

# THE FAITH

GIVEN ONCE, FOR ALL —*Jude 3*

---

A Guide to Reading  
and Study

by T. M. Moore

---

CHARLES  
COLSON  
AND HAROLD FICKETT



# CONTENTS



*Introduction* . . . . . 3

PART I  
GOD AND THE FAITH

Lesson 1: Everywhere, Always, by All . . . . . 6  
Lesson 2: God Is . . . . . 10  
Lesson 3: He Has Spoken . . . . . 14  
Lesson 4: Truth . . . . . 17  
Lesson 5: What Went Right, What Went Wrong . . . . . 21  
Lesson 6: The Invasion . . . . . 25  
Lesson 7: God Above, God Beside, God Within . . . . . 29

PART II  
THE FAITH AND LIFE

Lesson 8: Exchanging Identities . . . . . 35  
Lesson 9: Reconciliation . . . . . 38  
Lesson 10: The Church . . . . . 42  
Lesson 11: Be Holy—Transform the World . . . . . 46  
Lesson 12: The Sanctity of Life . . . . . 50  
Lesson 13: Last Things . . . . . 54  
Lesson 14: The Joy of Orthodoxy . . . . . 58  
Lesson 15: The Great Proposal . . . . . 62

*About the Author of This Study Guide* . . . . . 66

---

# INTRODUCTION

---

## Pressure to Change

The Christian faith in the West today is experiencing tremendous pressure to change. One well-known cleric has gone so far as to warn that Christianity must “change or die.” Secular voices shriek their protests against the faith of Christ, evangelizing their atheistic, anti-God message with fervor to the applause of critics. In every communion of the faith, leaders are coming to the realization of Christianity’s increasing marginalization, even irrelevance. In spite of a certain amount of high visibility in the political arena, Christians seem every year to have less influence in the moral, social, and cultural arenas of life in the West. Crises in the church—scandals, the dying off of a generation of well-known leaders, polls that show very little difference between Christians and the rest of society in certain key moral and spiritual areas—have led some to conclude that Christianity in its present form is no longer a viable option for people seeking meaning and happiness in life. Certain leaders in the “emerging Church” movement want to lay aside the label “evangelical” and create an entirely new identity for the faith, forged in the fires of postmodernism and pop culture.

Everywhere the pressure to change is being exerted. Churches feel it in their worship services. Seminaries show their sensitivity to this pressure by creating new curricula and repackaging old ones. Believers want new programs, more “relevant” worship services, contemporary music, and teaching that is less theological and more practical in its thrust.

Some of this pressure for change is good and should be welcomed. In every generation the followers of Christ must be sensitive to the concerns, needs, and interests of the surrounding culture and society, and must adapt their efforts to follow Christ so that they communicate Him

clearly and represent Him effectively to the people with whom they live and work. Change and adaptation have marked Christianity throughout its two thousand years of expansion into cultures of all kinds, among people of every nation, tribe, and tongue.

But while much must be reviewed and many things can be changed, what must *not* change is that body of truth received by the apostles and passed on intact throughout the centuries. The faith of Jesus Christ—the truth He embodied and proclaimed—was received by the apostles as the capstone on a work of revelation that began with Moses, developed through David and the prophets, and was brought to its conclusion by the end of the first century AD. The Word of God in Scripture is the truth of God that comprises the faith, once for all entrusted to the saints. In every generation, faithful theologians have studied the works of prophets and apostles in the light of the teachings and writings of their forebears and have translated the faith to their own generations, preserving the truth in contemporary forms without compromise, omission, or addition.

This is what we have in *The Faith* by Charles Colson and Harold Fickett. Here, in stories, narratives, and trenchant expositions, is the old, old story of redeeming grace and truth, packaged for a readership swirling in the waves of change. *The Faith* is a life-preserver for any who may be having a hard time keeping their convictions afloat amid the stormy pressures for change that have settled on the Church today. This is a book to read, study, reflect on, discuss, and live out as a valuable resource for anchoring and asserting the faith of Christ in the midst of changing times. This guide to reading and study is provided by PFM and Zondervan in order to encourage careful reading, eager discussion, and faithful application of this important work.

## How to Use This Guide

This guide to reading and study is divided into fifteen lessons, corresponding to the fifteen chapters of *The Faith*. It has been written with individual readers in mind, but with the idea that they may use it individually or as part of a group study. We suggest that you download a copy of this guide so that you can write out your answers in the spaces provided, and have a permanent record of your studies. For each lesson the format of this guide proceeds as follows:

- *Lesson summary*: Provides a quick overview of the content and purpose of the chapter.
- *Questions to guide your reading*: Five questions are given to help the reader identify and keep in mind the main points of the chapter. We don't recommend that you write out your answers to these questions, merely that you keep them in mind as you read.
- *Questions for reflection*: The questions in this section anchor the chapter in the teaching of Scripture and lead the reader to reflect on the chapter in the additional light from the Bible. Here it would be a good idea to jot down some thoughts in response to each question. This will help you in thinking deeper into the teaching of Scripture and the lesson of each chapter.
- *Questions for discussion*: These are questions designed for use in a group setting, but they can also help an individual reader think more deeply about the issues raised in the chapter. Use these questions for reflection and meditation; you may or may not wish to write out answers to these. In a group setting, someone should be designated to lead the discussion using these questions. That person—leadership can change each time—will want to work through these questions carefully, perhaps developing a few more of his or her own to help guide the group.
- *Questions for application*: For individuals and groups, these questions point toward specific action steps that can help to “put legs” on the teaching of each chapter. Since, as Paul reminds us, the goal of all Christian instruction is the life of love (1 Timothy 1:5), these questions are designed to lead students to consider the outworking of *The Faith* in their own personal lives, among the people

they encounter every day. The more carefully and prayerfully you consider these questions, the greater the likelihood will be that you will actually begin to see growth in the faith in your own life.

- *Lesson conclusion*: This brief, concluding statement will summarize the present lesson and create a bridge to the next.
- *Additional reading*: For each chapter I've listed one or two other books, available through Zondervan, that might be helpful in exploring more fully the subject of the chapter.

You will note that there are twenty questions per lesson, numbered sequentially for easy reference. Only the *questions for reflection* and perhaps the *questions for application* should require written answers. The rest are given to guide your reading, provoke thought, and prepare you for discussion in your group. Where I have found it helpful for the purposes of *The Faith*, and useful for the reader to understand the continuity of this book with the glorious heritage of Christian thinking, I have added quotes from theologians and creeds from previous generations, illustrating the various points of the faith discussed in the chapters of the book. These may be helpful for meditation and reflection, as well as during times of group discussion.

## Securing Our Anchor

I have worked with Chuck Colson for over twenty years, and I'm convinced that this is his most important book to date. The Church in changing times must not cast off her anchors. Though she feels the pressure to “go with the flow” and “catch the winds” of change, this is a prescription for disaster. These present winds will also abate, and, though they may leave much destruction in their wake, only the Church that remains anchored to the truth—the faith once for all entrusted to the saints—will have the necessary grounding and spiritual resources to rebuild and restore what the winds of change have uprooted and broken down. Let us prepare now, while the storms yet rage, so that, when they subside, and even as their fury yet roars, we may build and rebuild with confidence.

T. M. MOORE  
Knoxville, TN  
Thanksgiving, 2007

PART I

GOD AND  
THE  
FAITH



# EVERYWHERE, ALWAYS, BY ALL

Read: Preface, Prologue, and Chapter 1 of *The Faith*

## Lesson Summary

In our day the faith of Jesus Christ is under assault on two critical fronts—postmodern secularism and radical Islam. Christianity has flourished in nearly every culture and land, and laid the foundations for the great cultural achievements of the West. If the faith of Christ is to survive and grow through its present challenges, believers need to look back to their roots and recover the core convictions of their faith, so that they might stand together against contemporary threats to the Gospel.

## To Guide Your Reading

Keep these questions in mind as you read. It is not necessary to write out answers to them:

1. What do the authors mean by the “core beliefs” of Christianity, and why do they consider it so important to maintain these at such a time as this?
2. To what do the terms “orthodoxy,” “right belief,” “radical Christianity,” and “mere Christianity” refer?
3. What is the nature of the “dramatic shift in the prevailing belief of Western cultural elites,” and why should this be of concern to Christians?
4. How do anti-theism and radical Islam pose challenges to the Christian faith?
5. What is theology and why is it important?

## For Reflection

You will find it helpful to spend some time reflecting more deeply on each of these questions in the light of your reading of chapter 1. Jot down some of your thoughts and responses in the space provided:

6. Read Jude 1–3. Who are called to “contend for the faith”? Why?
7. Read 1 Corinthians 15:3–9. Which of the “core beliefs” of Christianity does Paul mention in this passage? Are these honored in your church? How?

“For the Church,  
though dispersed throughout  
the whole world, even to the ends of the earth,  
has received from the apostles  
and their disciples this faith.”

—Irenaeus of Lyon, second century

8. Read Hebrews 2:1–4. What is our responsibility concerning the faith entrusted to us? What is the danger if we fail in this?

“How happy is that church, on which the apostles poured forth all their doctrine with their blood! Where Peter endures a passion like his Lord’s! Where Paul wins his crown in a death like John’s! Where the apostle John after suffering no hurt from being plunged into boiling oil was remitted to his island-exile! Let us see what she has learned, what taught, what fellowship has had with churches in Africa also!”

– Tertullian of Carthage, second/third century

### **For Discussion**

Use these questions to prepare for discussion with your friends. You may or may not wish to jot down some of your thoughts:

9. Read 2 Thessalonians 2:13–15. What is the responsibility of those who have been called to glorify Christ? What does this entail?

11. As you understand them, what are the “core beliefs” of the Christian faith? How have you learned these? How confident are you that these are, indeed, the core beliefs of the faith?

10. Summarize what these passages teach about the faith entrusted to us and our responsibility for it:

12. Do believers from other churches in your community share these core beliefs? How do you know? If churches really shared these beliefs, is it reasonable to expect that they might find ways of expressing them together? Why or why not? In what kinds of ways?

13. Do you agree that Christians today need to hold fast to their core beliefs? Why or why not? What obstacles keep us from fulfilling this responsibility?

### Application

The questions in this section will help you begin to work your reading and study into your life. Follow the instructions in each case and record your responses to the questions provided. You may not be able to do all these exercises. Choose one or two, however, and do your best on them:

14. To what extent, or in what ways, do you have a sense of being connected with the other Christians in your community? In your country? From other countries? Other times? How might a study of “the faith once for all entrusted to the saints” help you to grow in that sense of connectedness?

16. Ask three or four of the Christians in your network to summarize their understanding of the “core beliefs” of the faith. What did you learn from this exercise? You’ll be visiting with these friends on other occasions throughout this study, so you might want to let them know you’ll have other questions in the future.

15. How would you describe your attitude toward “theology”? What are some of the sources of that attitude? Are you “doing theology” when you are studying the Bible?

