelism, but not E-1. Missions is not just evangelism, begins with evangelism

**Evangelization** - is the goal of evangelism. It includes: · Planting churches: discipling new believers, incorporating them into the body of Christ where they can grow spiritually & serve Christ. · Propagation: includes them spreading the Gospel to others in their own culture & to other cultures.

The Goal is the evangelization of world!

### **C. Viewing the World: political countries & people groups**

Jesus said Go & make disciples of all nations... Myth: The work of Missions is almost done because there is a church in every country.

When we see the word "nation", we think of a "political country". However, this isn't the concept expressed in the Bible.

1. Nation - Greek word ethnos - Biblically, an ethnic unit or people group rather than a political country. Translated nation, people, heathen or Gentile A more correct usage would be as in the phrase "the Cherokee nation", referring to the tribe of Native Americans. In Rev 5:9 & 10:11 not only is the word "nation" used, but it is further spelled out as peoples, tribes, tongues & kindreds.

2. People group - people who are bound together by a common culture "significantly large sociological grouping of individuals who perceive themselves to have a common affinity for one another because of their shared language, religion, ethnicity, residence, occupation, class or caste, situation or combination of these." It is what makes us, us and them, them.

A people group is the largest group within which the gospel can spread along natural lines without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance due to culture, language, geography, etc. A country may have many people groups. ex: Papua New Guinea >800 languages

3. Unreached People Group - is a people group among which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers & resources to evangelize this people group without outside (cross-cultural) assistance. Unreached people groups lack a church that has the numbers & strength to reach their own people.

The world we need to be concerned with is the world of unreached people groups.

Q7 - It is estimated that there are about 10,000 unreached people groups; who have never yet heard the Good News of Jesus in a way that they can understand it.

Mostly they are found in 5 major cultural blocks: Muslim, Chinese, Hindu, Buddhist and tribal cultures This represents about 40% of the world's population (2-3 billion people). So the job is far from being finished!

### **V. How Is the Evangelization of the World Accomplished?**

**A. Plant multiplying churches in every people group of the world!** Churches that are able to spread the gospel throughout their own people group and also beyond to penetrate other people groups.

The resource most needed to plant multiplying churches is leaders. The training of nationals is key missions work.

### **B. Four Stages of Church Planting Relationships**

- Stage 1: Pioneer - First contact with a people group.
- Stage 2: Parent - Missionary trains national leadership
- Stage 3: Partnership - national leaders work as equals with missionaries.
- Stage 4: Participation - nationals lead the church, missionaries participate only by invitation.

Distinction between: Regular missions: Cross-cultural evangelism (ideally in association with Christians of the target culture) to a people group which already has a sound indigenous church. Frontier Missions: Cross-cultural evangelism to a people group who do not have a sound indigenous church (Stage 1 & 2)

### **C. Where are the unreached people groups? All over the world**

There is a window, where the vast majority of unreached are located.

1. Q8: 10/40 window: term coined for the area of the world between 10 degrees and 40 degrees North latitude, which stretches from North Africa & southern Spain to Japan & the northern part of the Philippines.

There is an emphasis in missions on the 10/40 window because: a. Most of the least evangelized peoples and countries of the world are here. b. This is where 3 large religious blocs of unreached peoples are mainly found: Islam, Hinduism & Buddhism. c. The poor are there. Many of the 50 poorest countries of the world are also the least evangelized countries of the world. Poorest of the poor. Lowest quality of life.

2. Brings us to our next Myth: I can't go when there is so much need here. On one hand it is true, there is need here in the U.S., but realize the need is far greater in the rest of the world. We should serve here. The problem is there is no time or resources left for the lost & poor of the world. There is a great imbalance in the allocation of resources such as money, people & prayer. I don't have to look farther than myself to know it's easier to pray for my family & friends than the lost of the world.

For example: western church spending is as follows 95% domestic projects 4.5% regular missions .5% Frontier missions - most needed Balance - We need to show concern for those near & far.

### **D. Nearly half the world's population is poor:**

1. Sobering Statistics - to give you a glimpse of the incredible need in the world:

Today: · Approximately 35,000 children age four and under will die of hunger & hunger related diseases. Tomorrow & every single day - Pulse, Dec 19, 1997 This year: · 250,000 children will become permanently blinded this year for lack of a 10-cent vitamin A capsule or a daily handful of green

vegetables. · 230,00 children are struck by polio because they do not receive the immunization, which has virtually eliminated polio in the West. In our World: · There are 100 million children living in the streets of the cities around the world. · There are nearly one billion people who are defined as "the absolute poor", whose existence is characterized by malnutrition, illiteracy, and disease and is beneath any reasonable definition of human decency.

Not long ago I read an article written by Peace Corps Nurse who was trying to help this extremely poor village in Sudan & village woman asked her, "Does anyone know we are suffering like this?" This pierced my heart. We need our eyes open to the incredible spiritual & physical poverty of the world!

2. Holistic Development - Since the lost are often poor, then a holistic ministry is needed. One in which evangelism, compassion & social transformation are inseparably related. Christian community development focuses on spiritual & physical needs (food, health, sanitation, and education), and aims to bring a group to a place of self-sufficiency, spiritually & physically.

The Peoples in the 10/40 window need to be given priority & it is an incredible challenge to bring the Good News to the poor in these countries, but with God all things are possible!! The question is, who will have the faith to step out to do it?!

## **VI. The Challenge of Crossing Culture**

This includes things we've covered - In addition, our own culture opposes missions. The accusation is: Myth: Missionaries destroy culture - as they evangelize & plant churches

**A. Cultural Imperialism-** imposing our own culture on others. This is the cry of our postmodern culture. Christian missionaries ruin cultures. What right do missionaries have to intrude & impose their beliefs & culture on others? This is an issue for which we all need to have a ready answer.

### **B. Our Answer**

1. Yes, but missionaries have done far greater good. Unfortunately missionaries have sometimes acted in a culture-destroying manner & needlessly opposed customs they did not understand. The world has been quick to notice the mistakes & stereotyped missionaries as cultural imperialists (as Abner Hale in Hawaii clip). Overall missionaries have done far greater good, even in the area of preserving culture. "By learning the language of a tribal group & studying tribal culture and thought, missionaries have actually done a good deal to preserve tribal cultures which might otherwise have just disappeared." In addition all the medical care, orphanages, education, & helping the oppressed far outweighs missionaries mistakes.

2. Some aspects of culture need to be changed. All cultures under authority of God's word. Ex. tribe in Brazil had custom of sacrificing babies to demons to try to prevent disease. Missionaries went, lived with the tribe, learned their language, gave it an alphabet, translated the Word of God, taught them to read. When the tribe learned about the love & truth of God, they had a rational and wonderful reason for not sacrificing babies to demons.

3. Cultures are in a constant state of change. The fact is commercial exploiters & other secular forces have destroyed tribal cultures. Ex. Movie: The Mission 1750 Even in the recent past, land developers, settlers, & gold seekers have murdered Indians in South America & taken what they wanted from their territories. "The most isolated minority cultures must eventually be overwhelmed by the commercial and political expansion of majority peoples. As governments want tribes to be assimilated into its society's cultures, who will help these primitive tribes survive?" Don Richardson

These are the answers we need to have ready to refute the myth that missionaries destroy culture.

Missions is not about cultural imperialism, yet there is the challenge of C. Ethnocentrism - the way we do things is the right way. We all think this, that's why our friends & family's idiosyncrasies bother us. We ask, why do you do it that way? All cultures are naturally ethnocentric. A missionary has to struggle to overcome their normal tendency to assume their culture's way is the only right way

#### **D. Cultural Sensitivity**

Some people reject the gospel not because they perceive it to be false, but because they perceive it to be alien. Others reject the gospel because they perceive it to be a threat to their own culture. When a missionary enters another culture, he is conspicuously foreign. How can he explain the gospel so it seems culturally right?

A missionary has to defuse these barriers through these means of cultural sensitivity:

**1. Identification:** developing a deep understanding of the local culture & a genuine appreciation of it, so there's not an us & them mentality. It is a sense of oneness with the people. Our example is Christ. Because of His love, He identified with us to bring us God's good news. 1 Cor 9:22 - Paul

Another way missionaries overcomes barriers of foreignness & threat is:

**2. Contextualization:** refers to finding ways to make the gospel & the rest of Christian teaching meaningful & appealing to the culture we hope to reach. Definition: "Presenting the gospel in ways which consider the world view of the local culture. Adapting the Biblical message into forms that are true to the Scriptures but appropriate to the local culture" In our own culture, we try to make the gospel culturally relevant.

Both the gospel and the church need to be contextualized. "Peoples who become Christian must be allowed to have expressions of worship, leadership, theology, and practice that reflect their own culture. Once the basic foundation of truth is laid, the receiving culture must determine its own appropriate ways to communicate & live out God's truth. It must express its love for God within its own cultural framework."

Identification & contextualization are means of making God's message understandable and acceptable in a new culture.

#### **VII. Missions involves cross-cultural evangelism & church planting**

The goal is to see a church planting movement begun in every people group.

This quote sums up what we're talking about:

"An estimated 75 percent of the world's non-Christians find themselves in unreached people groups. That means that over two billion individuals for whom Christ died will not hear of His love unless someone follows the call of God, leaves their own culture, learns a new language, eats new food, adjusts to a new lifestyle, loves new peoples who may appear unlovely, and shares the gospel message with them. This is mission, pure and simple. The age of missions is far from over. On the contrary, cross-cultural service for Christ is the most massive & most exciting challenge for Christians today." Peter Wagner, 1992 (8-26)

## **VIII. What are we doing about missions?**

### **Oakbrook**

- Giving: We have 3 missionaries on 2 fields
- Going: Short term trips
- Sending: Rom 10:13-15 Home Support Teams, Prayer partners, Financial partners
- Mobilizing: We have an Outreach Team with a Mission's Coordinator
- Special projects
  - Kids Connection Collector for needy Afghan children
  - Kids Connection – Collection for Back to School needs
- Who is your home group's missions rep?

### **You**

- TAKE A STEP!!
- Missions Mobilizers: sign up!
- Personal involvement is the key
- Spiritual vitality--see E. Stanley Jones quote: "I came to Him all unsuspecting. I wanted salvation, and found in taking it I wanted the salvation of the world. I'm taking more and more projects upon myself--world projects. And the more I take on myself--the more I'm taken over by joy, by well-being, by inner excitement, by adventure, by growth, by LIFE"
- Perhaps the biggest myth for us is that we love our comfortable lifestyle too much!

### **Take a step!!**

Read, take a class, give, take a trip! Find how you can use your talents & resources for God's global purpose! Especially--look for the launching of missions mobilizers this fall and get on board! Growing as globally aware christians stimulates our faith to develop. It stirs us up! Mobilizing, sending, going launches us into a world where we must trust God!

It moves us from being spectators with a pea-sized world to participants--partners with God in His plan for this planet! Give up your small ambitions!

It pleases God--it is central to His purposes!

There is no more significant way to live.

We live in a battleground, as you step forward expect some opposition because Satan knows that mobilizing people in missions is a threat to his stranglehold on the world. Don't buy into myths about missions! Urge you: read your Bible with your eyes open. Watch the news prayerfully, i.e. Iranian hostages, and gulf war

You were blessed to be a blessing!

P. C-14 Missions Mobilization "As christians, we know that ultimate success, significance and fulfillment are found only in God. If God is a missionary God, then our significance can be found in

participation in God's global cause. In the words of Jim Elliot, *"He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep, in order to gain what he cannot lose."*

## **The Poor**

### **Urban Concern: Concern Christian Community Development**

*Why should we address social issues if Christ is coming back and we know the world system is doomed?*

**1. Moral Command.** It is a moral issue (not an eschatological one) and sin if we do not show concern. **(Ezekiel 16:49)** "Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy.

Sin of omission. - lack of concern for the poor (not doing anything). This is probably one of the biggest sins the church is involved in. Unfortunately you probably don't hear much about this scripture or sin in the church today or even in seminary

Why is that?

Someone wants us to avoid hearing about our own sin lest we turn, repent and draw close to God. This would be the devil. What a powerful gospel we would preach if the church could give real testimony to the love of God in this area.

### **2. Expression of the love of God (gospel)**

Does anyone know 1 John 3:16-17 ?

**(1 John 3:16-17)** "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. (17) If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?"

The gospel is demonstration as well as proclamation. The greatest demonstration of God's love was Christ dying on the cross. He could have just told us he loved us but he also demonstrated it in his actions. We need to demonstrate the gospel through our actions of love for the poor, in addition to our explanation of the love of God.

### **3. We are responsible to represent the Character of God**

**(1 Peter 1:14-19)** As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. (15) But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." (17) Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.

A. God is concerned about justice for the oppressed and poor.

**(Psalm 140:12)** I know that the LORD secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause of the needy.

B. God identifies with the poor.

(Proverbs 14:31) He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.

To be Holy is to be like God. In this area it means to be concerned about the poor to the extent that we act by doing something about their predicament.

We shouldn't use our eschatology as a shield for our sin. As we will see, the fact that Christ is coming back is a reason to serve the poor not a reason to neglect them.

### **History of Xenos getting involved in Christian Community Development**

Our elders were bothered by the fact that our church was weak in the area of ministry to the poor and hurting. We had tried some things in the past but had never kept it going (Orient). So we began to save up money and teach on the need for service and the variety of gifts in the Body Of Christ. A year later I was hired on a part time basis while continuing in my role of doing accounting and administration.

#### **We started a 4-phase plan:**

- **1st phase.** We began home church service ministries and recruited a service ministry coordinator in each home church.
- **2nd phase.** We began service ministries to the whole church such as single parents, CARE group, service network (replaced by NETWORKING).
- **3rd phase.** We wanted to do something in the community of need outside of the church.
- **4th phase.** Set up (or link with) a Christian Community Development ministry overseas.

Let's look at the third phase more in depth and get a historical perspective on how things have developed here at Xenos.

I hooked up with a local group of pastors and others that were meeting about prayer and racial reconciliation. They referred me to John Perkins ministry in Mississippi called Voice of Calvary. Ron Sider called this ministry the best thing going in North America. I attended a workshop at Voice of Calvary in Mississippi. A week later I attended the first meeting of the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA). This was a group of Christians from around the country working in low income areas and committed to Christian Community Development as it was defined by John Perkins.

I began to get input from other ministries such as Voice of Hope in Dallas, Lawndale community church, Bethel New Life, and Circle Urban ministries in Chicago.

We took the principles we learned from these different groups and applied them to our local situation. In addition we continued to get input from John Perkins and others. We got together with people from Rhema Christian Center and began a Bible study at Windsor Terrace. Xenos then formed Urban Concern.

#### **Mission Statement**

The mission of Urban Concern is to work with individuals in the inner city to break the cycle of poverty and hopelessness. Urban Concern is committed to raising up leaders who will play an active role in restoring their community.

How do we carry out that mission? I have given you two handouts. One is the philosophy (theology) and the other is the "4 D" strategy underlying our ministries.

## Philosophy

God has always had a concern for those who are poor, in need, oppressed, and those who know God and are following God will demonstrate this through their actions.

**(Jeremiah 22:15-16)** "Does it make you a king to have more and more cedar? Did not your father have food and drink? He did what was right and just, so all went well with him. (16) He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me?" declares the LORD.

This is what people do who know God.

It is the church's (& Christians) responsibility to serve the poor and bring them the gospel.

## 4 D's.

Define geographical area, describe the needs, distribute resources, and develop leadership.

**Structural sin** in our society has developed segregation between the rich and poor (as well as racial). To love our neighbor requires us to make a relational link across these geographical boundaries that are set up by the sin in our society.

**Lifestyle and friendship evangelism** will fall short most often in ministering to those in need today because most of us have relationships with working people and live in middle class neighborhoods.

Linda Dillow in her book *Creative Counterpart* tries to justify not going to the inner city poor by falsely interpreting Proverbs 31:20 "She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy." Dillow conveniently passes by the part about the excellent wife opening her arms to the poor and focuses on the needy. She interprets needy then to apply to people with many needs such as a divorce, or depression. Plenty of people with needs are in her own neighborhood she points out so she doesn't have to go to the inner city poor and neither do you according to Dillow. The problem is that while these needs are valid ones to meet in our own neighborhoods, she is leaving out the needs of the poor that the verse refers to. Most of us do have to go out of our own neighborhoods to fulfill the scriptures command to reach out to the poor.

Here at Xenos we must have a lot of excellent wives (and single women) because we find so many of them volunteering at Urban Concern in our various ministries to the poor.

Avoiding the poor is a sin that is in our culture and we need to be aware of it. Moving up and out has to be challenged as a materialistic and self-centered philosophy. We should not just go along with the crowd as to where we live or whom we have relationships with.

**(Phil. 2:3-8)** Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. (4) Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. (5) Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: (6) Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, (7) but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. (8) And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross!

Christ was born poor, became a refugee, lived as a homeless person and even to the point of allowing himself to be killed. He didn't stay in heaven where it was most comfortable or safe. A friend of mine

who is on the CCDA board said he was doing a survey of Christians and one of the questions he asked was "Do you think Jesus spent a lot of time with the poor, homeless and down and out? Do you spend a lot of time with the homeless, poor and down and out?" He said that although Christians want to say they want to be like Jesus there is a disconnect in this area.

We need to consider the good of others in our choice of where to live and who to have relationships with, and we should seek God's direction in these decisions (rather than just following the flow of our culture).

I have seen hundreds pray to receive Christ in my ministry to the poor over the last 9 years. Over nine years in ministry to the middle class, a few dozen. We shouldn't assume that there will be less fruit in ministry among the poor.

Let's take a look at UC and see how practically these ideas have worked out

## **Video**

*What can you do? Everyone can do these things.*

### **1. Volunteer.**

There are over 1000 volunteers each year at UC. There are various volunteer opportunities requiring different levels of commitment. The South Linden Bible Study is our key program for outreach and evangelism. It meets every Monday night and requires a couple of hours each week. Some people bring their kids and have them go to the classes for their age. There are tours on the first Monday of every month. 100's of children have prayed to receive Christ. Other needs include One on One Mentors, After School helpers or academic tutors, summer program, summer camp, Hope Builders is one weekend a month, and event help is one time a year usually. I have volunteer applications or you can call the Urban Concern office at 291-0885 and talk to Donna Spengler.

### **2. Get others involved.**

Many Christians want to follow the commands of scripture to serve the poor but don't know how to go about that. If you know of Christians outside of Xenos you might want to bring them to the silent auction. This is a great way to introduce people to Urban Concern. People also use this event to bring non-Christians they are reaching out to.

### **3. Give to the general fund.**

Urban Concern is supported through the general fund at Xenos. Almost \$200,000 came to UC from the general fund of Xenos in 1999.

### **4. Pray.**

Seek God's will in what you should do but also pray for people and families that are poor and oppressed.

There are tragic situations that children and families are in here in Columbus (as well as around the world).

## 5. Learn what the Bible says about the poor and oppressed

**(2 Tim. 2:15)** Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

You should be able to know and explain the scriptures on the poor - it is a huge amount of scripture in the Bible.

I always encourage people to first take the Principles class to get an overall grounding for their Christian walk with God. Once you have done that you need to take my Christian Community Development class. It's a five week course offered the second half of winter quarter. Everyone should have the basic introduction to the scriptures and ministry to the poor even if it is not the area God has called you into making your primary ministry. There are also resources such as tapes from CCDA conference, videos and books at the study center. Start with John Perkins and go from there.

**(Matthew 25:31-36)** "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. (32) All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. (33) He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. (34) "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. (35) For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, (36) I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

### Memory Verses

Matt. 24:14\* Jesus will return to establish his kingdom only after the Great Commission is fulfilled.

Prov. 14:31\* We honor or reproach God by how we treat the poor.

Ps. 140:12\* God is committed to the cause of the afflicted and justice for the poor.

### Assignment

Study 2 Cor. 8,9 and record principles of financial giving. Give at least one practical application of each principle.

# Xenos Christian Fellowship

## Christian Principals Unit 4

### The Challenge of Wealth

#### Instructors

#### Overview

- [Discussion Questions for \*Affluenza\*](#)
- [Biblical Response](#)
- [Theological Solution to Materialism](#)
- [Concluding Challenge](#)

#### Discussion Questions for *Affluenza*

##### 1. Shopping Fever

What is the lure of shopping and material possessions?

What kinds of pressures do you feel to "keep up with the Jones's"?

##### 2. Chronic Stress

How has the work-spend treadmill affected your life? Consider how it has affected your family and your health, but also question the affects that it has had on your spiritual life. Your ability to serve God in ministry, your participation in the body of Christ, and your relationship with God (prayer and bible study.)

##### 3. Hypercommercialism

How does advertising influence your values and buying habits?

##### 4. Material Girls and Boys

How does it make you feel that corporations are targeting so much advertising at kids?

What are some of the negative affects that we as parents have on our children in this area?

What does our behavior and our lifestyle communicate to them?

##### 5. A Rash of Bankruptcies

How has debt hindered your ability to serve God and to be a good steward?

How have credit cards made it possible for us to spend beyond our means?

##### 6. Fractured Families

How do materialism and other money issues create conflict in your family?

What impact has materialism had on the quantity & quality of the time that your family spends together?

## 7. Social Scars

How has affluenza contributed to the gap between rich and poor?

How has affluenza affected your values in regard to the poor and needy?

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## Biblical Response

### The Theological Problem of Materialism

- **Materialism easily leads to idolatry**

For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters, To hew for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns That can hold no water. Jeremiah 2:13

- **Idolatry involves two moves:**

1. Rejecting God and 2. Trusting another.

Give me neither poverty nor riches; Feed me with the food that is my portion, *that I not be full* and deny you and say, "Who is the Lord?" Or that I not be in want and steal, and profane the name of my God. Proverbs 30:8b-9

Here the author recognizes a danger in both poverty and wealth. What is the danger?

*Idolatry - that I will stop looking to God as my adequate provider and look to my wealth or my own devices.*

for I've learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity. In any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. Philippians 4:11-13

Here the author has learned the secret of contentment in both poverty and wealth. What is the secret?

*Faith - that I continually look to God as my adequate provider.*

- **Modern idolatry rejects trusting God in favor of trusting wealth.**

We tend to draw meaning, security and comfort from counterfeit sources, usually money, rather than from God.

This is why it is characterized as idolatry in the Bible ("You cannot serve God and money" Lk.16:13 & "coveting is idolatry" Col.3:5).

- Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. 1Tim.6:17

Note: In Hosea 2:5 & 8, that part of the adultery of Israel was attributing to other nations, the blessings that God had given them and then using God's blessings to pursue idolatry.

We must come to grips with the fact that pursuing wealth is antithetic to pursuing God. It is a kind of idol worship that God hates.

- For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and have pierced themselves with many a pang. 1Tim.6:10
- **Materialistic idolatry takes several forms**
  - **Competitive acquisition** (James 2:1-9 favoritism; 4:1-4 conflict arising from coveting)

Now what you want to get clear is that pride is essentially competitive – is competitive by its very nature. While the other vices are competitive only, so to speak, by accident. Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more than the next man. We say that people are proud of being rich or clever, or good looking, but they are not. They are proud of being richer or cleverer or better looking than others. If everyone else became equally rich or clever or good looking there would be nothing to be proud about. It is the comparison that makes you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest. C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, pp. 109-110

- **Security acquisition** (Isa.46:4-9; Ps.147:10-11)

Amassing wealth (Luke 12:15-21; Matt.6:19-21)

Amassing possessions that "protect us" (Ps.33:16-17; Isaiah 22:8b-14)

- **Comfort acquisition**

Stimulation (Isaiah 5:11-12)

Relaxation (Amos 6:6-7)

Insulation (Isaiah 5:8)

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## The Theological Solution to Materialism

- **Trust God with your life**

*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.* For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet *your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?* And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his life's span? And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But *if God so clothes the grass of the field*, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, *will He not much more clothe you?* You of little faith! Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for *your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.* But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and *all these things shall be added to you.* Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. Matt 6: 24-34

This passage is packed with important theology concerning our relationship with the material world but notice the important theme running through the passage - we should entrust our lives to God because he is aware of our needs and he is good.

It's when we doubt

- **Adopt God's agenda for our lives**

*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth*, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But *lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven*, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

*But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness*; and all these things shall be added to you. Matt 6: 19-23, 33

God's redemptive agenda applied to our possessions.

- **Become thankful people**

In America we have a perception problem. We never seems to be satisfied and we interchange needs and desires so frequently that we confuse them.

- What is a need?
- What is a desire?

*Some humorous examples:*

*I'm starving (translation: I haven't eaten in three hours. It's 11 pm. I had a full meal earlier, but I need a pint of Ben and Jerry's right now.)*

*I'm broke (translation: I am temporarily without cash to use for whatever I wish.)*

*I'm poor (translation: I only own one car. I shop at Shottensteins. I have to buy Old Milwaukee.)*

**We really need to recognize that we are a lot better off than we think we are.**

**Read Sider- Chapter 1- Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger**

Let's cultivate a regular practice of considering what we have to be thankful for.

- **Simple life-style**

Try these handy tips for beating Affluenza! (copied from [www.pbs.org/affluenza](http://www.pbs.org/affluenza) )

Before you buy, ask yourself:

1. Do I need it? Do I want to dust (dry-clean or otherwise maintain) it? Could I borrow it from a friend, neighbor or family member? Is there anything I already own that I could

substitute for it? Are the resources that went into it renewable, or non-renewable? How many hours will I have to work to pay for it? (Note: Before you do this, you may find it useful to figure your real hourly wage. Take your annual net income and subtract your work-related costs like clothing, transportation, child care, parking and lunches out.

2. Avoid the mall. Go hiking or play ball with the kids instead.
3. Figure out what public transportation can save you (time, money for gas and parking, peace of mind).
4. Become an advertising critic. Don't be sucked in by efforts to make you feel inadequate so you'll buy more stuff you don't need.
5. Volunteer for a school or community group.
6. Splurge consciously. A few luxuries can be delightful, and they don't have to be expensive.
7. Stay in -- have a potluck, play a game, bake bread, write a letter, cuddle a loved one.
8. Make a budget -- know how much you are earning and spending. Each dollar represents precious time in your life that you worked. Are you spending money in ways that fulfill you?
9. Pretend the Joneses are the thriftiest, least wasteful people on the block. Then try to keep up with them.
10. For even more ideas, watch **Affluenza**.

**Then add,** If I were to decrease my spending, how could God use those resources to further his purposes?

**Concluding questions:**

- Am I making a distinction between needs and wants?
  - Do I feel secure in God's promise to provide that I regularly and generously give to God's work?
  - Do I realize that greed can destroy my spiritual vitality?
- **Use God's resources wisely**
    0. Budgeting- we need to have an idea of what our set monthly expenses are and what is a reasonable amount to spend in those categories (e.g. food, entertainment, etc.) Anticipated Expenses that people might not plan for- auto repair, Christmas spending, home repair, vacation, etc. This is where many people get into trouble. When these expenses arise, the credit card comes out and a new monthly payment results. They get further and further in debt.
    1. Savings-
      - Emergency Fund- GIFT recommends 2 months (Blue, 4-5 months)
      - Down payment for house- rent at a level that enables you to save for down payment.

- Auto purchase- save for down payment or full purchase price.
  - Other major purchases- computer, furniture, remodeling. Why not wait until we save the money rather than finance the expense?
2. Debt- The Bible doesn't prohibit the use of debt, but warns us of its dangers.

Proverbs 22:7- The borrower becomes the lender's slave.

It presumes that future income will fund today's life-style.

- It's very deceptive- easy to get into, but difficult to get out of.
- There are consequences including the stress, family difficulties, may limit our ability to give or minister (e.g. missions field).

Think carefully about your decisions to borrow money and evaluate your options in light of the Bible.

What should I do if I'm really in debt and having a hard time meeting my monthly payments?

- Cut up your credit cards.
- GIFT or Consumer Credit Counseling.

3. Retirement- How do I decide what to plan for?
- Most secular retirement projection models recommend that one replace his/her earned income in peak years from age 60-65.
  - Alternative: What is a simple life-style and how much will that cost? I can then deduct expenses that I won't have when I retire (children's education, house payment, funding retirement account, etc.).

- **Educate children on finances**

**Remember:**

- They will do what you do.
- Your identity may be wrapped up in what *they* have. We realize that they represent us in the neighborhood and school. Do I find myself thinking, "I want everyone to know that I provide the best for my kids." This is a very insidious, but dangerous area. It's dangerous because our kids soon come to expect the best of everything and in our desire to provide them with everything, we deprive them, ultimately from the freedom to live without the best of material objects. Will this child, who has had everything he desired, have the freedom to live a life of total commitment to the Lord if material deprivation is required? Could he/she become a missionary, or am I taking that freedom from him by providing every material possession.