17. Now ask two or three non-Christians in your network their understanding of the “core beliefs” of the Christian faith. Don’t be shy: just tell them it’s an assignment you have to complete for a course (you’ll be coming back to chat with these folks again too). What did you learn from this exercise?

18. In what ways do you sense that the challenges to Christianity mentioned in this chapter are pressing on you in your own network? How do they affect your practice of the faith?

19. What goals would you like to set for this study? What do you hope to learn? How do you hope to grow?

20. Find one person who will be willing to pray with and for you as you work through this study (men with men, women with women). Set a time to get together. Share with him or her what you are reading, why, and what you hope to gain from your study. Ask that person to agree to meet with you—for coffee, on the phone, over lunch—so that you can share what you're learning and listen to his or her views on certain matters. Jot down any thoughts that come to mind from this time.

## Conclusion

In the face of mounting challenges, Christians today need to secure their hold on the ancient and radical core beliefs of the faith, joining together to embrace and proclaim the truth of the faith entrusted once for all to the saints. This faith begins with the confident assertion, “I believe in God . . .”

“The preaching of the Church is everywhere consistent, and continues in an even course, and receives testimony from the prophets, the apostles, and all the disciples—as I have proved . . . for this gift of God has been entrusted to the Church, as breath was to the first man, for this purpose, that all the members receiving it may be vivified.”

—Irenaeus of Lyon, second century

## Additional Reading from Zondervan

Wayne A. Grudem, *Christian Beliefs: Twenty Basics Every Christian Should Know*

# GOD IS

Read: Chapter 2 of *The Faith*

## Lesson Summary

Many voices are crying out today, insisting that it is “irrational” — contrary to sound reason — to believe in God. In fact, just the opposite is true. Sound reason, the record of Christian history, the wonders of creation, and our innate sense of deity, point powerfully toward the existence of God.

## To Guide Your Reading

Keep these questions in mind as you read:

1. What are the three primary explanations for the origin of all things?
2. How does reason lead us to believe in the rationality of the existence of God?
3. How does the record of Christian history lead us to believe in the existence of God?
4. How do creation and the innate sense of deity point to the existence of God?
5. Why do people continue to deny the existence of God?

“The light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men unexcusable.”

— *The Westminster Confession of Faith*,  
1.1, seventeenth century

## For Reflection

Jot down some of your thoughts in response to the following questions. Look up each passage and meditate on it until you are able to formulate some response. Write out your answers in the space provided:

6. Read Psalm 19:1–6. Where is God revealing Himself? What is He revealing about Himself? Is this real revelation? Should people be able to “hear” and “see” God through this?
7. Read Acts 14:15–17. What “witness” to Himself has God left to all generations? What do such things tell us about God?

8. Read Romans 1:18–20. How reliable is God’s revelation of Himself in the things He has made? Where does that leave people? What should they be able to know about God from the things He has made?

“Understand the creation  
if you wish to know the Creator.”  
—Columbanus, sixth century

### For Discussion

Use these questions to prepare for your group discussion of this lesson:

11. Do you see evidence of the existence of God in the things of creation? Give some examples. What do these things “witness” about concerning God?
  12. Why is it so hard for unbelievers to see what you see in the things of creation? How will they ever be able to get beyond their “blindness” to understand that belief in God is completely rational?
  13. Reflect on your own coming to believe in God. What reasons or explanations were used to help you see your need of God? Why were these effective with you?
  14. Reflecting on Paul’s words in Romans 1:21–32, do you see evidence that the rejection of God in our generation is having the effects that Scripture describes? Explain. What does this suggest about the reliability of Scripture? The existence of God?
  15. Suppose someone said to you, “Look, I’d love to believe in your God, but there’s just *no compelling reason* for me to do so!” How might you begin to respond to that statement?
9. Read Romans 1:21–32. Why do people not acknowledge God’s revelation of Himself in creation and in their own hearts? To what do they turn? What would be some examples of this in our day? To what does that lead over time?
10. Read Ephesians 4:17–19. Why is it so difficult for many people to see that belief in God is altogether rational? What should be our attitude toward people who have a hard time believing in the existence of God?

**Application**

The questions that follow will help you begin to apply the teaching of this lesson to your life. Choose two or three of these and do them thoroughly:

16. Under the headings that follow, list some of the things in creation that speak to you about the existence of God. After each item you list, say a word or two concerning what you learn about God from this item:

<i>Things in Nature</i>	<i>Things in Culture</i>	<i>Things in People</i>

17. Use the lists you made above to chat with one or two Christian friends about the evidence of God in these various parts of His creation. Did they agree with your observations? Did they add anything to your observations?
20. Complete the following: “As a result of reading and studying this chapter, I’d like to be able . . .”

18. Choose one of the following passages: Psalm 19:1–4 or Romans 1:18–20. In a card shop, find a blank card that would be appropriate to send to a friend, with one or the other of these verses written out in your handwriting on the inside. Send or give the card to an unsaved friend, explaining that you would enjoy talking about this some time.
19. Suggest some ways that you might begin to be more conscious of the ways God is “speaking” to you through the things of creation. Do you think it might be helpful to keep a little notebook of some of your observations?

### Conclusion

People today have become accustomed to dismissing the idea of God as completely irrational. In fact, just the opposite is true. God is revealing Himself in many ways, most especially by having spoken to us through the Scriptures.

“No one can look upon himself  
without immediately turning his thoughts  
to the contemplation of God,  
in whom he ‘lives and moves.’”  
– John Calvin, sixteenth century

### Additional Reading from Zondervan

D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism*

# HE HAS SPOKEN

Read: Chapter 3 of *The Faith*

## Lesson Summary

Although the Bible is much maligned and ignored in our day, it continues to be what Christians in every age have understood it to be, the inspired Word of God. The God Who Is has made Himself known in creation and in our hearts; but He has spoken His Word to us, by Spirit-inspired prophets and apostles, and that Word has stood the test of thousands of years.

## For Reflection

Meditate on the passages that follow, recording some of your thoughts and other responses in the space provided:

6. Read 2 Timothy 3:15–17 and 2 Peter 1:16–21:  
What role did the Holy Spirit play in the giving of Scripture? Why is Scripture important? How should we receive and use it?

## To Guide Your Reading

These questions will focus your attention on the reading of chapter 3:

1. What do the Scillium martyrs and the Chinese house church believers have in common?
2. What are some ways the Bible is under attack today?
3. What do the authors mean by saying that the Bible is *inspired* by the Holy Spirit? Why does this matter?
4. What is the *canon* of Scripture?
5. What three evidences do the authors present for the *accuracy* and *reliability* of the Bible?
7. Read Job 23:12 and Jeremiah 15:16: How would you describe the kind of *attitude* toward the Bible indicated in these passages? Given what we saw in question 6, why would this be an important attitude to cultivate? How would you counsel someone to nurture this attitude toward the Bible?
8. Read Psalm 19:7–11. Here David refers to the Scriptures by many different terms. How many different benefits of Scripture can you identify here? Explain each one.

“The Bible was not made, but grew, and the composition of its several books marks the stages of its progressive development. It is, in the last analysis, the product of a single mind, the embodiment of a single fruitful principle, branching out in various directions. The different parts of it are mutually dependent, and are all together subservient to the organism as a whole.”

—Louis Berkhof, twentieth century

9. Read Matthew 22:23–33. What did Jesus mean by saying that the “Bible scholars” of His day did not “know” the Scriptures or the power of God? What was the result of their not knowing these? What would be some indications that someone really *did* know the Scriptures and the power of God?

“Whoever, therefore, thinks that he understands the divine Scriptures or any part of them so that it does not build the double love of God and of our neighbor does not understand it at all.”

– Augustine, fourth century

### For Discussion

Here are some questions you might use to prepare for your discussion group:

10. Read Acts 17:10–11. Explain each of the following:

“received the word with eagerness”:

“examined the Scriptures”:

“daily”:

“to see if these things were so”:

What do these terms suggest about guidelines for a working approach to the Bible?

11. Does the Bible *seem* to be a divinely-inspired book? What are some aspects of the Bible that might lead us to think that there is a divine Author behind all these words?

12. One of the ways we know the Bible to be the Word of God is that it is “profitable” for us in many ways (2 Tim. 3:15–17). What are some ways the Bible has “profited” your life? The lives of people you know?

13. Why do you suppose attacks on the Bible have increased in our day? Do you think the Bible makes people feel uncomfortable? Should it? Why or why not?

14. Suppose we really believed, with Paul and Peter, that the Bible was inspired, and, with Job and Jeremiah, we hungered and thirsted for it so that, like the Berean believers, we received it eagerly and searched it daily—suppose this were true of us: How would you expect to see that expressed in our everyday lives?

15. What are some obstacles to more consistent and effective use of the Bible by believers today? In other words, what’s keeping us from “going deeper” with the Word of God? Are these obstacles insurmountable? Suggest some ways of beginning to overcome them, so you will have more time and inclination for the Scriptures:

### Application

Choose two or three of the activities below to begin making more of a place for the Bible in your daily life:

16. Anything worth doing well is worth planning carefully. What is your plan for growing in understanding and “profiting” from the Bible? What do you think should be some aspects of such a plan?
  
17. Talk with some of your Christian friends. Ask them about how they approach the reading and study of the Bible. Ask them if their attitude toward the Bible is like Job’s and Jeremiah’s. Suggest some ways you might encourage one another in reading and studying the Bible.
18. Ask a couple of your non-Christian friends the following questions. Let the Lord lead you into whatever conversation might ensue:  

“Do you think the Bible has much impact in our community? Why or why not?”

“Do you think people could benefit from knowing more about the Bible? Could you?”
19. The authors talk about “the transformative power” of the Bible. Below, list some areas of your life where you would like to experience that power:

How might you begin to know that power more consistently?

20. Though the Bible is much maligned in our day, the fact is our society could not continue to exist without the teaching of the Bible. Unless, of course, we think it’s okay to steal, murder, commit perjury, and so forth. What other evidence might you cite to show that the teaching of the Bible is absolutely essential to an ordered, safe, and fruitful community?

### Conclusion

The Bible is God’s Word, given by God’s Spirit through God’s servants, and proven accurate and reliable in a wide range of ways. Men today may malign and scoff at the Bible, but it is the very *truth* of God—it is His Word.

“God speaks to us in different ways, and is no respecter of persons. But curiosity often hinders us in the reading of the Scriptures, for we try to examine and dispute over matters that we should pass over and accept in simplicity. If you desire to profit, read with humility, simplicity, and faith, and have no concern to appear learned. Ask questions freely, and listen in silence to the words of the saints; hear with patience the parables of the fathers, for they are not told without good cause.”  
— Thomas à Kempis, fifteenth century

### Additional Reading from Zondervan

Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stewart, *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*

# TRUTH

*Read: Chapter 4 of The Faith*

## Lesson Summary

Like the Bible, truth is under assault in our day, with many people denying that there can be such a thing as truth, and others content simply to be unsure. But truth exists, and believing in truth as God defines it makes all the difference in how we live.

## To Guide Your Reading

Chapter 4 develops answers to the following questions:

1. What are some ways that truth is coming under assault among those who oppose the Gospel today?
2. What do the authors mean by saying that many Christians have developed a “distaste of doctrine”? Why is this a problem?
3. Why is it important to our faith—what we believe—that we have clear convictions about the question of truth?
4. Why does truth matter to the practice of ethics?
5. Why is truth important to the development of culture?

## For Reflection

Meditate on the passages that follow and the questions provided with each one. Jot down some of your answers as you do:

6. Read 2 Timothy 2:24–26. What is necessary for people to come to the knowledge of the truth? Do we have a role in this?
7. Read 2 Timothy 3:1–9. How can someone be “ever learning” but never quite arriving at “knowledge of the truth”? How would you be able to know if this were happening to you?

“The right defence against false sentiments is to inculcate just sentiments.”  
—C. S. Lewis, twentieth century

8. Read Ephesians 4:17–24. What does it mean to say that “the truth is in Jesus”? What must we “put off” in order to receive that truth? What is involved in being renewed in our minds?

“We will destroy the church if we do not have the courage in a radical day like ours to hold onto the absolutes of the Word of God regardless of the cost. But also when we train children to take equally what the Bible says with what people will think, we destroy the Bible’s authority when the chips are down in the university.”

– Francis A. Schaeffer, twentieth century

9. Read Philippians 4:8–9. How would you explain the connection between *thinking* about true things and *living* in the truth? If we “practice” the truthful things to which we devote our minds, what is promised?

### For Discussion

Reflect on the following questions as you prepare for your discussion group. You might want to jot down some thoughts as you do:

11. Do you agree that truth is under assault in our day? Can you cite some examples? Why does it matter?

12. What would you describe as the “truth-making” agencies in our society? That is, where do people go to learn about “truth,” or views of truth? What is the relative role of each of these in the lives of the people we see each day?

10. Read John 8:39–47. Jesus understood the difference between truth and lies. Why is it important that we be able to distinguish between these?

13. It’s clear that many lies are being told today in the name of “truth.” That is, people are embracing and promoting ideas that seem contrary to what our society has always understood to be true. Can you think of some examples? What makes these ideas not true?

14. Think of a society like Soviet Russia, which Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and others accused of being built and sustained on lies upon lies. How did the absence of truth affect the following aspects of Russian life under Soviet rule?

religion:

culture:

international involvement:

personal ethics:

family life:

education:

15. What “checks” exist in our society against such a thing happening here? What is our responsibility as individuals for ensuring against the erosion of truth? How should we protect ourselves against the subtle appeals of all kinds of lies?

### Application

Here are some exercises that can help you to see the importance of knowing the truth and standing squarely for it. Choose one or two of them to help you in learning to apply the lesson of this chapter:

16. Spend an evening watching television with a view to discovering truth. Pay attention to storylines, reports and reporting, advertising, and so forth. Make a list of everything you hear that “sounds like” a lie, or, at best, a sincere stretching of the truth. What makes it so? Does it matter? Why?

17. Ask some of your Christian friends how they think about truth. Jot down their responses. Ask them if they think they ever come under the influence of lies, half-truths, or outright attempts to deceive them. Then ask how they prepare themselves to resist being led astray from the truth that they believe.

18. Engage an unbelieving friend over the question of truth. Ask how he or she feels about truth: Does it exist? Can we know it? Does it make any difference? Do you ever think you might be lied to by people you trust? How do you determine what's true, what you should live by?

"If we could not know truth ..."

19. During the week to come, as you read your Bible, write out one sentence of truth for each passage you read. In other words, for each passage you read this week, try to summarize in a single sentence the truth it proclaims. You might follow the formula: "The truth contained in this passage is ...". Then reflect on how those truths compare with what you hear from the media, culture, your friends, etc. Is there a conflict of truth in the world today?

"The best way to ensure that I live in the truth is ..."

Share your answers with a friend and use your thoughts as a conversation starter.

### Conclusion

We need to understand that truth exists, truth matters, and truth is the only thing that can keep us from falling victim to various kinds of evil.

20. Try completing the following in your own words:

"I know that truth exists because ..."

"For a man speaks more or less wisely to the extent that he has become more or less proficient in the Holy Scriptures. I do not speak of the man who has read widely and memorized much, but of the man who has well understood and has diligently sought out the sense of the Scriptures."

— Augustine, fourth century

"I know that truth matters because ..."

### Additional Reading from Zondervan

J. P. Moreland, *Kingdom Triangle: Recover the Mind, Renovate the Spirit*

# WHAT WENT RIGHT, WHAT WENT WRONG

Read: Chapter 5 of *The Faith*

## Lesson Summary

The truth is that evil abounds in our world, and it is the fault, not of God, but of our own free and responsible choices. Our unbelieving contemporaries reject this idea and try to pin the problem of evil on sociological causes. But this, too, is just one more ploy in Satan’s game of deceit.

## To Guide Your Reading

Keep these questions in mind as you read chapter 5:

1. What do the authors mean by the problem of evil, and how is this related to what they call “the cosmic war in the heavens”?
2. What is the relationship between God, human free will, and evil? Why is it important to understand this?
3. How do our unbelieving contemporaries try to account for evil? Why does this not work?
4. What is Satan’s role in the continuing presence of evil in the world?
5. Why is it important to understand that we all have a responsibility in the presence of evil in the world?

## For Reflection

Here are some of the classic texts on the origins of evil. Meditate on each one carefully:

6. Read Ezekiel 28:1–19 and Revelation 12:7–12. These texts have historically been understood as recounting the fall of Satan from heaven. Why did Satan fall? What were the results of his fall?

7. Read Genesis 3:1–6. To what did the fallen Satan appeal in trying to get the woman to join him in the cosmic war against heaven? Where did the woman go wrong?

“The great Dragon, worst of all, terrible and ancient –  
Who was also the slippery serpent, wiser than all  
The beasts, and the fiercer creatures of the earth –  
Dragged a third part of the stars with him into the  
abyss  
Of the infernal places and the various prisons:  
Exiles from the true Light, hurled headlong by the  
flatterer.”

– Columba, sixth century

PART I: GOD AND THE FAITH

8. Read Genesis 3:7–24. Make a list of the consequences of the fall into sin, as you see them in each of the following verses:

v. 7:

v. 8:

v. 12:

v. 13:

vv. 14–15:

v. 16:

vv. 17–19:

vv. 22–24:

9. Read Romans 3:9–23. Paul elaborates the consequences of sin. How many different effects and consequences of sin can you identify in these verses?

10. Read Ephesians 2:1–10. Paul says that people caught up in sin are “dead.” In what sense? How has God overcome this problem?

“The desire for sovereignty is a deadly corrosive.”  
—Augustine, fourth century

**For Discussion**

You may find the following questions helpful in preparing to meet with your discussion group:

11. Why do people even care about “the problem of evil”? What does this say about our innate sense of “right” and “wrong”—even “truth”?

12. Why is it impossible to hold the view—as some religions do—that evil simply does not exist? What if we all held that view? How would that affect our society?

13. We need to account for evil, because only by accounting for it can we hope to overcome it. What seem to be the most popular approaches today for explaining the presence of evil? Are these truly viable? Why or why not?

14. Why do people resist the idea that we are responsible for evil? That, through the exercise of our free wills, people commit evil? What does admitting this necessarily imply about us as people? Is this notion agreeable to contemporary unbelievers? Why or why not?

15. Why do people today reject the biblical explanation of the origins and nature of evil? What's at stake in admitting that the Bible might be right?

### Application

Here are some exercises to help you work out the teaching of this chapter in your own life. Choose two or three of these:

16. “Evil” is not a term much in use today—too many moral and spiritual implications, I suppose. But people will readily talk about things they consider to be “wrong” or “not right” in the world. Spend a day listening to people talk to one another, watching the news, reading the paper, and so on. Make a list of everything you encounter that people think of as wrong. Ask a few friends to comment on what it is about these things that makes them “evil.”

17. The Bible says that the Law of God is holy and righteous and good (Rom. 7:12). This is the very opposite of what we think of as “evil.” Ask several of your Christian friends if they know all the Ten Commandments, and if they can recite them in order. Do you think we can defend ourselves against evil if we willfully ignore what is holy and righteous and good?

18. “Evil” has become somewhat fashionable again. People have used this term in reference to several recent events, usually involving the loss of innocent life. Ask some of your unbelieving friends if they believe in “evil” and, if so, of what does “evil” consist? Ask them how they know this is what “evil” is.
20. Meet with someone not part of your discussion group to talk about what you’ve learned thus far (perhaps your “prayer partner” from Lesson 1). Share what you are learning and spend some time in prayer together.

19. If we are responsible for evil, because sin remains in even those redeemed by the Lord, then we need to be alert to its presence in our lives. This week, try to be conscious of any time an evil thought comes to mind, an evil sentiment grips your heart, or you say or do something that qualifies as less than holy and righteous and good. Is there evil in you yet? How should you try to deal with this evil? Where do you turn to overcome evil with good?

### Conclusion

We can’t get away from the fact that we are responsible for the evil in the world, because there is evil in our wills. How can we ever overcome this? Only by the invading grace of God!

“But it is most truly said, ‘Pride is the beginning of all sin,’ for it was this sin that overthrew the devil, from whom arose the origin of sin and who, through subsequent envy, overturned the man who was standing in the righteousness from which he had fallen. For the serpent, seeking a way to enter, clearly sought the door of pride, when he declared, ‘You shall be as gods.’”

—Augustine, fourth century

### Additional Reading from Zondervan

Chap Clark and Kara E. Powell, *Deep Justice in a Broken World: Helping Your Kids Serve Others and Right the Wrongs around Them*

# THE INVASION

Read: Chapter 6 of *The Faith*

## Lesson Summary

In Jesus Christ the Truth of God became a Man and accomplished the redemption of God's people, a work that continues even to this day. In Christ God is reconciling the world and all things to Himself.

“In the incarnation of God there  
is no lowering of the Deity; but the nature  
of man we believe to be exalted.”  
— Anselm, eleventh century

## To Guide Your Reading

These questions will help you to consider the important elements of the incarnation of Christ and His great work of redemption:

1. In what sense is the incarnation of Jesus like an invasion against an enemy-held island?
2. What did Jesus accomplish by His death on the cross? How must we respond to this?
3. Why is it important to understand the resurrection of Jesus as a true historical event, and not just a myth?
4. What is the significance of the ascension of Jesus Christ? What is He doing at present?
5. How do these various aspects of the work of Jesus, the incarnate God, benefit those who believe in Him?

“Unless man had been joined to God, he could never have become a partaker of incorruptibility. For it was incumbent upon the Mediator between God and men, by His relationship to both, to bring both to friendship and concord, and present man to God, while He revealed God to man.”