**Teach them:**

- To be grateful people.
- Be a good example of thankfulness. In our conversation and our prayers.
- Withhold purchases sometimes. If they get everything they want they will have no category for thankfulness. One way to thankfulness is deprivation.
- To give. If they receive an allowance or earn money, require giving.

- To save for large purchases from early-on. They will learn to delay gratification that way.
  - That we will forsake material things (bigger house, new car, big vacation, Esc) to obtain spiritual things (more time together, giving to God's work, developing good relationships, serving people, etc.)
- **Give toward God's work regularly and sacrificially**

This was covered in depth last week.

**1 Timothy 6:17-19\*\*** Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. 18 Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, 19 storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.

- Vs 17- perspective- not on riches, but on God and his provision
- Vs 18- What to do.
- Vs 19- the result

## Concluding Challenge

Finance is a vital area for us as we consider our spiritual lives.

The key understanding:

**It's not that we are saying no to material things, but we are saying YES to God.**

When we adopt this perspective, the material gradually comes into proper perspective. We also find that we will be criticized by the world, but who will we choose to please? God or the world?

Os Guinness in *The Call*- "A life lived listening to the decisive call of God is a life lived before one audience that trumps all others--the Audience of One." Pg 73.

Who are we living our lives to please?

"When asked why he was not stung by a vicious attack from a fellow Member of Parliament, Winston Churchill replied, "If I respected him, I would care about his opinion, But I don't so I don't." pg 74.

General Charles Gordon (a prominent British general) said, "The more one sees of life, the more one feels, in order to keep from shipwreck, the necessity of steering by the Polar Star, i.e. in a word leave to God alone, and never pay attention to the favors or smiles of man; if He smiles on you, neither the smile or frown of men can affect you." Pg 76

I'd like to come to this perspective: "I live before the Audience of One. Before others I have nothing to prove, nothing to gain, nothing to lose." Pg 77.

## Memory Verses

**1 Tim. 6:9\*** -- living life with the desire and pursuit to get rich is wrong.

**1 Tim. 6:17-19\*\*** -- it is not wrong to be rich; the issue is how we use our wealth.

**Luke 16:9-11\*\*** -- from last week -- Using our money to advance God's purposes will result in gratitude from those our money helped to save. And, God opens doors for more significant ministry (evangelism, discipleship, etc.) when we first properly steward a lesser resource -- money.

## Assignment

From last week: Continue working on Ministry and gift assessments

# Xenos Christian Fellowship

## Christian Principles Week #7, Unit #4

### DISCOVERING THE WILL OF GOD

#### Instructors

## Week 7 Overview

- [Foundational Considerations](#)
  - [Practical Guidelines](#)
  - [Foundational Principles for Discovering God's Guidance](#)
  - [Road Signs](#)
  - [Conclusion](#)
- 

### Learning Goals

- Know the foundational principles involved in determining God's will.
- Know the "road-signs" and what bearing they have in determining God's will.

### Introduction

As Christians, we will regularly confront difficult decisions. They are difficult because their relationship to God's moral will is not obvious. Some of these decisions will have a major impact in our lives making them even more important.

E.G. -- although it is within his moral framework to marry a Christian, he doesn't specify which one.

E.G. -- he does say we must work in order to provide for our household and share in his work -- he doesn't tell us which job to take.

"Should I go back to school or not?" "Should I buy a new or used car?" "What kind of house should I live in -- where?" are examples where we don't find direct guidance.

Yet, does that mean that God doesn't guide us in these areas? That he has no opinion on the matter? That the decisions we make don't matter? That they can't impact our walk with him in any way?

Tonight we'll be talking about guidelines to help us make these types of difficult decisions.

God does not lead mechanically.

- Because God is personal and we are personal, he leads us personally, not mechanically. Therefore we should avoid any such attempt to find a formula, and be open to let God lead us in the way he chooses.
- Because God guided me in a certain way does not mean that he will always guide me that way, nor that he will guide other Christians in that same way.
- Apply this to yourself and in working w/ others.
- Read *The Letters of Francis Schaeffer*, p. 164.

Thus we face a balance--by living in a personal relationship to God, and by not living as if God were not there. But this does not mean that I must find God's leading in a mechanical and legalistic way, and perfectly in every case, or God will cast me off.

I personally could not live for twenty-four hours without looking to the leading of the Lord, and this is how I live my life, not in theory, but in practice. But I also know the freedom I have of knowing there is no mechanical formula given in the Scripture, but that it must be a day-by-day closeness to God...And I have the freedom of knowing that if I honestly miss this way somewhere, God will still deal with me gently." (Francis Schaeffer. *The Letters of Francis Schaeffer*. (Crossway Books. Westchester, IL. 1985) p. 164.)

- Examples of different ways God led people (Gideon, the prophets, direct vision of Cornelius, Ethiopian eunuch).

### Two Personal Questions:

- Are you teachable/leadable? Will you follow God's will once you know it?
- Do you believe that God desires to lead you? God will lead if you will follow. See John 10 and Psalm 23- Depiction of God as a shepherd offering guidance of the sheep.

### Three Foundational Considerations

#### 1. God's personal will has 2 dimensions:

- Moral/ Sanctification (**Rom. 12:2\***; 8:29; 1 Thess. 4:3)

**(Rom. 12:2\*)** And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

God's desire for each of us is our sanctification. He recognizes that each of us is unique and His plan for change will vary individually, but he clearly desires to see us progress spiritually.

**(Eph. 2:10)** For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

It's our new identity in Christ that gives us the basis for following his will.

**(Rom. 8:29)** For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren;

**(1 Thess. 4:3)** For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality;

- Ministry Purpose (Col. 1:9,10; Rom. 12:2a,3-8)

**(Rom. 12:2a,3-8)** And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is . . . (3) For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. (4) For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, (5) so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. (6) And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly: if prophecy. . . (7) if service. . . , or he who teaches. . . (8) or he who exhorts . . . , he who gives . . . , he who leads. . . , he who shows mercy. . .

God has a particular role for us to play in the body of Christ based on the way he gifts each of us. With this role comes the opportunity to exercise our gifts in meaningful and fulfilling ministry. Discussion making for the Christian must bring these factors to bear on decisions.

**Illustration: Consider each of these as river banks which constrain the flow of the stream. They offer the broad structure and God provides specific guidance.**

## 2. Spiritual maturity brings increasing knowledge of God's will

**(Col. 1:9,10)** For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

Paul prays that the Colossians would be filled with the knowledge of God so they can make the right decisions as they face adversity. As Christians mature they grow in a working knowledge of God's will.

**(Heb. 5:14)**- But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

The author of Hebrews expected the audience to grow in their knowledge of God's word so they would be able to practically apply it to everyday situations.

**(Col. 4:12)** Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.

This prayer recognizes a connection between maturity ("...you may stand perfect") and increasing knowledge of God's will ("...all the will of God").

## 3. Sometimes God reveals his will specifically.

Acts 8:26-40- Philip's call to "go to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza." Then later to "go up and join this chariot."

Acts 10- God reveals his will to Cornelius and Peter

Acts 16:9ff- Paul's vision of the man from Macedonia.

**Qualification:** This revelation is at God's discretion and not ours. Note that these individuals were aggressively serving God and the more dramatic revelation came.

"I believe God has an individual will for my life and for every life, but its realization depends on a true surrender of *my* will and *your* will to Him for the fulfillment of His plan as and where He sees best. He may, however, leave considerable freedom of choice within His moral will... (J. Oswald Sanders. *Every Life is a Plan of God*. (Discovery House Pub. Grand Rapids. 1992) p. 39.)

## Practical Guidelines for Discovering God's Will

Three sections: Principles of Guidance, "Road Signs" or Tools that sometimes apply, and Important Qualifications.

### 1. Ways to improve your discernment of God's will

a. *Scripture--Soak your mind in it.*

- Learn what the Bible emphasizes

**(Isaiah 55:8,9)** "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Neither are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.

We need to be humbly aware that our thinking is much different than God's.

**(1 Cor. 2:9-16)** but just as it is written, "THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND WHICH HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM." (10) For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. (11) For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. (12) Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, (13) which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. (14) But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. (15) But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man. (16) For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE SHOULD INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.

God gives us the Holy Spirit so we may "have the mind of Christ." Having his mind allows to understand and apply his word (12b-".. things freely given to us by God").

**(Rom. 12:2a)** And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is . . .

- Memorize Scripture

"The Spirit cannot recall what the mind has not installed."

(Col. 3:16)- Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

- **Apply Scripture**

(James 1:22) - But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

Qualification: *God leads through Scripture. He will never lead us to go outside scripture (Jeremiah 14:14,23:32 ,23:35,36)*

- Further, while we should seek his leading and follow it as we understand it, we should avoid being as dogmatic about God's personal leadership as we are about the clear teaching of scripture.
- We can never be as certain about God's personal leading in our lives as we can be about scripture. We may be mistaken about God's subjective leading, but the objective Word is essentially clear in its guidance.
- Saul ignored God's law and acted anyway. 1 Sam. 13:12ff;1 Chron. 10:14.
- Read *The Letters of Francis Schaeffer*, p. 163.  
Another thing to lean against is [the idea]...that we can know God's leading with the same finality that we have concerning the teaching of Scripture, for example, about the deity of Christ. When we are led, we must acknowledge that since we are both finite and sinful we can be mistaken. Thus, the Lord can lead us so clearly [in a particular moment], and yet we can never say at that moment that we personally know this to be truth on the same level as Scripture. When the Lord led my wife and myself to begin L'Abri, the leading was so clear that not to have moved forward would have been disobedience. And yet if you had asked me at that time if I was as sure of this as I was that which Scripture taught, I could not have said yes. But as the years have passed there is no doubt that we did understand the leading of the Lord [in beginning L'Abri]. (Francis Schaeffer. *The Letters of Francis Schaeffer*. (Crossway Books. Westchester, IL. 1985) p. 163.)

b. *Willing--Be willing to do God's will **before** you know it.*

- **John 7:17\***; James 1:5ff;

(John 7:17\*) "If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself.

(James 1:5ff, 6-8) But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. (6) But let him ask in faith without any doubting. . . (7) For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, (8) being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

- Unwillingness to do this betrays an unbelief in God's goodness for you, which must be resolved first. Many times, you must struggle before God in prayer to admit that you don't have this attitude and then adopt it

Qualification: *God's leading may **not** be obvious **before** we decide.*

- Many times we can perceive his guidance before the situation. At other times, we may be able to look back in retrospect and see his guidance.

- During those times when we must make a decision even though God's leading is not clear, we can be confident that because we have presented ourselves to him to be used as his instruments (Rom 6:13), he *is* guiding and leading our lives.
- This is an important perspective to maintain, because it guards against destructive introspection and/or indecisiveness when God's guidance is not clearly perceived in advance of a decision. Since we have presented ourselves to God, and since we know that he is guiding us, we can step out in faith when the situation calls for a decision.
- Joseph made many decisions without anything but moral guidance and only understood retrospectively what God intended (Gen. 39-50, especially 50:20).

c. *Acting- Act on God's moral will that you know.*

- **Mt. 13:12\***; Heb. 3:7-19; Jesus in Gethsemane (" . . . not my will, but your will be done . . . ")

(**Mt. 13:12\***) "For whoever has, to him shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.

- Are you in revolt in an area already revealed? God will often withhold further guidance until you end this controversy. EXAMPLE: Fornicator wanting guidance on where to go to school.
- Positive point: Are you committed to sanctification and serving God in ministry as your highest priorities? Without these priorities, you probably won't get a whole lot of guidance, because God wants to guide you primarily in these 2 paths (see above)! If you are committed to these two priorities, you can rest assured that God will guide you and not leave you in the dark.
- "There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, in the end, 'Thy will be done.' ...No soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will ever miss it. Those who seek find. To those who knock it is opened." (C.S. Lewis. *The Great Divorce*. (MacMillan Pub. Co. New York. 1946) p.72)

d. *Praying--Pray regularly for God's guidance?*

- "Faced with a pile of problems, we may say with our lips that only prayer can solve them, yet we talk more than pray, worry more than pray, and scheme more than pray. "In sum, we put everything before prayer; other things are placed in prominent positions while prayer is relegated to last place; it is the only thing which is not so important." --Watchman Nee
- Beware of creeping autonomous DEISM (Prov 3:5,6)!  
(**Prov. 3:5,6**) Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And do not lean on your own understanding. 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.
- Read Hybels, *Too Busy Not To Pray*, pp. 117-121.

**Conclusion:** If these are habits in your Christian life, you won't stray far. For most of us, the absence of one or more of these principles is the reason why we are experiencing confusion.

## 2. "Road Signs" - Things that *sometimes* reveal God's will.

Qualification: *Avoid the extremes of Christian Deism vs. "super-spirituality."*

- Some tend toward an excessively subjective view--and unhealthy emphasis on feelings and experience.
- Others tend toward a view that makes virtually no room for God's personal guidance. This promotes a more impersonal and less prayerful relationship with God.
- Know your tendency, lean the other way, and teach others to do the same.
- Read *The Letters of Francis Schaeffer*, p. 163 for a balanced view on this. "There are two things to be leaned against simultaneously: the first is living as though God did not exist and as though He could not or would not lead us; the second is living as though God's leading were almost magic without any use of the mind." (Francis Schaeffer. *The Letters of Francis Schaeffer*. (Crossway Books. Westchester, IL. 1985) p. 163.)
- Example of Christian Deism: Joshua 7:2-13. A negative example of super spirituality: Colossians 2:16-23.

The key is knowing how to use them--what they can and can't do for you.

a. *Common Sense*: The ability to consider different courses of action and the likely implications of each.

- "Spiritual expedience" is applying common sense within a framework of biblical *values* and *priorities*. "What course of action will enable me to most effectively achieve biblical values and priorities?"
- "Look before you leap." Don't be a fool--leaping before you look.
- Read Titus 1:8. This kind of common sense is a qualification for eldership (*phroneo* - sensible).

(**Titus 1:8**) but hospitable, loving what is good, **sensible**, just, devout, self-controlled

- **QUALIFICATION**: Avoid using this to rationalize fearfulness. Do you have a category for scary/costly steps of faith? We are promised adversity in our service of Christ and therefore should expect it.
- Use a "Pro's and Con's" list--**BUT** be sure to prioritize the "pro's" and "con's" in the light of scripture.

b. *Spiritual counsel*

- Wise counsel can give you additional light on Scripture and common sense/ spiritual expedience. "Have you considered this implication?"
  - Prov. 11:14; 24:6 "In the abundance of counselors is victory."
  - Prov. 12:15; 13:10,18 "The wise man listens to advice."
  - Prov. 15:22 "Without consultation, plans are frustrated, but with many counselors they succeed."
  - Prov. 19:20 "Listen to advice."