— Irenaeus of Lyon, second century

## For Reflection

The texts that follow outline the great redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Reflect on them carefully, especially as you have experienced their truth in your own life:

6. Read Philippians 2:5–11. Why did Jesus become a man? What did He accomplish, and how? What are the implications of this for us, both for the present (v. 5) and as we look to the future (v. 11)?
7. Read 1 Corinthians 15:3–20. Why does Paul keep saying “according to the Scriptures”? Which Scriptures? Can you think of some? According to Paul, why is it important that we understand the resurrection of Jesus to be a true historical event?

8. Read Acts 2:29–41. Raised from the dead, Jesus was exalted to heaven. Why? What was the result of His exaltation, and what are the implications of that for people? How should we respond to this news?

“It is, as we have frequently said, the characteristic aim of holy Scripture to present the Saviour in a two-fold manner. First, in that he is Word, effulgence and wisdom of the Father, he always was and is God and Son. Subsequently, by taking flesh for our sake from a virgin, the God-bearing Mary, he became man. Now one can find this indicated throughout inspired Scripture.”

–Athanasius, fourth century

9. Read Hebrews 8:1–13. At the Father’s right hand Jesus mediates “better” promises for us, the promises of the New Covenant. What are those promises (vv. 8–12)? How do you experience them? How would you counsel someone to lay hold on those promises?

10. Read 1 John 5:1–6. Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross was acceptable to God, because He perfectly fulfilled the righteous requirements of God’s Law (cf. Matthew 5:17). He overcame death, which had not claim on Him (because He was without sin), by following God’s Law. This is how Jesus “walked.” What does He expect of us? How now should we “walk”?

### For Discussion

Use these questions to prepare for your group discussion. You don’t need to write out your answers, but think through these questions so that you can talk with your friends about their meaning:

11. In His work of redemption, Jesus accomplished several important things. Be prepared to talk about the importance of each of the following:
  - He fulfilled all righteousness:
  - He proclaimed a Kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy:
  - He healed the sick and cared for the downcast:
  - He took the punishment due us for our sin:
  - He overcame death and hell by His resurrection:
  - He ascended into heaven and is enthroned on high:
  - He poured out His Holy Spirit:
12. This is the “Good News” of the Kingdom of God and Jesus Christ. Can you assemble all your thoughts from question 11 into a two- or three-sentence summary of the Gospel?

13. Should we think of Jesus' redemptive work as only applying to the saving of our souls? Is His redemption (salvation) larger than this? How much larger?

### **Application**

Choose two or three of the following exercises and use them to work this chapter's lesson into your life:

16. In the space that follows, briefly write out your own personal experience of the saving work of Jesus Christ, from the beginning to the end. How has His work affected you? How did you come to believe in Him? What difference has this made in your life?

14. What does it mean to "believe" this Good News? What are the primary obstacles to people believing it? How did you come to believe it?

15. Review the questions in the previous section and in this section. Jesus said, "As the Father has sent Me, so I am sending you" (John 20:21). What are the implications of Jesus' incarnation for the way we should be living?

17. Ask several of your Christian friends to explain their understanding of the "Good News." Listen carefully, and help them see, from your work in this lesson, any areas where their understanding of the Good News needs to be fleshed out more fully.

18. Ask one of your non-Christian friends to help you out with something: Tell him or her that you're taking a course trying to understand the faith once for all entrusted to the saints, and that one of your assignments is to summarize the work of Jesus. Ask if he or she would be willing to listen to your summary and comment on it. Then, get together with your friend and share a summary of your answers to questions 6–15. Talk about it together.
19. Next time you're in worship, see how much of the Good News of Jesus is included in your service. Make a little "checklist" from question 11. Every time you hear one of the aspects of Jesus' work mentioned—in singing, prayer, preaching, etc.—note it on your list, noting where that particular part of the work was mentioned. Later in the day, talk with a friend or your family about your worship. Was the work of Jesus central to your worship? Should it be?
20. You can use the Good News of Jesus, as outlined in question 11, to pray for your friends. For example, how could the Good News help you in praying for someone who was going through a difficult time? For someone who didn't believe the Good News? Someone who was trying to be a disciple of Jesus? Make a list of your closest friends and those you see most often during the week. Beside each name, note some aspect of the work of Jesus that might apply especially to that person at this time. Begin praying daily for these friends.

### Conclusion

Central to God's truth, as well as to knowing that truth, is Jesus Christ and what He has done to accomplish our redemption. He is the Son of God Who came for our salvation, the second Person of the Triune God, our Savior and King.

"Wherefore, following the holy Fathers, we all with one voice confess our Lord Jesus Christ one and the same Son, the same perfect in Godhead, the same perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man, the same consisting of a reasonable soul and body, of one substance with the Father as touching the Godhead, the same of one substance with us as touching the manhood, like us in all things apart from sin."  
— *The Formula of Chalcedon, fifth century*

### Additional Reading from Zondervan

Dennis F. Kinlaw, *Let's Start with Jesus: A New Way of Doing Theology*

Michael Wilkins and J. P. Moreland, eds., *Jesus Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents the Historical Jesus*

# GOD ABOVE, GOD BESIDE, GOD WITHIN

Read: Chapter 7 of *The Faith*

## Lesson Summary

The Christian faith begins and ends in the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These are not three gods, but One, and inseparable. They are equal in power, majesty, eternity, glory, and honor, though they have different functions within the Godhead and in the divine economy. This One eternal God is sovereign over all things.

increases, anything to do with sex or appearance, anything corporeal, but one everlasting God without beginning, Who is wholly everywhere without limitation of place, disposing all movements without movement of his own, Who sees the past, present and future ages of His creatures equally, for Whom nothing is past, nothing remains to come, but all things are present.”

—*Liber de Ordine Creaturarum*, seventh century Irish

## To Guide Your Reading

Let the following questions mark the path through this important chapter:

1. Why is the doctrine of the Trinity at once so important and so difficult to understand?
2. Summarize the various attacks on the doctrine of the Trinity that we can expect to encounter.
3. What are some helpful ways of thinking about the Trinity? What are the limitations of these?
4. In what ways is the doctrine of the Trinity relevant to our everyday lives as Christians?
5. What are some of the implications of the doctrine of the sovereignty of this Triune God?

“For it is truly so that the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is in all respects inseparable, one Godhead in essence and a distinctive Trinity in the substances of the Persons, in which it must be believed there is nothing superior or inferior in the nature of the Godhead, nothing that came earlier or later, in which it is not right to discern anything enslaved, anything subject, anything that can be perceived in a particular place, anything limited to time, anything unstable, anything that

## For Reflection

Meditate on the passages and questions that follow. Write out some of your thoughts and observations as you prepare for your next discussion session.

6. Read Matthew 28:18–20. This is the “Great Commission.” Why do you suppose Jesus made a point to include all three Persons of the Trinity in this mandate? How is each of the Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—relevant to our mission in the world?

7. Read Genesis 1:1–3, 26, and John 1:1–5. How can you see that the members of the Trinity are present in these accounts of creation? What seems to have been the roles of each?

8. Read 2 Chronicles 24:19–20 and John 14:15–17. The Spirit is present in both Testaments, but the way people related to Him is different from the Old to the New. How do these two texts portray that difference? What are the implications of this difference?

9. Read Revelation 4:1–6 and 5:1–6. The “seven spirits” here can be translated “sevenfold” or “altogether perfect” Spirit. Can you see the Trinity in these verses? What is suggested about the relationship between them?

10. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:1–10. Here the three Persons of the Trinity are mentioned in connection with the believing community. How do believers relate to each? How would you describe your relationship to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit?

“Now, as to this rule of faith ... it is, you must know, that which prescribes the belief that there is one only God, and that He is none other than the Creator of the world, Who produced all things out of nothing through His own Word ... that this Word is called His Son ... [Who] sent instead of Himself the Power of the Holy Spirit to lead such as believe.”

– Tertullian, second/third century

### For Discussion

Think through the following questions in the light of chapter 7 and the passages examined in the previous section. Prepare to contribute to the discussion the next time your group assembles.

11. Do you think most Christians have a good understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity? Why or why not? Does it hinder their faith in any way if they don't? How?

12. Why is it so hard to grasp this concept? Why do those who oppose the Gospel attack the doctrine of the Trinity? How can we prepare to defend this teaching?

13. We relate to each of the Persons of the Trinity. Each has a role in our lives. How would you explain the nature of the believer's relationship to the Father? To the Son? To the Holy Spirit?

14. The Father is over all things. The Spirit dwells in us. The Son is the Mediator between us and the Father. In the Spirit we are enabled to receive the Son. Through the Son we may know the Father. By the Father's grace and power we receive the Spirit and believe on the Son. Why is each of the Persons of the Trinity absolutely essential to our being able to know God and enjoy and glorify Him forever?

15. The Triune God is sovereign. Below, make a quick list of all the different areas of your life—where you go, what you do, whom you encounter:

How might God express His sovereign grace and truth through you in each of these areas? On a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 = As Good As It Gets!, how would you rate the extent to which God's sovereignty can be seen to be at work in you in each of the areas you listed above? Why did you choose the numbers you did?

### **Application**

We need to work hard to grow in our understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity and its importance for our lives. Choose two or three of the following exercises and see if they won't help you in this great task:

16. Try your hand at diagramming the Trinity and our relationship to it. You'll want to include some means of illustrating the three Persons of the Godhead, yourself, the world, and how all this relates. This can be a daunting challenge, and Christian artists through the centuries have come up with some really lovely ideas. See what you can do!

17. Interview some of your Christian friends in a “word association” game. Give them the words that follow, then jot down their one-word responses to the right:

Trinity

God the Father

God the Son

God the Holy Spirit

The sovereignty of God

Now, based on what you see in this, what can you conclude about the state of understanding of the Trinity among the Christians you know?

18. Tell an unbelieving friend at work, or an unbelieving neighbor, that you’re taking a course on the Christian faith, and you need to get some views about the Trinity. What do they understand that *Christians* believe about this? What do *they* understand by the Trinity? Listen carefully. Do the unbelievers you know grasp the doctrine of the Trinity very well?

19. In your next service of worship at church, listen carefully to see how each of the Persons of the Godhead is mentioned. Are they all acknowledged? In what way(s)? Do you think it’s appropriate to offer worship to all three Persons of the Godhead? Why or why not?

20. Spend some time looking around at creation. How many ways can you see that the created world reflects the reality of the Trinity? For example, everything has length, width, and breadth (or depth). Insects have three distinct body sections. Make a list below:

“In the unity of the Godhead there are three Persons, having one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Father exists. He is not generated and does not come from any source. The Son is eternally generated from the Father, and the Holy Spirit eternally comes from the Father and the Son.”

– *The Westminster Confession of Faith, 1648*

### Additional Reading from Zondervan

Alister E. McGrath, general editor, *Zondervan Handbook of Christian Beliefs*

Kevin Giles, *Jesus and the Father: Modern Evangelicals Reinvent the Doctrine of the Trinity*

Frank D. Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology*

### Conclusion

Belief in the doctrine of the Trinity is absolutely essential to the life of faith. We will never know fullness of life as God intends until we understand the work of each Person of the Godhead, and how each of them is working fully in us, to will and to do of God’s good pleasure (Philippians 2:12–13).

PART II

THE  
FAITH  
AND LIFE



# EXCHANGING IDENTITIES

Read: Chapter 8 of *The Faith*

## Lesson Summary

Christian faith begins when one is converted to Jesus Christ by the grace of God, received through faith. This begins an altogether new experience of life, in which, progressively, we die to ourselves so that we might live to God. This life requires that we be prepared to share in the sufferings of Jesus, for this is the way of true and saving faith.

1. What does it mean to “be saved”? How does one come to be saved?
2. What is “saving faith”? What happens when someone is sincerely converted to Christ?
3. What do we learn from the example of Dietrich Bonhoeffer about the nature of the life of faith? How should we expect to experience this in our own lives?
4. What does it mean to “share in Christ’s sufferings”? How does suffering function in the life of faith?
5. Why is suffering rightly referred to as “the school of faith”?

“Although the Christian is thus free from all works, he ought in this liberty to empty himself, take upon himself the form of a servant, be made in the likeness of men, be found in human form, and to serve, help, and in every way deal with his neighbor as he sees that God in Christ has dealt and still deals with him. This he should do freely, having regard for nothing but divine approval.”  
 –Martin Luther, sixteenth century

## For Reflection

Here are some fundamental texts relating to the life of faith. What do we learn from each one of these concerning how we must follow Jesus?

6. Read Ephesians 4:17–24 (a text we looked at before, but from a different angle). What do we learn from this passage about the “exchange of identities” that is involved with believing in Jesus? In what ways do you experience this?
7. Read John 13:1–15. What do we learn from Jesus in this passage about self-denial? What kinds of things get in the way of living like this?
8. Read Galatians 2:15–21. How does Paul describe this “exchanged life” in these verses? In what ways have you experienced this?

9. Read 2 Timothy 3:10–17. Who should expect to suffer? In what ways? Why? Why do you suppose so few Christians experience the kind of suffering Paul knew in his life?
10. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17–21. With this passage as your opening thought, write out a brief summary of all that you have observed in questions 6–10 about the “exchanged life” of following Christ.
11. What seem to be the various components of “saving faith”? That is, what needs to be present for a person to know that he or she is expressing (or has expressed) saving faith, faith that converts one to become a follower of Christ?
12. Do you think most Christians expect their life as a follower of Jesus to include suffering? If so, what kind? If not, why not?
13. What kinds of ways should Christians expect to suffer? Are these always related to our faith in Christ, or are there other ways of suffering, ways that people who are not Christians also experience? Should Christians regard such suffering differently? Explain.
14. How would you counsel a new believer to prepare for a life of denying himself or herself and suffering for Jesus? What would you say to this person about the benefits of suffering? How to prepare for it? What God can do for him or her through suffering?
15. How can Christians help one another to live more authentic lives? Is there anyone in your life helping you like this? Are you helping anyone else?

“Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts of men willing to be co-workers with God, and without this hard work time itself becomes and ally of the forces of social stagnation.”  
—Martin Luther King, Jr., twentieth century

### For Discussion

Prepare for your next discussion group meeting by meditating on the questions that follow. Make some notes as you need to in order to help get your thoughts together:

11. What seem to be the various components of “saving faith”? That is, what needs to be present for a person to know that he or she is expressing (or has expressed) saving faith, faith that converts one to become a follower of Christ?
15. How can Christians help one another to live more authentic lives? Is there anyone in your life helping you like this? Are you helping anyone else?

### Application

Here are some exercises to help you gain the practical benefit from this lesson. Choose several and work at them diligently.

16. Imagine yourself in a casual conversation with an unsaved friend. You're talking about "religion" and suddenly, your friend asks you, "What do Christians mean by 'being saved'?" How would you respond?

17. Ask two or three Christian friends to share their experience of becoming Christians. How did they come to know the Lord? What happened at that time? What has happened since? How does that compare with your own experience? Do you think Christians could help one another by sharing like this more frequently?

18. Do you know a Christian who has recently endured suffering—whether for his or her faith or otherwise? Talk to that person about the experience. How did he or she deal with the suffering? What role did his or her faith play? What, if anything, does he or she think was gained through suffering?

19. For many years, especially early in the history of the Church, Christians kept careful records of their martyrs, and circulated their stories all over the Roman Empire. Why do you suppose they did this? Is there any benefit to be gained by Christians today from such stories? Try telling Dietrich Bonhoeffer's story to a few friends. Do they seem interested? Are they encouraged? Are you?

20. Review the goals you set for this study. Meet with your prayer partner and share what you have been learning and whether or not you think you're making progress toward your goals.

### Conclusion

The life of faith begins in believing in Jesus Christ, being converted to Him, and embarking on a life of self-denial and suffering as one of His followers. As we take up this life we will discover incredible, wonderful power from God to enable us to know what it means to be born again, and to show the love and forgiveness of Christ to others.

"It is the fellowship of the Cross to experience the burden of the other. If one does not experience it, the fellowship he belongs to is not Christian. If any member refuses to bear that burden, he denies the law of Christ."

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer, twentieth century

### Additional Reading from Zondervan

Samuel Wells, *Power and Passion: Six Characters in Search of Resurrection*

Steve Harper, *The Way to Heaven: The Gospel According to John Wesley*

John Koessler, *A Stranger in the House of God: From Doubt to Faith and Everywhere in Between*

# RECONCILIATION

*Read: Chapter 9 of The Faith*

## Lesson Summary

The power of the Gospel and the truth of Jesus Christ can be seen in the way Christianity effects reconciliation among men, bringing forgiveness, peace, and unity where anger and violence formerly obtained. But reconciliation doesn't come easily; we must be prepared to work hard to realize it.

## To Guide Your Reading

The following questions will lead you through the content of chapter 9:

1. What is the main point of the story about Sarria? Why is unforgiveness such a curse?
2. What makes Christianity unique among the world's religions in being able to achieve forgiveness and reconciliation among men?
3. Why is it important that Christians begin working hard at the unity they have in Christ? How can we begin to do this?
4. What encouragement are we seeing today to indicate that greater unity can be achieved among the members of the Body of Christ?
5. What can we learn about the state of affairs in Northern Ireland?

## For Reflection

The passages that follow underscore and elaborate the teaching of chapter 9. Read them carefully and meditate on them thoroughly. Write out your answers to the questions:

6. Read 2 Corinthians 5:16–21. What is the “ministry of reconciliation” (v. 18)? To Whom do we need to be reconciled? What does that mean? How should we expect that to play out among people?
7. Read Ephesians 4:1–6. Summarize the basis for Christian unity as Paul outlines it here. He says we need to be “working hard” (v. 3, the Greek is *spoudazontes*) to maintain the unity that God has provided for us. Why? What kinds of things threaten our unity?

“Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ.... We belong to one another only through and in Jesus Christ. What does this mean? It means, first, that a Christian needs others because of Jesus Christ. It means, second, that a Christian comes to others only through Jesus Christ. It means, third, that in Jesus Christ we have been chosen from eternity, accepted in time, and united for eternity.”

–Dietrich Bonhoeffer, twentieth century

8. Read Psalm 133. The psalmist provides enticing pictures of what unity is like when brethren are able to achieve it. What happened when Aaron was first anointed as priest? (Read quickly Leviticus 8 and 9, pausing especially over Leviticus 9:22–24.) What does this situation suggest about what real unity is like? And when the dew of Hermon (considerable, but far to the north) appears on the dry mountains of Zion, what does that suggest about unity when we are able to achieve it?

“What else is the Church than the congregation of all the saints? From the beginning of the world, be it patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, prophets, apostles, martyrs, or all other just men, who have been, are, or shall be, are one Church because they are sanctified by one faith and life, sealed by one Spirit, made one body; of which body the head is held to be Christ, as indeed it is written. I go further. Even angels, virtues, and powers supernal are united in this one Church; for the Apostle teaches that in Christ all things are reconciled, whether things on earth or things in heaven. So in this One Church thou believest that thou art to attain the Communion of the Saints. Thou must know that this one Church is ordered throughout the whole world and to its communion thou oughtest firmly to adhere.”

– Niceta of Remesiana, fourth century

9. Read John 17:20–26. What does our unity say to the world about our God? What do we gain from realizing this unity ever more fully? What should we expect to “see”?

10. Summarize what these passages teach about Christian unity. Then, on a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 = To A Very Great Extent, indicate the state of the practice of Christian unity among the believers in your city. Why did you select the number you did?

### For Discussion

Here are some questions to use in preparing for your next discussion group meeting:

11. The authors, following the teaching of the Bible, indicate that reconciliation with God and between brethren in the Lord is an important testimony to the truth of the Gospel. Why is this so? Do you think the world today sees this kind of unity among believers? Explain.

12. What are some of the obstacles keeping Christians and their churches from realizing greater unity? What should be some powerful focal points around which all believers can rally in pursuit of greater unity?

13. How might you expect greater unity among the members of the Body of Christ to affect your church? The churches in your community? You personally?

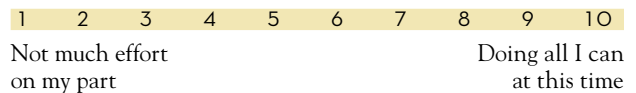
### Application

Here are some opportunities for you to put into practice the teaching of this chapter:

16. Spend some time reflecting on your own efforts to create more unity within your church, and with other Christians in your community. Paul says (Ephesians 4:3) that we are to “work hard” at this effort. Below, jot down everything that comes to mind which you would consider an example of how you are trying to fulfill this reconciling work of bringing greater unity into the Body of Christ:

14. If, as the authors indicate, unity must begin in our own congregations, what are some obstacles in your church standing in the way of greater unity? Suggest some things that you might do to begin trying to overcome those obstacles:

Now, use the scale below to assess the present state of your own efforts to bring more unity into the Church:



15. How do you suppose greater unity within churches and among the congregations of true Christians might impact your community? What might displays of this unity look like? If non-Christians began to see this more consistently, how would you expect that to affect their view of the church? Of the faith?

17. Let's stay with this just a bit: Suppose you wanted to improve the number you circled above. In fact, take that as a goal, stated this way: “I plan to improve my work at bringing greater unity in the Body of Christ by two points!” Answer the following:

What will that look like when you have achieved it?

What do you need to start doing in order to accomplish your goal?

How long will you give yourself to achieve this goal?

18. Meet with your prayer partner and share with him or her an overview of chapter 9 and this lesson. Discuss the importance of our unity in Christ as a witness to the truth of the Gospel. Share your answers to questions 16 and 17 above, and pray together that you might be faithful and diligent in working toward your goal.
19. Talk with your pastor about this chapter and lesson. Does he or she agree that working toward unity is important for our witness to the truth of the Gospel? Ask your pastor to explain what your church is doing in order to effect greater unity among the members of the Body of Christ in your community.
20. Talk with one of your unbelieving friends or colleagues. Share what you have been thinking and studying about the importance of Christian unity. Ask your friend if the lack of visible unity among Christians has ever been a matter of curiosity or concern—or perhaps a stumbling block to faith?—for him or her. Ask whether or not any greater visibility of Christian unity—suggest what that might look like—would affect his or her openness to the faith.