- Prov. 20:5 "A plan in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding draws it out."
- Prov. 20:18 "Plans are established by counsel"
- Prov. 27:17 "Iron sharpens iron"
- QUALIFY: Seek *mature* counsel (grounded in the Word and/or previous experience) from people who know you well.
  - Give them *full* information--not partial.
  - Seek counsel from several mature Christians.
  - Avoid people who *you* know will only see it your way ("ear ticklers").
- REMEMBER: The advisor is not are responsible for the decision.
  - Advisors beware-- some people like others to make their decisions for them. ("What would you do?")

#### c. *Personal Desires*

- Avoid the extremes of asceticism ("Whatever I want, the opposite is God's will") or selfishness ("If I want it this badly, it must be God's will"). Which do you tend towards? Lean the other way!
- EXAMPLE: Enjoying an area of *ministry* often indicates gifting or burden (E.G. "I really like working with kids.")

#### d. *Gifts/ ministry burdens*

- As we grow in our gifting/ministry we gain clarity about God's will (e.g. type of personal ministry you should take on).
- This raises the obvious question: "How do I discover my gift(s)?" [Week 10](#)

#### e. *Intuition*

- This includes leadings, prompting, impressions spontaneously emerging in our mind, especially during prayer.
- If they are from God, they will be consistent with the Word, with who you are (Hybels questions, pp. 134-137) and with an attitude of servanthood.
- When they line up this way, assume they are from God and follow them. You'll often be amazed at how fruitful they are!
- The more you are in the Word, understand your ministry role, and are committed to servanthood, the more this area will come into play.
- ALSO: The more regularly you spend time alone with God, the more aware of these through the day you will tend to be.

#### f. *Inner peace*

- This is a certain kind of intuition, deep seated calmness from God about a direction you've chosen to take.
- When this is present it confirms and strengthens our resolve to follow God's will.

- **QUALIFICATIONS:** We are not talking about a constantly tranquil state. Our emotional fallenness, the fact that we're in a battle, and taking scary steps of faith will produce inner turmoil sometimes.
- When peace is absent, re-evaluate your decision (i.e. especially in moral areas or matters of conscience).

#### g. *Follow delegated authorities*

- This includes parents, husband, state, employer, church leaders.
- **EXAMPLE:** You are musically inclined and believe you have been led by God to be involved in that type of ministry in your home group. You ask your home group leaders if you can provide some music for the group. They think about it, and say "No, thanks."
  - Now you wonder what to do? Should you continue to press them because you really feel led by God? Should you rally the troops to see if there is a consensus? NO--you should submit. You also should find an outlet for your burden and skills.
- **QUALIFICATIONS:** We do outgrow authority or change them at times. We may have to disobey if against the written word of God (not against your feelings, or "what you believe in your heart").
- Question yourself: "Why am I leaving this delegated authority?" Are you aware of any character issues that God is teaching you through this person? Have you learned the lesson? Can you cite changes in your character? If you can't specifically note the progress God has made in your life through the situation, then you're probably on the run.

#### h. *Circumstances*

- Circumstances play a relatively minor role in major complex decisions. They explain the options presently available. They play a major role in confirming after a decision is made.
- Fleecing (see Gideon). Note that God had already told Gideon his will. This was for confirmation and encouragement. This is not the norm, so don't expect God to do it for you.
  - It is generally more helpful when negative, because it narrows the range of options.
  - Open/closed doors not necessarily mean "NO" or "YES. " With Paul, they were not all yes/no (2 Cor 2:12,13; 1 Cor 16:8,9).

#### i. *Results*

- Learn from them! *Why* did the decision lead to good/bad results?
- Helpful in determining gifted areas.
- How often do you thank God when you get guidance (10 lepers - Lk 17)?
- **QUALIFY:** Results don't in themselves confirm or deny the wisdom of the decision (pragmatics are not the only considerations).

- What *kind* of results? Biblical or carnal?
- Biblically correct decisions may not yield immediate or external results.
- Results which followed past decisions do not guarantee the same results from similar decisions now (e.g., church growth methods).

## Conclusion

Teach others the importance of personally discerning God's will for their lives--DON'T TEACH THEM TO FOLLOW YOU!

This principle is important to observe in our work with younger Christians if they are to become "independently dependent on the Lord." When discussing important life decisions, it is important to tell them that God can guide them if they ask for his guidance and if they have the willingness to do his will even before they know what it is. In this way, we teach them to do what they do out of conviction that it is God's will, not merely because we told them to do it.

Avoid the extremes of "paralysis by analysis" (e.g. - people making decisions about home group or ministry involvement) vs. "Husky Dog" (Ps. 32:8,9 -- "I will instruct you and guide you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. Do not be as the horse or the mule with no understanding, whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check.")

Remember to apply God's grace.

While disregarding God's leadership may result in loss, we should never feel that our lives are destroyed. God is a God of grace, and this means that when we turn back to him, he will continue to lead us from there and to bless us and use us. (*Letters of Francis Schaeffer*, pp. 163-164).

## Memory

Rom. 12:2\* God's will for our life revolves around our sanctification and his role for our lives in his purpose here on earth.

Jn. 7:17\* Learning God's will is predicated upon our first being willing to do his will, even before knowing what it is.

Matt. 13:12\* As we are responsive to God's will in our lives, he will continue to unfold his will in the other areas. The reverse is also true.

## Assignment

Complete evangelism passages.

# Xenos Christian Fellowship

## Christian Principles Unit 4

### Evangelism, Part 1

#### Instructors

#### Overview

- [Theology of missions & evangelism](#)
- [Harvest vs. Search Theology](#)
- [Key ideological shifts](#)

#### Theology of missions & evangelism

##### Evangelism and missions as the purpose of the church (reminder of [Unit 1, Week 1](#))

**1 Tim. 2: 3** This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.;

**2 Pet. 3: 9** The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

**Matt. 28:18-20** And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. (19) "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, (20) teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

**Acts 1:8** but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

What is the purpose of the church? Anyone who is serious about Christianity must form clear conclusions on this question. The purpose of the church is not to perpetuate itself.

The church is commissioned as God's instrument to reach lost people. It is lost people and not found people, that are the central focus of God's concern (Mark 2:17; Luke 15). Of course, God has great concern for all Christians, but his concern extends to people all across the world who live without him. When a church adopts a mission that excludes evangelism as its central purpose, the clock is ticking toward the breakdown and destruction of that church.

Therefore, the church must not make its primary focus: good fellowship, deep knowledge, political agenda, family protection, fundamentalist church protection, corporate worship, etc.

This is why the Xenos mission statement is a reiteration of God's priority of evangelism. We are committed to evangelism and missions as the axis around which everything we do revolves. Despite this clear statement of

mission, we could easily lose a mission focus and drift away from God's central purpose for the church.

### **Three participants in evangelism**

#### **God's part:**

##### **~ Christ provides redemption**

**1 John 2:2** He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

##### **~ The Holy Spirit convicts**

**John 16: 8-10** "And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment; (9) concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; (10) and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you no longer behold Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

**John 12: 32** "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."

##### **~ God creates opportunities**

**Col. 4: 2 [3-6\*\*]** Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; 3 praying at the same time for us as well, that God may open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; 4 in order that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak. 5 Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. 6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person.

In the same way, God will at times arrange "divine appointments" for lost people with Christians who are willing to discuss their relationship with Him (see also Phil 15,16). But this doesn't mean that the *process* of leading them to Christ will be rapid or easy.

##### **~ God empowers those who share their faith.**

**Mk. 13: 11** "And when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not be anxious beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit.

**1 Cor. 2: 2-4** For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. 3 And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. 4 And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

#### **Our Part in evangelism:**

**To present the message of salvation** in a way that the hearer can understand (not necessarily attractive, but clear to all 2 Cor. 2:14-16 "...life to some and death to others.")

Our part matters! People can freely choose a relationship with Jesus Christ. Therefore they must hear the message to believe. The Body of Christ must do its part to present the message.

**Rom. 10:14** How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

**2 Cor. 5: 18-20\*** Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

We have the privilege of being ambassadors, and the great benefits of witnessing and being in a church committed to outreach.

### **Hearer's Part:**

#### **The hearer must choose whether or not to believe.**

**Mt. 23: 37** "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.

**Luke 8:5-15** Parable of Soils

**John 7:17** "If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself."

God answers the questions of the person who is investigating honestly. In other words, they must have a bias of being willing to respond to the truth of God. God responds to that willingness by providing sufficient evidence. Those who under appreciate the *hearer's* part tend to take on more responsibility than they should. Symptoms of this problem would include (1) tying up all your time with a few reluctant people or (2) resorting to manipulation. See 2 Cor. 4:2-4.

### **Harvest vs. Search Theology**

Christians often disagree on whether or not one should account for results of the church's evangelistic efforts. Some consider this to be vital to a faithful evangelistic witness and would consider their church as failing if there were prolonged periods of time without evangelistic fruit. Others consider a focus on counting attendance, conversions, church growth, etc. to be ungodly. We introduce these terms to initiate you into this debate.

#### **~ Search Theology**

Searches for the receptive people through the faithful proclamation of the Gospel, leaving results between God and the hearer.

#### **Search theology is flawed because:**

- ~ It neglects analysis of results.
- The Great Commission provides a command which includes results.

- Luke 14:15-24- The parable of the Great Banquet- The master was concerned about filling the table.

- The example in Acts: Luke includes numbers in his report of the early church.

~ It lacks a dynamic approach to evangelism and therefore its adherents does not persuade (Acts 17:2-4; 18:4; 2 Cor. 5:11, 20), persist (Acts 17:17), or adjust (1 Cor. 9:19-23).

~ Search theology has been used to justify failure in evangelism.

### ~ **Harvest theology**

Finding and winning receptive people (harvesting) through faithful proclamation of an understandable Gospel, keeping an eye on results to determine effectiveness and future methods.

#### **Harvest theology is Biblical because:**

It does reflect on results.

It is dynamic.

#### **Harvest theologians beware:**

Results are not always obvious (2 Tim. 4:2 "...in season and out of season.").

God's part may be minimized.

#### **The hearer's part may be minimized.**

1 Cor. 3:5-7 What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. (6) I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. (7) So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.

Mk. 4 -- parable of the soils

#### **What happens if the church loses an evangelism focus?**

**1. Vitality and excitement wane** because new converts are the lifeblood of the church. They "validate" the gospel and increase our own confidence in it and God's power.

**2. No new people means no home group plants** which means no new leaders and workers needed which means less motivation for learning and sanctification among members.

**3. We get more self-focused** because there are no new converts to care for.

**4. Relational conflict increases** because instead of banding together to help witness and care for the new converts, we start looking at how others aren't meeting our needs (Movie: *Remember the Titans* -- black and white students in a Virginia highschool forced integrate overcome racial differences in their drive to win a state championship).

**5. The church gets involved in "brass-polishing" or "gingerbread"—**doing less important things that further detract from our real mission.

**6. A "ghetto" mentality develops** that justifies lack of contact with non-Christians—which will lead to increased vulnerability to tribalism, materialism, and hidden sin.

**7. An "ivory tower" Bible-club mentality develops** and people debate nonessential issues and can't relate to non-Christians.

**8. The church becomes callused to the plight of the lost (apathy).** Not just that they are going to hell in the next life, but that they are miserable in this life.

**Eph. 2: 12** remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

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## Key ideological shifts in today's culture

How is it that vital evangelistic movements die? Sometimes it's because they departed from the gospel, but more often it's because they lose touch with the culture.

We must not only know what the good news is, but must also know our culture's current ideological objections to the gospel and how to respond. We need to discern the "spirit of the age," recognizing that it changes in important ways. For example, not too many years ago, skeptics rejected Christianity because it was thought to conflict with science. Today, just as many people reject Christianity, not because it has been carefully examined and found inconsistent with science, but merely because it claims to be universally true! This shows a significant shift in how our culture thinks.

*To get things rolling, the class could note other reasons that people reject Christianity.*

We would never think of sending missionaries abroad without knowledge of the language and culture of the target field. Today we must do the same thing at home. We are cross-cultural missionaries right here! Note that 2 Corinthians 5:20 is an important part of our Christian identity. Just as Paul was an ambassador, so too are we—to our own culture.

2 Cor. 5:20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

We must try to understand the key ideological shifts of our culture. How has thinking changed in the western world in the past generation.

The way it was	The way it is
<p><b>1. Spiritual background</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Nominal Christian experience- most people had some exposure to the Christian world view.</li></ul>	<p><b>1. Spiritual background</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Little significant exposure to the church</li><li>Many people mix and blend different faiths to arrive at what they believe</li></ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information such as "The Four Spiritual Laws" provided compelling reason to receive Christ. While many never heard the gospel, people did believe the basic concepts of a just and loving God, "true moral guilt," and forgiveness. A clear presentation of the Gospel put these concepts together in a way that often made sense to this critic.</li> </ul>	<p>(E.G. New Age). It is common to hold that all faiths are equally true. Note: unfortunately, even many with an evangelical church background have bought into this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Today's perspective is that we are not able to call things morally right and wrong (it is not "politically correct"). People today will say that assigning true moral guilt to someone or some situation is "intolerant;" rather, we should be open to everything. Therefore the Gospel message doesn't fit with this perspective.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. What the critics thought</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Critically minded skeptics appealed to reason and evidence (especially science)</li> <li>Christians would defend their faith (apologetics) using classical arguments (design of the universe, design of man, and the study of 'how we know what we know') or evidence (historical evidence for the resurrection, for the reliability of the Bible, etc.). The rational critic would often find these types of arguments persuasive.</li> </ul>	<p><b>2. What the critics think</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Critically minded skeptics find the claims and content of Christianity dogmatic and offensive. Christianity can't possibly be universally true because it excludes other religious voices and traditions.</li> <li>"Hmmm, that's great for you, but you can't impose your truth on me." Truth and reason bounce off many people today.</li> </ul>

The most significant aspect of the "spirit of the age" today has to do with truth. While Christianity may be accepted as true for Christians, it can't be true for those who believe something else. And to "impose" your religious views on others would be viewed as intolerant, close minded and arrogant. Show the video (Gary DeLashmutt, Dennis McCallum, Jim Leffel, and William Lane Craig).

### **Crossroads Video**

Consider these 2 questions as you watch the tape and we will discuss them.

What are the 2 views of "truth."

What are the 2 views of "tolerance?" (film clip of the Indian & missionary)

### **Start Tape**

Introductory remarks by Leffel

Ohio State campus interviews of students' views of truth

Craig defines truth as philosophers do "corresponds with reality"; biblical notion is same, by implication.

Den's overview of today's views of truth.

**1<sup>st</sup> pause** for discussion at 3<sup>rd</sup> "stop" marker (immediately after #4 in video sequence: Den's definition of postmodern "truth" to discuss truth . . .)

Contrast "truth" as expressed in the campus interviews with truth defined by Dr. Craig.

Two views of truth: biblical versus postmodern, with appropriate qualifications. You should clearly understand this issue and be able to explain it to an appropriate level to non-Christians. The contrasts between these two views of truth include the following:

**It is objective, not merely subjective** (Rom. 3:4). We have access to revealed truth, but we have not mastered it or been mastered by it completely. Our aim is to be biblical people. (1 Thess 2:15) We are not always objective, but our aim is to be objective, fair, and just. Our response to the truth should be personal and thus has subjective elements. The truth exists outside of us and is not effected by our force of will or our feelings.

**It is absolute, not relative** (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 4:12; Jn. 14:6; 1 Tim. 2:5,6; Rev. 7:9,10). We are not absolutely correct or certain about everything, but our aim is to greater accuracy and certainty. We do not have universal knowledge, nor do we know how to relate truth to every situation, but our aim is more knowledge and discernment for its application.

**It is antithetical, not synthetic** (Matt. 12:30; Ex. 20:1-6). We acknowledge supra-rational aspects of God, but we do not invoke "mystery" in order to sanction contradiction, intellectual laziness, or relativism.

**Truth is a bestowal of God's grace, not my propaganda.** Truth is given for our good, not to control and exploit us (Rom 1:16).

#### Restart Tape

Gary: Description of views of tolerance.

Video clip of Amazonian Indian's objections to Christian missionary trying to change them is equivocated with intolerance and arrogance.

Craig: Religious beliefs today are considered a "matter of taste" rather than fact -- much like we look at whether or not someone should like broccoli.

Dennis: The key in communication is to help them see they already DO believe in objective/absolute truth in many areas. Plus, those who denounce Christianity as wrong because we are absolutists just contradicted themselves -- they made an absolute statement by saying we're wrong!

Craig: Value of human life without objective truth -- total immorality because there is no agreed upon right or wrong way to treat one another.

Den: Hitler did what he felt was right in his heart -- so "what I feel is right" is not a very workable determinant for any belief system.

Gary: explanation of healthy personal relationships only possible if understand and agree what is right/wrong/ proper, etc. in a relationship. From a postmodern point of view, there is no such objective thing available and certainly we can't call on the other person to act a certain way.

Madonna video clip.

**2<sup>nd</sup> pause** immediately after Madonna's video

#### **Two definitions of "tolerance"**

**BIBLICAL: Personal respect and love for individuals despite deep disagreement with their beliefs.** The former (and biblical) definition of "tolerance" made a distinction between people and their religious beliefs. It meant that people should have the legal freedom to practice the religion of their

choice, and that you should personally respect and love them, even if you conclude that their beliefs are false. We should expressly affirm this kind of tolerance and deplore this kind of intolerance.

[1983 Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary- *tolerate*- to recognize and respect (others' beliefs, practices, etc.) without necessarily agreeing or sympathizing.]

[1988 Random House Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged- *tolerance*- a fair and objective attitude toward those whose opinions, practices, race, religion, and nationality differ from one's own]

### **CONTEMPORARY: Recognition of and respect for the opinions, practices, or behavior of others.**

- 1999, Webster's II New College Dictionary

Today's "tolerance" has removed the distinction between persons and their beliefs. It means that you must never call others' beliefs false or untrue, or you are an arrogant, intolerant bigot. But this definition confuses tolerance with truthfulness. Ohio State won the Rose Bowl in 1997. Imagine a Michigan fan responding to this claim by saying, "That is incredibly intolerant to say!" Similarly, to claim that all religions do not teach the same things is not an intolerant statement. It is an assertion that is either true or false.

What do you think about the film clip of the Indian and the missionary?

Have you encountered this kind of objection? What do you think about Dr. Craig's distinction between "matters of taste" and "matters of fact"?

### **Regarding the Madonna video**

Ask if they were able to critique the lyrics and see the postmodern, relativistic thinking. Ask if they were disgusted by the sexual overtones, the "occultic" innuendoes, etc.

So are we going to reject these people or are we moved by compassion to reach out to them?

**Restart the tape** -- end before Dennis answers about how to communicate to the postmodern thinker.

Gary: Great impact on those who don't know Christ when they see love in action and as they comment on it, we describe the source.

Craig: Is the church ready?

### **Impact of postmodernism on relationships**

How do these two definitions of tolerance on our relationships?

e.g. No common basis of truth for resolving conflict in relationships and moving forward.

Sharing how your relationship with God has given you a basis for resolving conflict in your relationships is a natural way to lead into a discussion about the gospel.

What do you think about Gary's point about the loss of relationships when we deny objective truth? How does the Madonna video underscore this concern?

Can you see how denying objective truth leads to serious moral problems? Where do you think this manifests itself most in our culture? (E.g. breakdown of the family, etc.)

Now we need to take a closer look at the issues -- next week.

### **Memory Verses**

**2 Cor. 5:18-20\*** - We are ambassadors for Christ.

**Col. 4:3-6\*\*** - Pray for open doors.

## Assignment

Talk to a non-Christian and record their answers to the following questions:

- Do all religions basically teach the same thing? Why do you think that?
- What does it mean to be a tolerant person?

Write a full paragraph response to each of these **common objections** to Christianity:

1. "Why should I regard the Bible as God's Word? What about all of the other scriptures?"
2. "How can your religion consign people to hell if they have never even heard about Christ?" **Hint:** There are really two distinct issues in this objection—God's judgment and whether he judges all people who didn't have access to the Bible.

**Don't forget the quiz next week!**

# Xenos Christian Fellowship

## Christian Principles Unit 4

### Evangelism, Part 2

#### Instructors

#### Overview

#### Important Communication Guidelines

#### Four Objections

1. Is Christianity the only valid religion?
  2. Why should I regard the Bible as God's Word?
  3. Do your part to build and maintain an outreach ethos in your home group.
  4. How can your religion consign people to hell because of an accident of birth?
- 

#### Introduction

Last week brief review — we focused on the shift in thinking from modern to postmodern worldview. Overview of where this week fits into the evangelism equipping picture. We address apologetics in this class. To improve your evangelistic effectiveness consider taking the class "Sharing Your Faith."

#### Important Communication Guidelines

##### 1. Find common ground.

Remember there are areas of common ground between Christianity and postmodern thought—even though we agree for very different reasons.

Why is connecting on **common ground** important?

**We can correct misconceptions about Christianity.** To meet loving, thinking, and culturally aware people is a great surprise to many—and often opens doors for further conversation.

**Key areas of common ground:** Consider, "What is the **biblical reason** for each point?"

**Human subjectivity:** Humans are not able to be totally objective largely because of the fall. We are subjectively involved in everything we evaluate. Romans 1:21, 28; Jer. 17:9

**Inadequacy of reason alone:** Reason alone is inadequate for the construction of a comprehensive worldview. 1 Corinthians 2:14; Eph. 1:17, 18; Is. 64:4

**The myth of "progress":** Modernism and its myth of progress toward should be critiqued. Biblically, utopia is not expected before Christ returns. In fact, the Bible predicts that society will worsen as we approach the advent of Christ to such an extent that human extinction would occur without his return. Matt. 24:10-12; 2 Timothy 3:1-7; Matt. 24:22

**Critique of racism and sexism:** Multiculturalism and racial/ethnic equality is a great concern of the postmodernist as it is with god. We should be very concerned about racism and sexism. Gen. 12:1-3 (all nations blessed), Gal. 3:28

**Concern for the environment:** We should be concerned for the care of the environment. Gen. 2:15 (God's intention for humanity was benevolent rulership of the creation), Rom 8:20,21 (This expresses God's intent to restore the natural realm)

What are the limitations of communicating **only** on common ground?

You can't stop here, or you only give the impression that Christianity agrees with our current cultural ideology (the mistake of all theological liberalism). You have to go on to explain what else Christianity says, including where we disagree with the current postmodern consensus (e.g., absolute truth, one way of salvation, ability to adequately understand the author's intended meaning, etc.).

## **2. Pick carefully what to disagree with.**

When talking about spiritual things with people influenced by postmodern thought, you will hear all kinds of things you disagree with (Examples: amorphous spirituality; relativism; positive statements about other religions, etc.). If you feel you must disagree with every false statement, you'll come off as excessively critical and probably not be heard. Instead, prioritize what you'll disagree with (e.g., "All forms of spirituality are equally valid.") and be prepared to let the rest go for now for the sake of continued open communication.

**How can I deal with a controversial issue that threatens to kill communication?**

**The key is to be honest with what you want to accomplish with them. That is, to help them know God.**

**EG- "My beliefs aren't the same as yours, but I want to help you understand how I came to these conclusions rather than fight over it."**

**EG- "What do you think Christians think about this topic?" Often times we can find common ground with the non-Christian and help them see the true biblical perspective on a particular issue. "Let's see if we can find out what Jesus would say about this."**

## **3. Be patient. Our culture is biblically illiterate.**

Our culture is much more biblically illiterate than it was before. Formerly, most Americans had "theistic puzzle pieces." They understood the basic theistic worldview—they just needed someone to show them how they fit the puzzle together (e.g., salvation by grace vs. by works). We can no longer assume that people have this knowledge.

**It takes people longer to understand and make an informed decision about the Gospel.**

Today, we find that it takes not days, but weeks and sometimes even months for people to understand the gospel and make a genuine decision to receive Christ.

**This means we must shift our thinking from "event evangelism,"** where we can explain and call people to a decision in one encounter—to **"process evangelism,"** where we may need to start with pre-evangelism and be very aware of the "decision continuum." (BOTH THESE TERMS NEED EXPLANATION)

**Be gentle.** Remember that most people have not thought through the implications of their world view. We don't want to belittle them by destroying their position, even if we easily could. We

need to help them see the inconsistencies in their world view and *gradually* they will develop a self critique. We rarely argue someone into saving faith!

#### **4. Seek to understand and tell your story.**

"Socratic evangelism" means asking people questions, and then following their answers up with more questions. Get used to asking people about their beliefs about God, spirituality, etc. People are generally much more willing to talk about this today than they were ten years ago—especially if you really listen and don't immediately negate, correct, etc.

**Share—don't declare.** In general, it is better to simply share what you have discovered rather than to declare what is true. This is not a cop-out to moral/ideological relativism; it is an understanding of communication dynamics. In a group setting, the speaker can be much more declarative and forceful because the individuals don't feel put on the spot. In personal conversations, declaration tends to close down communication, while asking questions and sharing your discoveries tends to open it up.

#### **5. Remember the witness of Christian community.**

Community is much more important in our culture than it was before, because of the unparalleled failure in relationships (marriage, etc.). Few things are more attractive to postmodern people than the discovery that we, as Christians, know how to build real love relationships. Not just the real love we must have for them, but also the real love they observe that we have for each other (Jn.13:34, 35). When they see this, they are often more open to hear about your explanation of this relational richness.

Therefore, rely more heavily on ongoing friendship evangelism than on one-time encounters with relative strangers ("warm" vs. "cold" evangelism). Where should we look to develop such "warm" relationships? How can we do this?

In addition, include ways to intentionally expose your non-Christian friends to your Christian friends (corporate vs. solely individual witness). What ways have we developed to do this?

**Now let's see how we can apply these communications guidelines to some common objections to Christianity.**

#### **Objection #1: "How can you say that Christianity is the only valid religion?"**

**Let's deal with the perspective,** "All religions are simply different paths to the same goal." (Different mountain roads which all lead to the summit).

**1. Many religions are contradictory.** While all religions have superficial similarities (Webster's: "The service and adoration of God or a god expressed in forms of worship"), they make contradictory claims about foundational issues.

(**Steve Turner**) "We believe that all religions are basically the same . . . They all believe in love and goodness. They only differ on matters of creation, sin, heaven, hell, God and salvation." (Steve Turner, British Journalist; quoted by Ravi Zacharias in Harvard lecture "Is Atheism Dead? Is God Alive?" in November, 1993.)

Are all religions basically the same as Steve Turner asserts, or are there substantive differences?

Consider the disagreement between the five great religions of the world on these crucial issues:

	WHAT IS GOD	OUR SPIRITUAL DILEMMA	WHAT IS SALVATION	THE WAY OF SALVATION
<b>CHRISTIANITY</b>	Personal & Trinitarian	Separation from God because of moral guilt	Conscious, personal fellowship with God for all eternity	Receive the gift of God's forgiveness by faith in Jesus Christ
<b>JUDAISM</b>	Personal & Unitarian	Separation from God because of moral guilt	Conscious, personal fellowship with God for all eternity	Turn to God & live a moral life
<b>ISLAM</b>	Personal & Unitarian	Separation from God because of moral guilt	Enter Paradise for an eternity of sensual pleasure ( <i>bur</i> )	Perform the 5 Pillars of Faith
<b>HINDUISM</b>	Pantheistic or Polytheistic	Ignorance that all is one	Freedom from conscious, individual existence ("moksha")	Better reincarnation by improving karma
<b>BUDDHISM</b>	Pantheistic or Atheistic	Ignorance that all is one	Freedom from conscious, individual existence ("nirvana")	Escape reincarnation by following 4 Noble Truths & 8-Fold Path

**There are many fundamental contradictions as we review this chart.** For example, God can't be personal and impersonal at the same time. Salvation can't be conscience existence and personal annihilation at the same time. The way of salvation can't be a free gift and a wage earned at the same time. The differences are very clear and all religions cannot be held as true.

**Don't just contrast Christianity to the other religions.** Evaluate the claims of Hinduism from an Islamic perspective, or the claims of Buddhism from a Jewish perspective.

### Consider the conclusion of these scholars of world religions:

**ANDERSON (Christian):** "The fact is that generalizations about religion are almost always misleading. Nothing could be further from the truth than the dictum . . . 'Religion has not many voices, but only one.' . . . Even the most cursory examination of the theology of these different religions reveals far more contradiction than consensus." (Sir Norman Anderson, *Christianity and World Religions: The Challenge of Pluralism* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1984, p. 15])

**Zaehner (Hindu):** "To maintain that all religions are paths leading to the same goal, as is so frequently done today, is to maintain something that is not true . . . (T)he basic principles of East and West . . . simply are not starting from the same premises. The only common ground is that the function of religion is to provide release; there is no agreement at all as to what (we) must be released from. The great religions are talking at cross purposes." (Colin G. Chapman, *The Case For Christianity* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1981], p. 143).