## Conclusion

Jesus said that visible Christian unity—the evidence of the reconciling power of the Gospel—was crucial to effective witness-bearing (John 17:21). We need to work hard at this, for the sake of the Gospel, and also in order that we might realize more of the reality of the Church, the Body of Christ.

“Although Churches be distinct, and therefore may not be confounded one with another, and equal, and therefore have not Dominion one over another; yet all the Churches ought to preserve Church-Communion one with another, because they are all united unto Christ, not only as a Mystical but as a Political head, whence is derived a Communion suitable thereunto.”  
— *The Cambridge Platform*, seventeenth century

## Additional Reading from Zondervan

Alvin J. Schmidt, *How Christianity Changed the World*

Dan Kimball, *They Like Jesus but Not the Church: Insights from Emerging Generations*

Randy Frazee, *The Connecting Church: Beyond Small Groups to Authentic Community*

# THE CHURCH

Read: Chapter 10 of *The Faith*

## Lesson Summary

The Church, the Body of Christ, is the focal point of reconciliation, forgiveness, and unity; it is where believers most pointedly participate in the glory and mission of God. The true Church is characterized by certain distinctive marks—the ministry of the Word, the sacraments, discipline, and community—and can be a powerful force for personal and cultural transformation.

of [the universal church], are also more or less pure, depending on how the gospel is accepted and taught, how the ordinances of God are administered, and how public worship is performed.”

– *The Westminster Confession of Faith*,  
seventeenth century

## To Guide Your Reading

Let these questions help you focus on the main points of chapter 10:

1. What is the Church? What are its primary functions to be? Why is worship so important to the life of the church?
2. What do the authors mean by the “marks” of the Church? What are the four primary marks of a true church?
3. What is a sacrament? Why are these important to the life of the church?
4. Why do local churches need to practice discipline (accountability)? What are some ways churches do this?
5. What is the Church’s mission in the world? How does her mission relate to her character?

## For Reflection

Study and meditate on the following passages. They can help us to think about God’s vision for His churches:

6. Read Hebrews 12:18–28. In this passage, cited in chapter 10, the writer of Hebrews conflates three important images: The holy Mt. Zion of the Old Testament, the gathering of saints in heaven before Christ, and the Kingdom of God. Each of these images suggests something to us about the Church. How do these images lead you to think about the nature of the Church, her character, and her mission?

“In order to gather and perfect the saints in this life until the end of the world, Christ has given the ministry, Scriptures, and ordinances of God to this universal and visible church, and by His own presence and Spirit He enables the church to function in this way according to His promise.... Particular churches, which are members

7. Read Ephesians 2:11–22. How is the Church related to Christ? To the Spirit? To the prophets (Old Testament) and apostles (New Testament)? How are church members to relate to one another?

8. Read Acts 2:42–47. Here is the gathering of the very first Christian church. What seem to have been its main priorities?

9. Read Ephesians 4:11–12. Paul describes the process by which a church achieves “building-up” (v. 12). How would you explain each of the following?  
pastors and teachers:

equipping:

the saints:

work of ministry:

How (or in what form) do you find these things in your church?

10. Read Ephesians 4:13–16. If vv. 11 and 12 describe the *process* whereby a church achieves “building-up,” vv. 13–16 describe the *nature* of a built-up, or healthy and growing church (note v. 13, “until”). How would you define each of the following?

**Unity**

of the faith:

of the knowledge of the Son of God:

**Maturity**

no longer children:

speaking truth in love:

every joint supplies:

increase in love:

To what extent does your own church reflect this kind of “building-up”?

“The Church, then, is called catholic because it is spread through the whole world, from one end of the earth to the other, and because it teaches fully and without any omission every doctrine which ought to be brought to men’s knowledge.... It is called catholic also because it brings into religious obedience every sort of men, rulers and ruled, learned and simple, and because it brings a universal remedy and cure to every kind of sin ... and possesses within it every form of virtue that is named.”

–Cyril of Jerusalem, fourth century

### For Discussion

Let these questions help you prepare for your next discussion group meeting. Come to that meeting prepared to take an active role in sharing and encouraging your fellow group members:

11. In what ways does your church reflect the nature, mission, and character of the church as chapter 10 describes these, and as the questions in the preceding section have explored? Does anything seem to be missing, or in need of strengthening?
12. What does it mean to say that a church “grows”? What might be some inadequate ways of thinking about this? Can you suggest a more balanced and complete view of a healthy, growing church?
13. Whose responsibility is it to help the church grow? The Lord gives the increase, of course; but what is the role of staff, leaders, and church members in seeking to achieve the “building-up” of the local church? To what extent is this happening in your church?
14. Do you feel “equipped” for “ministry”? Explain:
15. When is a church faithful to its mission and character? What kinds of things keep churches from fulfilling their mission or realizing their character? Can church members play a role in helping in these matters? How?

### Application

These exercises can help you begin to work out the implications of this lesson and chapter in your own church. See if you can do them all before the next meeting of your discussion group:

16. Meet with two of your church's leaders. Ask them, "Is ours a healthy, growing church?" Make note of their responses, and compare them. What do you learn?

17. Ask your pastor(s) to explain to you the measures your church leaders use to determine the ways your church is growing. Do these seem adequate? Can you think of some other measures that might be used?

18. To what extent, and in what ways, or by what means, does your own church express the marks of a true church? What can you do to help ensure that these marks are consistently evident in your church?

19. Ask five of your fellow church members, "What is the mission of our church?" and "How are we doing at fulfilling that mission?" Note their responses, then suggest some ways that you and they might help your church be more consistent in pursuing its mission.

20. What is the role of each of the following in helping a church grow in holiness?

church members (the "saints" or "holy ones"):

the Holy Spirit:

the Law of God ("holy and righteous and good," Romans 7:12):

## Conclusion

The Church is the Body of Christ. As members of the Church, with Christ as Head, we are called to seek the holiness of our Lord and carry out the mission He has appointed to us.

"Stand fast, brethren, in the faith of Jesus Christ, and in His love, in His passion, and in His resurrection. Do ye all come together in common, and individually, through grace, in one faith of God the Father, and of Jesus Christ His only-begotten Son, and "the first-born of every creature," but of the seed of David according to the flesh, being under the guidance of the Comforter, in obedience to the bishop and the presbytery with an undivided mind, breaking one and the same bread ... that we should live in God through Jesus Christ."  
— Ignatius, second century

## Additional Reading from Zondervan

Sue Mallory, *The Equipping Church: Serving Together to Transform Lives*

D. A. Carson, ed., *Worship by the Book*

Robert Webber, *Worship Old and New*

Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson, *Building a Church of Small Groups*

# BE HOLY — TRANSFORM THE WORLD

Read: Chapter 11 of *The Faith*

## Lesson Summary

Christians are called to be holy, as Christ is holy. This involves renewing our minds and taking up new desires and practices, according to the holy Law of God. The holiness of the Church comes to expression both individually and socially as believers grow in grace and transform the world.

## To Guide Your Reading

Use these questions to help you identify and keep in mind the main points of the chapter. It is not necessary to write out your answers to the following:

1. What is holiness? Why does it matter? Why is becoming holy such a struggle?
2. What do the authors identify as four keys to becoming holy?
3. What are some differences between personal holiness and social holiness? Why is each important?
4. How can we see personal and social holiness coming together in men like William Wilberforce and William Booth?
5. What can be the effect of a commitment to holiness on an entire society?

## For Reflection

The following passages can help us think more pointedly about the calling to holiness. Read and meditate on each one, jotting down your thoughts in response to the questions that follow:

6. Read 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1. What “promises” are we to long for (vv. 16–18)? How do these promises relate to the pursuit of holiness? What is absolutely necessary if we are to become holy (7:1)?
7. Read Romans 3:21–31. Righteousness is holiness expressed in life. Where do we get the righteousness we need in order to be acceptable to God? But (v. 31) does this nullify the need to strive for righteousness in our daily lives? Explain.

“And we who were filled full of war, and slaughter of one another, and every kind of evil, have from out of the whole earth each changed our weapons of war, our swords into ploughshares and our pikes into farming tools, and we farm piety, righteousness, the love of man, faith, and hope which comes from the Father Himself through His Who was crucified.”

— Justin Martyr, second century

8. Read Romans 7:7–12. What is the role of the Law of God—the Ten Commandments—in helping us to become holy? How does Psalm 1 suggest the righteous person should use that Law?

9. Read 1 John 1:5–2:6. John outlines the way of holiness. Can we expect to attain perfect holiness in this life? What should we do when we fall short of that goal? How then shall we resume the pursuit of holiness?

10. Read Philippians 2:12–13. Only God can make us holy. What has He put at work within us toward that end? What must we do, for our part?

“Wherefore let us know nothing more profitable for ourselves than to examine ourselves daily, every day of our life reviewing that dubious life, and keeping account of our words and thoughts, and shuddering at human life, to ponder without ceasing [the end of our lives], while we spurn the pleasures of the world ... let us ever ponder the life true and eternal, which after death shall keep the immortal just.”

—Columbanus, seventh century

### For Discussion

Work through these questions carefully. They can help to make your next discussion group a valuable time of considering together the calling to holiness:

11. How would you explain the concept of holiness to a new believer? Why does holiness matter? How does one “pursue” holiness?

12. What are some of the main obstacles to becoming holy? Can you suggest some ways of removing or overcoming these obstacles?

13. Do churches have a responsibility to establish a “holy presence” in their communities? Can you suggest some ways they might do that? Is your church making any efforts at being a holy presence in your community?

14. Besides Wilberforce and Booth, can you think of other Christians who have made an impact on society by their holy lives and work for holiness, righteousness, and justice? What can we learn from such people about holiness?
15. What are four key components of holiness, and why is each important to becoming holy? Suggest some ways that the members of your group might help one another to realize these four key components.
16. Besides Wilberforce and Booth, can you think of other Christians who have made an impact on society by their holy lives and work for holiness, righteousness, and justice? What can we learn from such people about holiness?
17. Psalm 1 indicates that we can grow in righteousness when we are planted by God's living water (His Spirit, John 7:37–39) and meditate on His Law day and night. Lay out a plan for bringing your own life more into line with the description of the righteous person found in Psalm 1. Share that plan with a trusted friend.
18. Talk with several of your Christian friends about the need for greater holiness in your community. What are some areas of your community where greater holiness is needed? What might your church do to begin addressing this need?

### Application

Choose a couple of these exercises to help you work the lessons of this chapter out in your own life:

16. In the space that follows, jot down some areas of your life where you think the Lord has been working in you to will and do of His good pleasure, bringing holiness to greater completion in you. How has this come about? What did the Lord use?
19. Think about your own life: Where is there potential for you to raise the banner of holiness? In what kinds of arenas? Before whom? What obstacles are hindering you? What might you expect to be the result if you made a firmer, more conscious commitment to pursue holiness in these arenas, and before these people?

20. Choose one of the passages related to holiness from this lesson. Commit it—or part of it, at least—to memory. Recite it to yourself often. For a couple of weeks, use this passage at the end of the day to reflect on the day gone by. Can you see evidence that God is working in you unto holiness? Can you see areas where there is still work to be done?

“The moment we make up our minds that we are going on with this determination to exalt God over all, we step out of the world’s parade. We shall find ourselves out of adjustment to the ways of the world, and increasingly so as we make progress in the holy way. We shall acquire a new viewpoint; a new and different psychology will be formed within us; a new power will begin to surprise us by its upsurgings and outgoings. Our break with the world will be the direct outcome of our changed relation to God.”

—A. W. Tozer, twentieth century

### Additional Reading from Zondervan

Bill Hybels, *Holy Discontent: Fueling the Fire that Ignites Personal Vision*

Glen S. Scorgie, *A Little Guide to Christian Spirituality: Three Dimensions of Life Lived with God*

Ken Boa, *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation*

### Conclusion

The Church is called to be holy. Holy lives make for holy societies and bring much glory to God. Let us pursue holiness in the Lord, and let us take up the cause of life as we do.

# THE SANCTITY OF LIFE

Read: Chapter 12 of *The Faith*

## Lesson Summary

From its inception down to this day Christianity has demonstrated a concern for the sanctity of life at all stages of development. The Bible’s high view of what it means to be a human being—Christian humanism—leads Christians to seek the nurture and protection of life by every means, no matter how great the challenge, and in spite of the voices arrayed against them.

## To Guide Your Reading

Let these questions help you focus on the main ideas in this chapter:

1. What do the authors mean by “the sanctity of life”? Why are Christians committed to this?
2. What are some of the differences between Christian humanism and secular humanism?
3. What lessons can contemporary Christians learn from the Church’s mixed involvement with the issue of slavery?
4. What are some of the problems opposing the cause of the sanctity of life? Why may we not embrace a “lesser of two evils” mentality?
5. In what ways has modern technological advance compounded the difficulty of this issue?

## For Reflection

We need to understand the Bible’s teaching about human beings if we are to take up with abiding conviction the task of the sanctity of life. Consider the following passages:

6. Read Genesis 1:26–31. What does it mean that men and women were made in the image and likeness of God? What are some ways we see this “image of God” in people?
7. Read Matthew 25:31–46. What would be some examples today of “the least of these”? How should churches try to care for them?

“He who takes upon himself the burden of his neighbor; he who, in whatsoever respect he may be superior, is ready to benefit another who is deficient; he who, whatsoever things he has received from God, by distributing them to the needy, becomes a god to those who receive his benefits: he is an imitator of God.”

—*Epistle to Diognetus*, second century

8. Read Exodus 21:12–14; Jeremiah 1:4, 5; Psalm 139:13–16; and Luke 1:39–45. What do we learn from these verses about God’s view of life in the womb? What is its source? Nature? Potential? Value?

“What more? A noble thing is philanthropy, and the support of the poor, and the assistance of human weakness.... Basil’s care was for the sick, and the relief of their wounds, and the imitation of Christ, by cleansing leprosy, not by a word, but in deed.”

– Gregory on Basil, fourth century

### For Discussion

Think through your answers to the following questions so you will be prepared to contribute during the next meeting of your discussion group:

9. Read Psalm 8. What is the role of human beings in the divine purpose and plan?
10. Read Genesis 9:5–7. When we discount, disparage, or demean human beings, Whom ultimately are we offending? Why? In the light of the passages we’ve looked at here, what do you think should be some of the “planks” of a Christian platform on behalf of the sanctity of life?
11. What seem to be the motivations of those arguing for a “pro-choice” policy today? Are any of these consistent with Biblical teaching?
12. Realistically, what can one Christian do in his or her church to encourage a more consistent and active sanctity of life policy? What about in his or her community?

13. As you see it, what are some of the “tough questions” in having to deal with this issue? See if you can discover any sources from within the Christian community who are thinking about such matters.
14. What opportunities exist in your community for Christians to reach out to “the least of these” and show the love of Christ to their fellow image-bearers?
15. At some point, “life issues” must be brought into the political arena. Suggest some ways Christians can do this together:

### Application

Here are some application projects you and your discussion group might consider:

16. Go to the Internet to discover as many Christian agencies as you can that are working in pro-life issues. Find out various ways that you might become involved, and pray about how God might be leading you.
17. Contact PFM or go to the Prison Fellowship website, and click on the information about Angel Tree Ministry. Here is an opportunity for you and your church to enrich the life of the children of inmates. Find a project with Angel Tree and encourage your church to become involved.

18. How many different ways can you think of to begin praying about pro-life issues? For whom should you be praying? With what in mind? In what kinds of settings? Begin making prayer for life issues a regular part of your own prayer ministry.

## Conclusion

Christians, because of their high view of people as made in the image of God, have always been involved in “life” issues in one way or another. Until the Lord returns the Church will need to be actively involved in defending the dignity of human beings against those who have another agenda.

“Our age is suffering because of the rift between the spiritual and the temporal. It is suffering not only because of the despiritualization of the world, but also because of the disincarnation of the church. The church, it seems to me, has separated itself from real life and thus simply abandoned the world to its practical difficulties and taken refuge in an ivory tower. And for this it bears heavy responsibility for our present crisis. True, it still goes on preaching, but far from the public place where the practical life of men is lived.”

—Paul Tournier, twentieth century

19. Prepare a brief presentation based on the material of this lesson and chapter. Invite some friends over, or see if you can speak to your Sunday school class or Bible study group. Make a presentation then, encourage your listeners to take up some pro-life initiative.

20. What local pro-life agencies are in your community? Rescue mission? Children’s services? Unwed mothers’ services? Ministry to the disabled? Try to discover as many as you can in your own area. Choose one or two, and call to find out what their most urgent needs are. Make them a subject of prayer, and see what you can do to enlist your church in helping to meet these needs.

## Additional Reading from Zondervan

Ivy Beckwith, *Postmodern Children’s Ministry: Ministry to Children in the 21st Century Church*

Scott B. Rae, *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics*

# LAST THINGS

Read: Chapter 13 of *The Faith*

## Lesson Summary

There is an end to history. Jesus is coming again! Until then, Christians are called to lead their lives with a view to their final outworking in glory. Our lives until Christ returns should reflect to our neighbors the world that is coming, and the way things ultimately will be.

## To Guide Your Reading

These questions will help you focus on the primary points of this chapter:

1. In what way is the life of the Church a “sign” of things to come?
2. What do the authors mean by “justice”? How does this “sign” the world to come?
3. “Love” is the second sign of our eternal destiny. How does the Christian’s commitment to loving relationships speak to our neighbors about eternity?
4. What can we say about those who have never heard the Good News of Jesus? What is our role in redressing this situation?
5. Why is it important to remember that Jesus will one day judge all people?

## For Reflection

There is much more to say about “last things” than we can address in this lesson. The following passages are representative of how believers should think about last things, and how they should occupy themselves in this life:

6. Read Matthew 28:18–20. What does it mean to “make disciples” “as you are going”? Jesus promises to be with us in this effort. What difference should that make in the way we relate to the people around us each day?
7. Read 2 Peter 3:10–14. Where is history headed? How should we be living in the light of this?

“A bad death never follows a good life:  
for there is nothing that maketh death bad  
but that estate which followeth death. Therefore  
let not their care that needs must die be employed  
upon the manner of their death, but upon the estate  
that they are eternally to inherit after death ...  
what power hath the horror of death to affright  
their souls that have led a virtuous life?”

—Augustine, fifth century

8. Read 1 John 3:1–3. What is the final estate of those who believe in Jesus? Knowing this, how should we be striving to live now?

“But we must be ignorant of the secret events of things, as touching the time to come; for there is nothing which may make us more slack in doing our duties, than too careful inquisition therein, for we will always take counsel according to the future event of things; but the Lord, by hiding the same from us, doth prescribe what we ought to do.... Christ forbiddeth us to apply those things unto ourselves, which God doth challenge as proper to himself alone. Of this sort is the foreknowledge of those things which God hath taken to himself to govern and direct, according to his own pleasure, far contrary to our opinion, and otherwise than we could invent.”

– John Calvin, sixteenth century

9. Read Acts 1:7–8: What is “not for you to know”? What *does* Jesus want us to know, and do, while we can? What does that involve?

### **For Discussion**

Here are a few questions you can use in preparing for your next discussion group meeting:

11. Christians often seem to divide over “last things” matters. Since it is “not for you to know” very much about such things, is it a good idea for us to let such discussions divide the members of the Body of Christ? Why not? What should we be thinking and talking about instead?

10. Read 2 Timothy 3:1–12. What can we expect from the world around us in these last days? How should we be striving to live?

12. One of the “last things” that everyone will have to deal with is the judgment of Christ. But we don’t talk much about this in our churches, or among our friends. Why not? Is judgment part of the Good News of Jesus? In what way? How should we include the idea of judgment in sharing the Gospel?
13. Talk about the idea that the way Christians live now is supposed to be a “sign” of where things are headed ultimately. What do you understand things will be like in the new heaven and new earth? Should we spend more time thinking and talking about this? Would this be likely to affect the way we live now if we did? In what ways?
14. What are the different aspects of justice? How can Christians work together to achieve more justice in our society, more of the *shalom* of God?
15. If we really believe that life in the new heavens and new earth is going to be gloriously happy, and that failing the judgment of Christ will mean eternal misery, what does love demand of us toward our neighbors? How can we begin to take a more consistently loving approach to “signing” the way to heaven for our neighbors?

### Application

Choose one or two of the following activities to begin working the lesson of this chapter out in your own life:

16. Write a paragraph about what life will be like in the new heaven and new earth. Turn this into a song, a poem, or a painting, or, in some other way, make this into a crisp summary that you can review often and share with others. What do you learn from doing this activity?

17. For a week, read your local paper carefully, looking for examples of injustice—lack of *shalom*—in your community. Note them in the space that follows. Could local churches do anything about any of these? What? How might more direct and consistent Christian involvement in some of these areas help to bring the justice and love of Christ to light in your community?
19. Talk with a non-Christian friend about love or justice. Does he or she think these are important? Why or why not? Where does his or her sense of the importance (or lack of importance) of love and justice come from? Share from your reading the importance of these two subjects to the Christian worldview.

18. Suppose you had an opportunity to share the Good News of Jesus with a friend. What would you say? In the space that follows, outline a presentation of the Gospel that you might use to help another person come to know the Lord:

20. Meet with your prayer partner for this study. Share what you've been learning, and spend some time in prayer for one another.

### Conclusion

We are called to be living witnesses to the eternal reality of the glory of God. In these last days, as we await the return of the Lord, we could do no better than learn to rejoice in the orthodox faith of Christ, and to live it more fully, day by day.

“Who can satisfy God in the last times,  
when the noble rules of truth have been changed,  
save for those who scorn this present world?”