**Clendenin (Christian):** "Contrary to the idea that all the religions teach the same thing, by virtue of their historical particularity and specificity the many religions offer us radically divergent pictures of God, the world, life, death, the afterlife, and humanity . . . Historically and empirically it is obvious that a common essence is precisely what religions do not have; they aim at different goals, teach contradictory doctrines, and prescribe radically different experiences. Religion as a common genus simply does not exist." (Daniel B. Clendenin, *Many Gods, Many Lords* [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995], pp. 64, 108).

**Netland (Christian):** "It is difficult indeed to escape the conclusion that some of the central affirmations of Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Shinto are opposed; as long as the meanings of the doctrines within the respective religious communities are preserved, they cannot be jointly accepted without absurdity." (Harold Netland, *Dissonant Voices: Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991], pp. 110, 111).

**Panikkar (Pluralist):** "(Pluralists must abandon their quest for a common essence because) the incommensurability of ultimate systems is unbridgeable . . . (and any) alleged common denominator is a sheer reductionist abstraction." (Raimundo Panikkar, *The Jordan, the Tigris, and the Ganges*, In Hick and Kitter, eds., *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988], p. 110).

**Conclusion:** Therefore, the "**Different mountain roads which all lead to the summit**" analogy is simply not true. The roads are on different mountains, they lead in fundamentally different directions and they end on completely different summits! We cannot hold the view that all religions are basically the same if we know the basic tenets of those religions.

**2. Even the pluralist doesn't accept all religions as true or valid.** Especially when they prescribe practices that are morally repulsive, even the most thoroughgoing religious relativist will usually admit this.

How many of us are really prepared to say that Baalism (with mandatory child-sacrifice), or many African Islamic sects (with mandatory clitorrectomy), or Australian aboriginal animism (with headhunting) are valid religions? How open-minded would we be about our children converting to these religions? How many of us would be able to say with a clear conscience "I'm glad you've found what's true for you?"

How many of us are ready to accept Hinduism's teaching that women cannot enter the eternal state, or the Koran's teaching that (Jihad) holy war is a virtuous way to spread the faith?

**(Daniel B. Clendenin)** "Do we really want to say . . . that all religions and religious practices without exception are pathways to God? . . . What about Hindu widow-burning, female infanticide, or Aztec human sacrifice (Hans Kung notes that 20,000 people were sacrificed in four days at the consecration of a temple in Mexico in 1487)? . . . But in assessing religion, pluralists have the problem of avoiding radical relativism, which . . . is inherent in their position. In fact, consistent relativism would render both praise and blame impossible. As the pluralists themselves acknowledge, without some criteria it is impossible to distinguish between Jim Jones and Mother Theresa, between an Amish village and David Koresh's Waco compound. To make critical judgments of any sort requires some standard or standards, but to introduce such criteria in order to judge religions is to no longer accept them all as equally true and good." (Daniel B. Clendenin, *Many Gods, Many Lords* [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995], pp. 50, 51).

**3. A sad irony: no religion is taken seriously.**

By insisting that all religions are really talking about the same thing (the "Real," the "sacred," etc.), it refuses to take seriously the truth claims of those religions. Thus, religious relativism, which accuses absolutist religions of being condescending and dismissive toward religions that disagree with them, is actually condescending and dismissive toward all religions!

**(Daniel B. Clendenin)** "Pluralism . . . is incompatible with and even antithetical to any traditional account of religion. If the pluralist is right, then the adherents of all the major religions . . . are badly mistaken in their traditional understanding and practice of their various faiths. Consequently, a consistent pluralism requires a drastic revision . . . a genetic-like mutation, of all human religiosity as it has been conceived and lived throughout human history. It is obvious that such an absolutistic diagnosis and prescription are as theologically and culturally imperialistic as one can imagine . . . Pluralism's residual patronization lurks in the idea of a common essence. It suggests that the particularity of a religion's cumulative tradition really does not matter, that its many incongruities with other faiths are merely accidental or arbitrary. The more one emphasizes an essential core of religion, the less reason there is to take the particularities of a religion with genuine seriousness . . . Rather than a celebration of the world's heterogeneous and particular faiths which might inform and challenge one's religious worldview, we have here a suffocating homogeneity . . ." (Daniel B. Clendenin, *Many Gods, Many Lords* [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995], pp. 90, 108, 109).

## **Objection #2: "Why should I regard the Bible as God's Word? What about all of the other scriptures?"**

In a religiously pluralistic culture, the Bible no longer commands respect.

**Examples:** Hinduism (*Rig Vedas; Upanishads*); Buddhism (*Pali Canon; Sutras; Tibetan Book of the Dead*); Confucianism (*Analects of Confucius*); Islam (*Quran*); Ba'hai (*Writings of Baha'u'llah*); Mormonism (*Book of Mormon*).

### **1. Most other scriptures don't claim to be revelation from God.**

**Most "scriptures" of Hinduism and Buddhism never claim to be a revelation from God** for the obvious reason that the eastern god is not a Person who speaks. Rather, they normally claim only to be human speculation. Likewise, the sacred Chinese books claim no supernatural inspiration or authority, Confucianism being less a religion than a venerable moral tradition.

In fact, **only those religions rooted in the Bible** (including Islam and the Christian sects, like Mormonism) **are virtually the only ones who claim to have books that are actual revelation from God.**

### **2. Only the Bible is rooted in history.**

**Why is this so important?** Because the nature of spiritual truth claims is that they cannot be directly verified. How can we directly verify whether God is personal or impersonal? What the afterlife is like? Whether salvation is by works or by grace? **If all we had were the assertion of the scriptures, there would be no way to decide.**

But if that same text made factual assertions about areas we could test like, say, historical matters-then we could indirectly test their spiritual truth claims. If they interface inaccurately in these areas we can test, why should we trust them in the areas we can't test? On the other hand, if they DO interface accurately in these testable areas, we have a basis for taking more seriously their spiritual truth claims.

Is 41:21,22 "Present your case," the LORD says. "Bring forward your strong arguments," The King of Jacob says. 22 Let them bring forth and declare to us what is going to take place; As for the former events, declare what they were, That we may consider them, and know their outcome; Or announce to us what is coming.

Is 43:9 All the nations have gathered together In order that the peoples may be assembled. Who among them can declare this And proclaim to us the former things? Let them present their witnesses that they may be justified, Or let them hear and say, "It is true."

**Isn't the Bible full of undeniable historical errors?** Although it was once confidently assumed that archeology would prove the historical inaccuracy of the Bible, this is far from the case. While we cannot say that archeology *proves* the authority of the Bible, it is fair to say that **archeological evidence has provided external confirmation of hundreds of biblical statements.**

See [Unit #3, Inspiration of the Bible](#)

**Old Testament example:** Scholars considered the Genesis account of Abraham (including Sodom and Gomorrah) to be mythological or ahistorical. Ur was excavated and shown to be a flourishing city

around 2000 BC. The Ebla Tablets include some of the kings mentioned in Gen. 14. Tel Mardikh tablets mention Sodom and Gomorrah.

**New Testament example:** Scholars scoffed at Luke's references to Lysanius as tetrarch of Abilene (Luke 3:1) because the only Lysanius known from ancient sources was executed in 36 BC-60 years before Luke's reference. But two Greek inscriptions from Abila, northwest of Damascus, now prove there was a "Lysanius the tetrarch" between the years AD 14 and 29. (Edwin M. Yamauchi, "Archeology and the New Testament," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 653.)

**Other scriptures are historically inaccurate or contain no history.**

**The eastern scriptures** have no interest in history, because according to their world view, this is the world of illusion from which we are to be delivered. Ancient polytheistic religions likewise had no interest in history. Their gods acted only in myths, removed as far as possible from real history.

**The Koran** is almost entirely assertions of Allah. It has very little historical material and when compared to parallel biblical material it often differs. A study of the Koran finds that Mohammed's references to Judaism are drawn from contemporary Jewish folklore (Josh McDowell. *The Islam Debate*. page 48.)

EG When the Israelites set up the golden calf in the wilderness they did so at the urging of a Samaritan. But Samaritans did not exist until then.

[Mentioned in Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, (Moody Press. Chicago. 1994) p. 549-552.]

**The Book of Mormon** makes many historical references, but it too is full of historical anachronisms and geographical inaccuracies.

[See also Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, (Moody Press. Chicago. 1994) p. 553-556.]

### **3. Only the Bible provides predictive prophecy.**

**This is a unique means of authenticating its claim to be God's inspired Word.**

The Bible actually **anticipates** our need for such unique authentication and provides its own means of authentication via the phenomenon of **fulfilled prophecy**. The Old Testament prophets made hundreds of predictions about the coming Messiah, most of which were beyond anyone's power to deliberately fulfill, or beyond anyone's desire to fulfill unless they were the Messiah.

Is. 46:9,10 "Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, 10 Declaring the end from the beginning And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure';

**Time** (Dan. 9:24,25) Over 500 years earlier, his death was predicted to the year. Refer to *Christianity: The Faith That Makes Sense* by Dennis McCallum, Tyndale House Publ., for full treatment.

**Birthplace** (Micah 5:2) Of course, Jesus had no control over this.

**Rejected by his people** (Isa. 53) So detailed that prior to the Dead Sea Scrolls, many thought it was a Christian forgery.

**Mode of Execution** (Ps. 22:1-18) This was predicted several centuries before crucifixion was invented!

**What about other "scriptures" and prophecy?** In the vast majority, there is no prophecy at all or any comparably unique means of self-authentication.

**Muhammad** acknowledged that the biblical prophets were confirmed by miraculous signs (*Surahs 3:184; 17:103; 23:45*)—including prophecy, but when he was asked for similar confirmation that his message was from God, he refused (*Surahs 2:118; 4:153; 6:8,9,37*) and regarded the request as impious. (Norman Geisler, In Dean C. Halverson, ed., *The Compact Guide to World Religions* [Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1996], pp. 265, 266).

**The predictions of other so-called prophets are unworthy of being compared to the biblical prophets.** They usually lack context and the syntax is so general that any specific interpretation (and therefore, any verification) is impossible.

**Baha'u'llah** (Founder of the Baha'i faith in *The Hidden Words*, #63, about 1858): "O ye peoples of the world! Know ye verily that an unforeseen calamity is following you and that grievous retribution awaiteth you. Think not the deeds ye have committed have been blotted out from My sight. By My beauty! All your doings hath My pen graven with open characters upon tablets of chrysolite." This is so general that it has no verification value.

**Objection #3: "Why should I accept your interpretation of the Bible? Everyone has their own interpretation."**

This is addressed extensively in [Unit #3, Biblical Hermeneutics and Inductive Study](#).

**Objection #4: "How can your religion consign people to hell if they have never even heard about Christ?"**

**There are two distinct issues in this objection:**

God's judgment of *all* people.

The justice of God's judgment.

**1. Will God condemn all those who have never heard the Gospel?**

**While the Bible insists that all people are saved only through Jesus Christ, it does not say that people can only be saved *if* they hear about Jesus Christ.**

(C.S. Lewis) ". . . God has not told us what his arrangements about the other people are. We do know that no person can be saved except through Christ; we do not know that only those who know Him can be saved through Him." (C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), p. 65.)

**The Bible clearly teaches that God is just. Psalm 89:14** says, "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you."

In Genesis 18:25, Abraham rightly asserts "Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

There are many implications of justice, but one of them is that one is held responsible only for information which he has received—not for information which he has not received. Paul upholds this

principle with regard to sin in Romans 4:15 when he says, ". . . where there is no law there is no transgression."

The Bible also teaches that **God gives a significant amount of revelation about himself to the person "without the Bible."** Paul declares in Romans 1:18-20 that God has "made it evident" to such people not only that he exists, but also that he has certain attributes: namely, tremendous power and creative intelligence. These attributes have been revealed "through what has been made"—through the order of the external universe.

Paul says in Romans 2:14,15 that people without access to special revelation ("the Gentiles who do not have the Law") also know that God is a morally righteous Being. They know this because of the moral conscience, which he has instilled in each person. These passages make two important points.

**First:** The amount of light is considerable. God reveals to the unevangelized that he is powerful, personal (because he is intelligent and righteous). Man's conscience also convicts him that he has violated God's righteous character (Romans 2:15). Responding to this light properly would mean humbly coming before God asking for mercy. Thus, though the **means** of man's forgiveness is not revealed through general revelation, the **need** for it is revealed.

**Second:** The point of Paul's argument in Romans 1 and 2 is that these people have been given enough light to be justly condemned. But it would seem to follow (because of God's justice) that this would also be enough light to be saved-if people respond to it properly.

Another biblical fact is relevant to this question. **Old Testament believers were saved by their faith before the Jesus came.** Hebrews 11 lists many Old Testament figures who fit this description. Old Testament Jews had access to special revelation, but they had no clear understanding of God's plan of salvation, because the fact that the Messiah must die for our forgiveness was not clearly revealed (Luke 24:44-47; 1 Peter 1:10-12). Furthermore, some of the Old Testament people who were saved (like Melchizedek and Job) had little or no access to the special revelation to Abraham.

Another possibility is that God will judge based on his knowledge of how people **would have responded** had they heard the message.

**Conclusion:** If the "person without the Bible" responds properly, (as defined above) to the light God has given him, he would be saved by grace through faith by asking God for mercy. He will be saved only through the death of Christ, because "no man comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6). In this way, the unevangelized person today is much like the Jew before the time of Christ: he is justified before God by responding in faith to the light, which he has. (For an extensive discussion see Donald Richardson. *Eternity in Their Hearts.*)

**Two important qualifications** need to be mentioned at this point.

**Qualification #1: Does this mean any unevangelized person who is a devout follower of his religion will be saved?**

By no means. Most world religions are animistic, polytheistic, or pantheistic. But Romans 1 teaches that **the truly open person will recognize that there is one God** who is intelligent and personal, and that worshipping other god(s) is therefore an act of willful rebellion. Again, virtually all world religions teach a "works" approach to the deity—that the acceptance of the deity is attained by human effort through good works and/or ritual observance. But Romans 2:14,15 teaches that **humans instinctively know that they are morally guilty before God** and therefore have no claim on God's acceptance based

on their own effort (works or ritual). Therefore, those who respond to God's general revelation by casting themselves on his mercy will be at odds with crucial elements in their native religious setting. Missionaries have reported many such people who responded quickly to their message of the one true God and his way of salvation.