—Columba, sixth century

### Additional Reading from Zondervan

Steven R. Tracy, *Mending the Soul: Understanding and Healing Abuse*

Michael E. Wittmer, *Heaven Is a Place on Earth: Why Everything You Do Matters to God*

# THE JOY OF ORTHODOXY

*Read: Chapter 14 of The Faith*

## Lesson Summary

Christianity is not the dry, dour religion of puritanical fanatics and confused, misled illiterates. It is the joy of knowing God and rejoicing daily in His truth. The joyful Christian life can be a powerful witness to the truth of the Gospel.

## To Guide Your Reading

This is a short chapter, but very important to the book as a whole. Read it carefully, allowing these questions to guide you:

1. The authors give five reasons why people balk at becoming Christians in our day. Can you briefly explain each of these?
2. What do the authors mean by “the joy of orthodoxy”? What are some of the rewards of embracing orthodoxy?
3. How can a joyful orthodoxy be a powerful witness to the world?
4. How did Christianity differ from the pagan religions of ancient Rome?
5. Why is it important that we take our stand as Christians today “upon the shoulders” of those who have gone before us?

## For Reflection

Here are some passages to reflect on relative to the joy of orthodoxy. Meditate on each, and write out your answers to the questions:

6. Read Philippians 4:6–9. This compact passage involves so much that we have discussed in this book. How does it counsel us to know the joy and peace that orthodox belief and practice can provide?
7. Read Psalm 27. The psalmist longs to see the good things of God coming to expression in his life. How does he hope to realize these? What must he do? What does it mean to “wait” on the Lord?

“St. Athanasius and St. Augustine are much more up to date than many of our theological contemporaries.

The reason is very simple: they were dealing with things and not with maps, they were concerned not so much with what men can believe as with what God has done for men.”

—Georges Florovsky, twentieth century

8. Read Romans 8:31–39. How can the truths outlined in this passage be a source of Christian joy?

“I think it to be abundantly manifest, that Christian practice is the most proper evidence of the gracious sincerity of Professors (believers), to themselves and others; and the chief of all the marks of grace, the sign of signs, the evidence of evidences, that which seals and crowns all other signs.”

— Jonathan Edwards, eighteenth century

9. Read 1 Peter 3:8–16. Peter discusses some of the aspects of the Christian’s “hope.” Based on what you see here, what do we “hope” for in the life of faith? How does that hope affect our outlook on life? The way we live? What others see in us? What does it mean to give a defense of that hope? Are you ready to do that?

10. Read Hebrews 12:1–3. How can studying the lives of those who have gone before us—that great cloud of witnesses—help us in our own walk with the Lord? What can we learn from the example of Jesus about how to have joy in the face of suffering?

### **For Discussion**

At this discussion session you will want to talk about ways that you have experienced the joy of orthodoxy in your own life. Use the following questions to help you prepare:

11. How did you come to faith in Jesus Christ? What are your earliest happy memories about being a believer?

12. In what specific ways have you experienced the power of Jesus to change your life, bringing joy in place of sadness, hope in the place of fear, and peace where anxiety or fear previously obtained? Can you give a few examples?

13. In what ways has believing in Jesus given more direction and purpose to your life?

### Application

Here are a few activities you might try. They can help you experience more of the joy of orthodoxy as the authors describe it:

16. Meet with two or three of your Christian friends. Ask them to explain why they are Christians. What is it about following Jesus that gives them joy, meaning, hope, purpose in life, and so forth? Share your own responses to those questions.

14. What are some Scriptures that you have found particularly convicting or encouraging? Is there one that has had an especially powerful impact on your life? Or that has given you some particularly compelling insight?

17. Choose a Christian biography to read as a follow-up to this study of *The Faith*. What do you hope to learn from this person?

15. What most encourages you to grow in your walk with the Lord? How do you try to encourage others in their faith? How might you and the members of your group do more to encourage one another in the joy of orthodoxy?

18. Do a brief study of one character from the Bible who encourages you in your walk with the Lord. What do you most admire about this person? What can you learn from him or her? Share your findings with your prayer partner.

19. In what ways do you find that your experience of the “joy of orthodoxy” is interrupted, impeded, or hindered? What keeps you from being more consistently joyful in the Lord? Make a point to pray about each of these matters more consistently. See if you can identify something in Jesus to give you hope that you might soon be able to overcome these hindrances to joy.

20. Review the goals you set for this study. Are you making progress? In what areas? Have you been surprised by anything you’ve learned thus far?

## Conclusion

The Christian life is a joyful enterprise of following Jesus in every area of our lives. New people can create a new community, which can bring the newness of the Gospel into every area of life, with joy!

“To follow Jesus came to mean, for the early disciples, what it must inevitably mean for a follower in any age – not an encounter for personal gain, but an act of self-losing for those gains which are of a spiritual nature, and of such self-giving consequence that they, as His followers, allow Him to state the terms of their devotion and of their sacrifice. Hence, love must supplant servile obedience in discipleship; and giving must replace receiving.”  
– John E. Gardner, twentieth century

## Additional Reading from Zondervan

Bob Roberts, Jr., *Transformation: How Global Churches Transform Lives and the World*

# THE GREAT PROPOSAL

Read: Chapter 15 of *The Faith*

## To Guide Your Reading

As we come to the final chapter in our study of the faith, once for all given to the saints, use the following questions to guide your reading:

1. What is the main point of the story of Thorney Island and the Benedictine monks?
2. What other benefits flowed into Western societies from the monastic movement and Christianity in general?
3. What do the authors mean by a “clash of civilizations”?
4. What are the roots of contemporary “Islamofascism”? Why should this cause us concern?
5. What does the Christian faith propose to the world? Why should we believe that this is possible?

“For we ought not to be contentious; neither has Christ desired us to be imitators of wicked men, but he exhorted us to lead all men, by patience and gentleness, from shame and the love of evil. For we can prove this even in the case of many who once were of your way of thinking, but have changed their violent and tyrannical disposition, being overcome either by the constancy which they have witnessed in their neighbor’s lives, or by the extraordinary forbearance they have observed in their fellow-travelers when defrauded, or by the honesty of those with whom they transacted business.”

— Justin, second century

## For Reflection

The Christian faith represents a stark contrast to every other worldview, as the following passages make clear:

6. Read Ephesians 5:1 – 16. How would you characterize the life to which believers are called as followers of Christ? What would constitute the “best use” of our time in any given situation?
7. Read 1 Peter 4:1 – 11. What does it mean to “live for the will of God”? What motivation does Peter supply for us to live this way (vv. 5, 7, 11)? How can believers help one another to live this way?

8. Read Psalm 12. In what ways does this psalm describe the situation in our world today? Where does the psalmist counsel us to find refuge? What does that involve?

“The world after the fall is no lost planet, only destined now to afford the Church a place in which to continue her combats; and humanity is no aimless mass of people which only serves the purpose of giving birth to the elect. On the contrary, the world now, as well as in the beginning, is the theater for the mighty works of God, and humanity remains a creation of His hand, which, apart from salvation, completes under this present dispensation, here on earth, a mighty process, and in its historical development is to glorify the name of Almighty God.”

— Abraham Kuyper, nineteenth century

9. Read 2 Timothy 2:22–26. Comment on the importance both of godly living and careful persuasion in helping others to see the truth of the Gospel.

### For Discussion

Use the following questions to prepare for your discussion group. Think carefully about the “clash of civilizations” and your role as a follower of Christ in the great proposal outlined in chapter 15:

11. In what ways does the “clash of civilizations” affect me and my church? Is it possible that this clash could “heat up” in coming days? In the next generation? What would that mean?

10. Read Acts 4:32–37 and 5:12–16. What is the potential for a transformed community of believers to exert transforming influence on the world around them? Why is this so?

12. How is it that Christianity has been able, over the years, to contribute so many positive benefits to culture and society? What is the relationship between these kinds of “fruit” and the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ?

13. Should we expect our faith in Christ to have beneficial social and cultural effects for our local community? Such as? Are there places in our community where believers might be able to make a positive contribution toward relieving suffering, achieving justice, introducing beauty, or restoring goodness? What can churches do to begin taking up such a challenge?

14. What is the “great proposal” that Christianity needs to make to this generation? What should the role of my church be in this project? What should my own role be?

15. I am one of the “saints” to whom the faith of Christ, and all its possibilities, has been “once for all given.” What are the implications of this for how I follow Jesus?

### Application

Here are some concluding exercises that can help you bring the lesson of this chapter, and this study, to expression in your own life. Choose two or three of them:

16. Meet with some Christian friends over coffee. Ask them what they think about the “clash of civilizations” and the “great proposal” Christians have for our generation. Clarify or explain where needed, but try to get them talking about this. Use some of questions 11 – 15 if need be. Pray about your conversation together, and consider whether there aren’t some things you might be able to do to encourage one another.

17. Talk casually with some unsaved friends or colleagues. Ask them if they’ve ever thought about the benefits that Christianity has brought to civilization. If they say, “Such as?” be prepared to share some of the things you’ve learned from this chapter. Ask them why they think Christianity, of all the religions of the world, has been able to make such contributions.

18. Set a program for continuing study based on what you have learned from this book. Choose some books to read. Make a point to do some topical studies from the Bible (What does the Bible teach about loving God? Loving my neighbor? Sharing my faith? Doing my work as unto the Lord rather than unto men?). Set some goals for your program of study.

19. Meet with your pastor. Tell him or her about the study you have just completed. Share what you have learned, and any thoughts you may have about how your church might become more involved in Christianity's "great proposal." Offer to help as needed.
20. Meet with your prayer partner to review the goals you set for yourself at the beginning of this study. Thank him or her for helping you through this course. Share what you've learned, and encourage your prayer partner to read this book as well.

### Conclusion

The world has entered into a period of a "clash of civilizations" in which militant Islam seems bent on destroying the legacy of the Christian West and eradicating all competing worldviews. In the face of this, Christians propose the life- and culture-transforming Gospel of the Kingdom of God. Each of us has a role to play in this.

"So long then as the Word of truth is on our side, never be in any wise distressed at the calumny of a lie; let no imperial threats scare you; do not be grieved at the laughter and mockery of your intimates nor at the condemnation of those who pretend to care for you, and who put forward, as their most attractive bait to deceive, a pretence of giving good advice. Against them all let sound reason do battle, involving the championship and succor of our Lord Jesus Christ, the teacher of true religion, for whom to suffer is sweet, and to die is gain."

—Basil, fourth century

### Additional Reading from Zondervan

Christopher Catherwood, *Christians, Muslims, and Islamic Rage: What Is Going On and Why it Happened*

Lee Strobel, *The Case for Faith: A Journalist Investigates the Toughest Objections to Christianity*



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS STUDY GUIDE



T. M. Moore is Dean of the Centurions Program of the Wilberforce Forum and Principal of the Fellowship of Ailbe, a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic tradition ([www.myparuchia.com](http://www.myparuchia.com)). He is the author of more than twenty books and is in frequent demand as a speaker and consultant. He and his wife and editor, Susie, make their home in Concord, Tennessee.