**Qualification #2: If people can be saved apart from hearing the gospel, is evangelism and missions necessary?**

**This question, if answered "no", would render Christ's commission to "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19) pointless.** The answer is "yes" because there is evidently a general correspondence between the amount of light given and the number of people who repent and are saved.

**Jesus teaches** this principle in Matthew 11:20-24. He says that Tyre, Sidon and Sodom would have repented if they had received the light that Capernaum, Chorazin and Bethsaida had received.

**This principle is also readily observed in history.** While probably some Africans responded properly to the light of general revelation and were thus saved, clearly they were a small minority in unevangelized Africa judging by the paganism which pervaded Africa in the mid 1800's. It is no coincidence that today, after 150 years of missionary activity, almost 50% of Black Africans are evangelical Christians.

Therefore, **the number of people who get saved through general revelation is probably very small, and this fact preserves the strategic importance of Jesus' mission mandate.**

**Note: Furthermore, people who get saved by responding to general revelation have fewer spiritual resources available to them than individuals who hear and respond to the gospel.** They would be like the "disciples" that Paul met in Acts 19:1-6. These men were evidently saved, but did not receive the Holy Spirit until Paul explained the gospel to them. The gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit, as well as the other New Covenant ministries of the Holy Spirit, may be given only to those who have heard and responded to the message of salvation through Jesus Christ.

## **2. Is there justice in God's judgment?**

We think, "It just doesn't seem fair for God to judge people and sentence them to hell." I don't like the idea, and neither does God (Eze. 18:23,32)—but consider these points:

### **~ Can we trust our ability to judge what is fair for ourselves?**

People tend to think that what they do is not very bad and does not deserve much punishment. Most **prisoners** believe that they are sentenced too severely. Because of our imperfect criminal justice system, some of them probably are—but it is highly unlikely that most of them are. **Children** demonstrate that this is an inborn attitude. This is why we don't let children or criminals choose their own punishments; they tend to go too soft on themselves. But God's judgment is perfect. He knows all the factors, every mitigating circumstance—and on that day he will demonstrate that he has been absolutely fair in his judgment.

### **~ Furthermore, the alternative to this—universalism—is definitely not fair.**

Is it fair for people to never be called to account for their actions? Is it fair that wicked people and not the righteous God have the last word on evil (STALIN: safe to the end, clenched fist at the end)? Is it fair for repentant people to spend eternity with an unrepentant STALIN? Is it fair for God to allow this world to go on for so long if he will send everyone to heaven? If people can't make a decision about

where to spend eternity during this life, what is the point? If there is no ultimate accountability for our lives, then what is the difference between heaven and hell?

~ **Finally, this objection assumes that we have a proper moral standard by which to evaluate whether God's judgment is fair or unfair.**

**Most Americans believe that if there is a hell, only really bad people will go there.** But there is a fatal flaw in this belief. How bad is bad enough? If Mother Theresa is good enough to go to heaven, and if Stalin is bad enough to go to hell, should we draw the line exactly halfway between them? What if you were one sin on Stalin's side of that line (that bad thought you had about your mother when you were ten years old)? Is this fair? No matter where you draw the line in this scenario, you always have the same dilemma. The Bible rejects this answer for one simple reason: it draws the line at God's moral perfection (Jas. 2:10; Matt. 5:48; Rom. 11:32 For God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all.). It makes perfect sense, and God is certainly within his rights to draw it here. However, it is really bad news because it means all of us—Stalin, Mother Theresa, you, me—are under God's judgment. But the good news is that God has offered to take the rap for all of us. He says he has come in the Person of Jesus to bear God's judgment for us on the cross (2 Cor. 5:21). Now the way is open for all of us to escape God's judgment—if we put our trust in his payment. That's news you won't find anywhere but in Christianity.

~ **More "Common Objections" are responded to in the teaching series by the same title.**

**For the CD:** <http://www.xenos.org/cgi-bin/shopper.exe?preadd=action&key=CD006>

**Tape set:** <http://www.xenos.org/cgi-bin/shopper.exe?keywords=tapes&search=action>

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**What could you do to help build and maintain an outreach ethos in your home group?**

- 1. Discuss evangelism regularly.** Matt 24:34b- "For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart." If this is important to you, you will talk about it.
- 2. Celebrate conversions.** People learn what is important (in part) by what we get excited about. We want them to know that we share the joy of the angels when one sinner repents. We want them to share our awe at the power of the gospel to penetrate all barriers.
- 3. Praise evangelistic efforts.** We transmit values (in part) by whom we admire. Sharing our faith is emotionally and spiritually difficult, especially when people don't respond. People easily get discouraged, and they need to hear us express God's heart—that he is delighted at their love for the lost and their willingness to step out in faith to share their faith.

Consider Bill Bright's adage in "Witnessing Without Fear": "Success in evangelism is sharing your faith in the power of the Holy Spirit, leaving the results to God. Failure in evangelism is failure to witness."

- 4. Pray for the lost corporately.** In our home group's weekly prayer, we make sure that we pray by name for the people we're reaching out to. And we weave this theme through our entire prayer time so that younger Christians learn that reaching others is ultimately why we're here.

**5. Share what you've learned about evangelism.** Christians will be more equipped and motivated to evangelize if you do this periodically. .

**6. Model outreach.** Reach out to your neighbors, get to know your kids' friends and their parents, witness to the non-Christians other church members are bringing around, etc.

**7. Maintain evangelism as an important "family value."** Our children will learn to value what we value. If we regularly discuss our burden for the lost, they will "catch it." If on the other hand we prioritize other values they will catch those instead. If we want our kids to be godly, we can't just protect them from the dangers of culture—but we must teach them how to live victoriously in the spiritual battle. If we have not modeled a love for lost people and an excitement about outreach, we have failed to protect them from the greatest danger of all—narcissism!

### **Memory Verses**

Matt. 28:18-20\* - **The Great Commission.**

### **Assignment**

Complete the *Ministry Assessment Materials*. Remember this is required for completion of the course.

## My Impact List

1. Carefully consider the people in your life to whom you could give concentrated effort in the attempt to bring them to the next step in the evangelism process.
2. List the names of these people in the space below.

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Please note that these names will change as these people become Christians or move out of your sphere of influence. This list, therefore, should be an ongoing part of your lifelong evangelism strategy.

Remember it is important to develop *no-strings-attached friendships* with the people on your list. Let them know by word and action that they matter to you, regardless of whether or not they agree with the Christian message.

### Praying for the People on Your Impact List

Begin to pray for the people on your *Impact List*. Ask God to work in their lives and to give you wisdom on how to effectively reach out to them. In praying for them, keep in mind the following three areas:

**Them** - Ask God to:

- ~ Pull them toward Himself
- ~ Open their eyes to the emptiness of life without Him
- ~ Help them see their need for forgiveness
- ~ Remove the confusion they have about Him and the life He offers
- ~ Help them grasp the meaning and importance of the cross of Christ
- ~ Open the person's heart to God's love and truth

**You** - Ask God to:

- ~ Help you live a consistent and attractive Christian life
- ~ Make you authentic and honest as you deal with life's ups and downs
- ~ Give you wisdom in knowing how to approach the relationship
- ~ Expand your knowledge so you will be ready to define and defend the Gospel message
- ~ Grant you appropriate boldness and courage
- ~ Use you to help lead this person into a relationship with Christ

**Us** - Ask God to:

- ~ Cause depth and trust to grow in the relationship
- ~ Open doors for spiritual conversations
- ~ Guide those conversations in pace, frequency and content

**PRAYER**

**CARE**

**SHARE**

# Xenos Christian Fellowship

## Christian Principles Unit 4

### Moving Into Ministry

#### Instructors

#### Overview

- [Spiritual Gifts, Ministries, and Effects](#)
  - [Importance of Discovering Gifts](#)
  - [Uniformity In the Midst of Diversity](#)
  - [Discovering your Spiritual Gifts](#)
  - [Fulfillment in Ministry](#)
- 

#### Introduction

God gives each of us a unique purpose in his plan; he plans "significant accomplishments" for us. This can be confusing, especially early in our Christian lives. Sadly, many Christians never find God's purpose for them.

First of all, we need to learn about spiritual gifts.

**(1 Cor. 12:4-6)** Now there are varieties of **gifts**, but the same Spirit. (5) And there are varieties of **ministries**, and the same Lord. (6) And there are varieties of **effects**, but the same God who works all things in all persons.

Teachings about the Body of Christ and the use of spiritual gifts is a prominent theme in the NT. **(Rom. 12; 1 Pet. 4:8-11; Eph 4:1-16)**

#### Spiritual Gifts

**Definition: God-given capabilities to serve others so that they are impacted for and/or built up spiritually in Jesus Christ.**

Every Christian has at least one spiritual gift

**(1 Cor. 12:7,11)** But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. . . (11) But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

Although we look at 20 such gifts, there are likely even more not mentioned in scripture. None of the passages concerning spiritual gifts are meant to provide an exhaustive list, but the focus is on *how* to use the gifts (E.G. with diligence, with love, etc.).

One of your handouts includes **definitions** of these gifts along with **distinctives** to help you recognize gifts in yourself or others. The handout also provides **cautions**—areas where sanctification is often challenged in people with that gift.

Tonight, we will not define every spiritual gift. The Ministry Assessment Materials provide definitions of most spiritual gifts. ([spgifts.htm](#)). Download [spgifts.rtf](#).

**Note:** We should view spiritual gifts as special areas of aptitude, and not as limits on our capability to serve (i.e. the evangelist is not the only one to evangelize).

## **Ministries**

### **Ministry- The use of spiritual gifts to serve others.**

We tend use the word *ministry* in two ways.

*Ministry* is what you do: Ministry is the act of exercising your gift.

e.g. You may develop a hospitality ministry in the Home Group by helping newer people feel welcomed and part of the group and hosting events.

*Ministry* can refer to the sphere in which you serve. That is, the place where you exercise your gifts in service.

e.g. You could show hospitality in Home Group as described above or at CT by introducing yourself to people you don't know.

## **Effects**

**Effects are the outcome of our ministries.** We bear spiritual fruit in ministry as we impact people for Christ.

In the Body of Christ, some will have a more visible, dramatic effect while others' ministry fruit may be less obvious (from our perspective, not God's).

## **Importance of Discovering and Exercising your Gifts**

### **Discovering and exercising your gift(s):**

#### **1. ... gives you a greater sense of significance and purpose for your Christian life.**

](2 Timothy 4:6-8) 6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; 8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing. As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

2 Tim. 4:6-8 becomes more concrete as God progressively clarifies your unique role. Note also that the word "loved" in the context "loved his appearing" is the Greek *agape*. That is serving love, not merely an emotional response.

#### **2. ... provides more insight into God's will for your life.**

It is God's will for you to exercise and develop your gift(s). As you do so, there will be many practical implications for **decision-making** in your life (see [Unit 4 Week 9](#)).

**(1 Peter 4:10)** As each one has received a **special** gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

See Romans 12:3-8. We find that God's will for us is connected to our exercising our spiritual gifts. If we know our gifts then we know our role and, in part, God's will.

### **3. ... provides additional motivation toward spiritual growth.**

It is difficult to maintain motivation in our sanctification unless we see the purpose for it.

**(2 Tim. 2:20-22)** Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. (21) Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. Now flee from youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart..

Also, it is much easier to **resist** sin when we **replace** it with the stimulation of ministry (EXAMPLES). As this happens, you will find greater resistance to the seduction of the world (1 Jn. 2:15,16; [Unit 4 Week 2](#)) which is only a counterfeit to the real purpose for your life.

### **4. ... lets you experience the power of the Holy Spirit.**

This is one of the features of gifting—the Holy Spirit often empowers you with special intensity as you serve in that area.

**Col. 1:28,29** And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ. 29 And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.

### **5. ... helps you overcome fearfulness and timidity in your service for Christ.**

When you serve according to your gifts, you gain confidence in God because you see Him at work in your ministry. This confidence permeates other areas of your Christian life.

**(2 Tim 1:6-9)** And for this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which was given to you by the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me His prisoner; but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted to us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.

### **6. ... frees you from making unhealthy comparisons to others.**

The more you discover and develop the unique contribution that you have, the easier it is to be grateful for the contribution of others. This minimizes carnal competition.

See 1 Cor 12:14-26-- For the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any

the less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. 19 And if they were all one member, where would the body be? 20 But now there are many members, but one body. 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." 22 On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; 23 and those members of the body, which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our unseemly members come to have more abundant seemliness, 24 whereas our seemly members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, 25 that there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

### **7. ... increases healthy interdependence within the Body of Christ.**

As you exercise your gift, you appreciate the genius of God's design of the body of Christ: everyone has an important contribution to make. As a result, you are more likely to seek out and receive the contribution that others have been gifted to make.

I realize that I can't do it all. I need others...

### **Uniformity and Diversity**

God has designed each of us uniquely, but **also** calls on our regular, consistent, and committed efforts in certain areas regardless of our gifts, burdens, or personality traits.

### **What are the areas of ministry uniformity (areas of ministry we have in common)?**

~ **Intercessory Prayer** (Col. 4:2; Eph. 6:18) (Unit 3)

~ **Evangelism** (1 Pet. 2:9; 1 Pet. 3:15; Col. 3:17-4:1; 1 Pet. 2:12-3:7; Titus 2:7-3:8; 1 Tim. 6:1,2) (Unit 4)

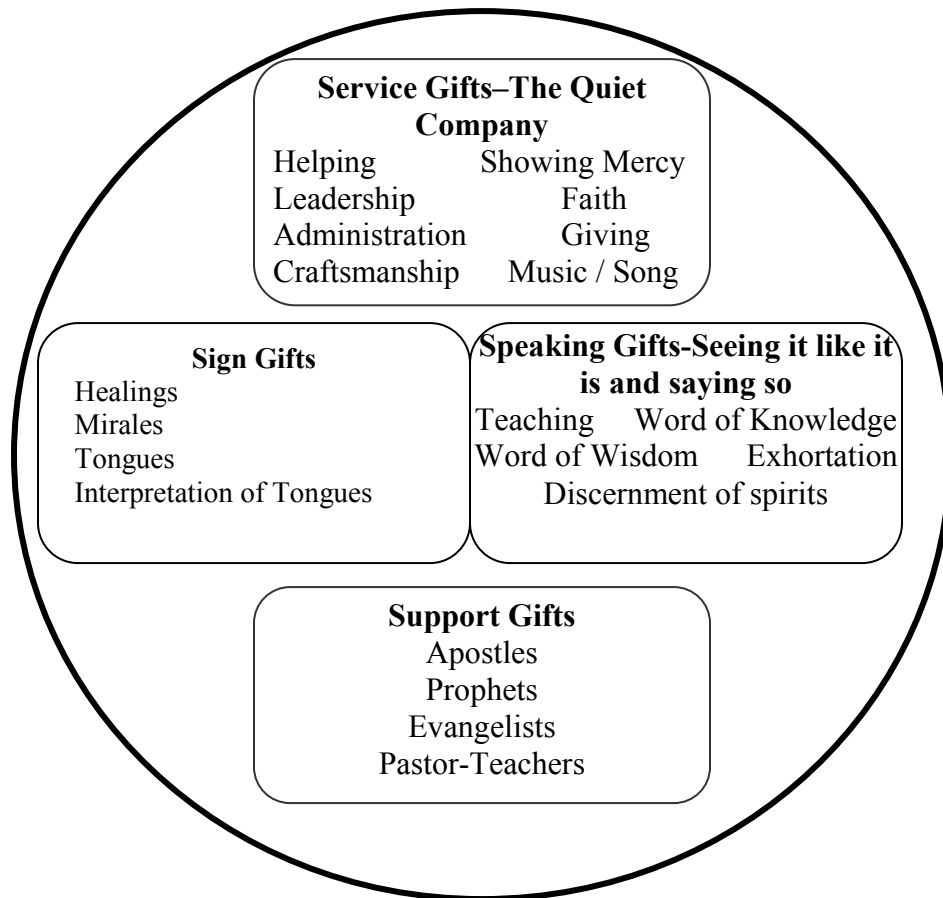
~ **Missions** (Matt. 28:19) (Unit 4)

~ **"Love one another"** (Jn. 13:34) as unpacked by the New Testament "one another" passages (see Rom. 12:10,15; 15:7; Gal. 6:2; Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:13; 1 Thess. 5:14; Heb. 10:24,25; Jas. 5:16). This is the main thing stressed, and Jesus Christ stresses that it is the underlying ministry that will enable us to succeed at the above two ministries. Do we serve others? (Unit 3)

~ **Financial giving** (Lk. 12:33,34; Gal. 6:6; Eph. 4:28; 1 Cor. 9:14; 1 Tim. 5:17,18). As stewards of God's money and material possessions, we are all responsible to use these things to advance his kingdom, as well as your own needs. (Unit 4)

We need to remain involved in these areas regardless of our area of ministry focus. We have to allow time for these provisions in our schedule—and sometimes in our heart.

## The Family of God



### God-given abilities...in the Body...for spiritual benefit

**Sign Gifts:** the super-human ability to authenticate God’s message, God’s spokesman and His work.

**Helps:** the capacity to serve joyfully behind the scenes in practical ways that releases others to use their gifts out front more effectively.

**Leadership:** to head up, lead, direct, manage, take charge, stand in front and lead

**Administration:** to organize and superintend, a helmsperson, detail oriented

**Craftsmanship:** ability to work with your hands with skill and artistry

**Hospitality:** lover of strangers, ability to care for those needing friendship, food and Lodging. You love to open your home and warmly welcome others

**Showing Mercy:** cheerfully show mercy, feeling compassion for those the majority ignores, giving undeserved aid to the sick, handicapped, deformed, retarded, poor, smelly, abused, aged, imprisoned.

**Faith:** beyond saving faith, beyond common Christian-life faith, the Spirit-given ability to believe God for the impossible, to envision what God wants done and to believe God will do it when others have a difficult time ‘seeing’ it.

**Giving:** the ability to give material resources to the work of God and to God’s people with such wisdom, sensitivity, generosity and cheerfulness that others are encouraged and strengthened. This gift is not limited to the “rich” or “super-rich” although it is often accompanied by the ability to make money.

**Music / Song:** the God-given ability to lift spirits, bring encouragement, exalt God call people to turn their eyes and hearts on God, give hope and instruction through the use of instruments and voice.

**Teaching:** the desire to know the truth, study the truth and to present it to others in a systematic, accurate and thorough way. The divine enablement to understand, clearly explain and apply the Word of God

**Word of Wisdom:** the ability to apply the truth to specific situations and needs producing solutions to problems and bringing order and understanding to confusion. The ability to “see” beyond surface issues to root causes.

**Exhortation:** the God-given ability to come along side others to give words of comfort, consolation, encouragement and counsel in such a way that others in the Body of Christ feel helped, refreshed and healed.

**Word of Knowledge:** insight and illumination, the God-given ability to accumulate and analyze information effectively, to understand correctly and exhibit clearly the truth of God

**Discerning of spirits:** the ability to distinguish between truth and error and to intuitively identify the true source of the teaching being given or of the person involved. These believers are given to ‘watch over’ the flock of God.

**Apostleship:** used in two senses – 1. sent by God to speak with great authority because of first hand knowledge of Christ’s life, resurrection, teachings and direct revelation. 2. great ability to go and set up new works, thus, sent by the church as church planters and missionaries, often entrepreneurial risk-takers.

**Prophecy:** used in two senses – 1. the ability to speak for God having received direct revelation and accompanied by power to work miracles, 2. the ability to forcefully preach God’s Word.

**Evangelists:** a passion to see people come to faith in Christ, the ability to present the Good News in such a way that people “see” clearly the truth of the gospel. This gift is given to lead others in the Body to share their faith..

**Pastor-Teachers:** the God-given ability to “shepherd” people, deep heart for people, to care for them, teach, guide and guard them.

## **Ways to discover your spiritual gifts**

Understanding spiritual gifts is important. Yet the Bible does not give us specific steps to take to discover our gifts.

What are we to make of this? It seems that there is no specific **method** for discovering spiritual gifts. Instead, God emphasizes certain **principles** that we employ as we live in the Body of Christ. As we live and function in the Body of Christ our gifts emerge.

### **1. Become a servant within the church.**

The Bible describes a servant as someone who attends to his master's tasks, even at his own expense.

**Mark 10:45** For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

**Philippians 2:3-5** Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. 5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,

God laid his life down to meet our needs. He commands us to follow his example, by expending ourselves in the service of others within the framework of the Body of Christ. As we serve, our gifting is manifest.

e.g. Over time you have probably become aware of different needs/ tasks in home church that are being overlooked (e.g. organizing a retreat, cleaning up after HC, encouraging a new person, etc.). As you make various attempts to serve, some efforts will be fruitful and others won't. Through feedback from others and the result of your efforts, God will open your eyes to unique areas of gifting that you may have.

**Because servanthood is such an important area, we should carefully distinguish it from its antithesis, selfishness.**

Servanthood	Selfishness
<p><b>Theo-centric:</b> "I want God's agenda for my life so I am willing to subordinate my own agenda to his." See Matt. 26:39; Mark 8:34. Jesus chose to deny his own human will to endure and survive the cross because he was God's servant, and because there was no other way to rescue the people he loved. How do you respond when God contradicts your agenda with the needs of others? Sacrificing our time and energy for the good of others might be painful at times—yet it leads to life (Luke 9:23-24)</p>	<p><b>Ego-centric:</b> "this doesn't fit into my agenda so I refuse to consider it." It is necessary to be able to say "No" to certain demands, but not for this reason. This kind of selfishness closes God out of the formula of growth in our life.</p>
<p><b>Fellowship with God:</b> "I can know God better through this whether or not people are impressed with me." Do we remember that we serve God? This area is usually challenged at the moment people don't respond as we would like them to. The bottom line of all of our study, fellowship, prayer, and service is: Are we doing it to know God better or to be noticed by others?</p>	<p><b>Impress People:</b> "If I do this, will they like me or think I'm spiritual?" This is giving with strings attached. "What am I getting in return for what I'm doing?" "Have people noticed and responded as I believe they should?"</p>
<p><b>Whatever It Takes:</b> "I am committed to excellence in my responsibilities to others, and I am willing to serve outside those areas in order to accomplish God's purposes." (Col. 3:23; Jn. 13:13,14)</p> <p>(Col. 3:23) Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men . . .</p> <p><b>Watchman Nee said, "Most Christians would lose their job if they treated their secular work like their Christian work."</b></p> <p>This includes being <b>dependable</b>—on time. As I realize the importance of my role in ministry, reliability comes more naturally.</p>	<p><b>Not My Job:</b> "I'll do the minimum in my responsibilities to others, and I will not be inconvenienced by tasks outside those responsibilities." This may be an attitude that is perpetuated by too much focus on our gifts/spiritual job description, or perhaps just selfish laziness. Each one of us will want to be aware of this potential tendency and lean against it.</p> <p>Wholehearted vs. halfhearted service</p>

<p><b>Humility:</b> "God has enabled me to make a significant contribution and I want to be faithful to him so he can be glorified through my service." (1 Cor. 15:10)</p>	<p><b>Pride:</b> "I have a lot to offer and you should feel privileged that I'm involved." OR, "I can't do anything significant." It doesn't matter if I'm here or not (Many Christians).</p>
<p><b>Other-Centered:</b> "I am learning to trust God's care for me enough to begin to notice and seek out others' needs." See Jn. 13:3,4ff as the context for Jesus' sacrificial service—he served freely and sacrificially because he knew he was in good hands. When you receive Christ, God makes you his adopted child and promises to care for you like he does his own Son. Knowing this, we can afford to take our eyes off of our self and begin to look after others' needs.</p>	<p><b>Self-Protective:</b> "I have to take care of me first. If I don't, who will?" This is an expression of one who is truly alienated from God or just doesn't believe God at his word when he promises to care for us and provide for us out of his wealth</p>

**2. Ask God to reveal your gift(s) (Jas. 4:2).**

Remember that God has sovereignly given you the gift(s) that you have. Affirm that he has gifted you for a unique and significant role (Lk. 11:11-13), and submit in advance to whatever role he has chosen for you. Then ask him to reveal your role to you as you step out in faith to find it (Jas. 1:5).

**3. Consider what you want to do?**

Phil. 2:13 says that God is at work in you both to create the desire for and to give you the empowering for his good pleasure—that is, for his unique purpose for your life. This promise encompasses God's ministry purpose for your life as well as his moral purpose (sanctification). Therefore, it is appropriate to ask yourself, "What areas of ministry are especially appealing to me?" "What would I like to do for the Lord if I could do anything for him?" Remember the variety of gifts that God has given. Resist the tendency to assume that you must be gifted like "so and so" in order to be significant, or that if you really would like to minister in a certain area, it must not be God's will.

**4. Consider what needs regularly come to your attention?**

Gifts often affects our perception of ministry needs. Ask God to open your eyes to the needs that exist around you. Look especially within your own home group, but also look beyond it to the fellowship as a whole and the local and global community. Are there certain kinds of needs that you tend to consistently see? If so, this may be an indication of your areas of gifting. Aptitude often affects our perception of a situation; we tend to be most aware of those needs that we are most suited to meet.

**5. Envision how the Lord could use you in ministry?**

Rom. 12:3 says with our gifting comes a "measure of faith." This evidently involves the ability to believe that God can use you in a certain role.

**6. Take steps of faith to attempt new ministries.**

As you become aware of specific needs, be willing to experiment and take risks even in areas that you do not think that you are likely to be gifted. You may be surprised at what you discover.

**7. Consider what you enjoy doing, feel empowered doing, etc.**

Gifts is spiritual empowerment, which is partially experiential.

**8. Consider where you are effective.**

Look for indication of effectiveness. What unsolicited feedback do you receive from others? When a pattern emerges of people telling you that God builds them up through you in a certain area, this is a reliable indicator of gifting. On the other hand, some people may experience setbacks in areas of gifting so be careful not to give up prematurely.

Start looking at others from the perspective of how God has gifted them. Put some thought in on how they might be gifted; let them know when you see them being effective with you or others. This creates an environment much more conducive to the discovery of gifts.

## **Fulfillment in Ministry**

### **Introduction**

Everyone wants a fulfilling life. Many Christians have not yet experienced fulfillment in ministry.

**What is fulfillment?** Fulfillment is a deep-seated sense of blessing/ joy arising from total commitment to something significant.

### **Total commitment to God's purposes**

All of us are committed to something. We have to consider, "What am I committed to?" In the US it's the "me first law." We learn to value and seek our personal interests above any other values. We've learned that the biblical world view is dramatically different.

1 Cor. 9:23-27 And I do all things for the sake of the gospel, that I may become a fellow partaker of it. (24) Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. (25) And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. (26) Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; (27) but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.

Col. 1:28,29 And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ. 29 And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.

We reach this point gradually as led by God. He gifts us and empowers us to serve effectively. It's not like being committed to ballet, but without talent. God provides the talent and part of our spiritual growth process entails learning that we are inadequate to serve him apart from his empowering.

2 Cor. 3:5-6a Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, 6 who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant...

We are most committed to gain what we believe will bring joy (or a substitute which is easier and quicker to attain e.g. we seek sexual intimacy, but fulfill that via pornography or other aberrant behaviors).

## **Blessing/ Joy**

The joy offered by Christ, as we align our will with His, far exceeds any worldly attempt for joy.

(John 10:10) . . .I came that you might have life and have it abundantly.

Phil 4:7,8 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ,

Heb.12:2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Jesus offers a brilliant example of commitment to God's purposes and his joy flows from living in concert with his Father's will despite the agony he faced.

### **Note:**

- ~ We shouldn't be committed to pursuing fulfillment as an end to itself.
- ~ Joy, in the modern sense, is often absent. Loving others can be painful at times.
- ~ Our own selfish motives can rob us of the joy/ fulfillment of serving others.

### **Conclusion**

(Luke 6:46-49) "And why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? 47 "Everyone who comes to Me, and hears My words, and acts upon them, I will show you whom he is like: 48 he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation upon the rock; and when a flood rose, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. 49 "But the one who has heard, and has not acted accordingly, is like a man who built a house upon the ground without any foundation; and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great."

Memory Verses: None.

### **Assignments - Study for the exam!**

# MINISTRY CONNECTION

THROUGH LOVE, SERVE ONE ANOTHER (Galatians 5:13)

**TEACHING**

**Worship**

**Servanthood - Obedience - Stewardship**

Phase I

**SPIRITUAL GIFTS**

**HEART**

**ABILITIES**

**PERSONALITY**

**EXPERIENCE**

**MATURITY**

**AVAILABILITY**

Phase II

**CONSULTATION**

"Prepare plans by consultation" Prov 20:18

Phase III

**SERVICE**

"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has strengthened me because He considered me faithful, putting me into service."

1 Tim 1:12

MAKING YOUR UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION TO GOD'S KINGDOM  
IN A MEANINGFUL PLACE OF SERVICE