

# **ET 302 – Christian Theology 2**



**Certificate and Diploma Levels  
Nazarene Theological Institute  
Africa Region**

## ***ET 302: Christian Theology 2***

**course author:** Gregory Crofford, Ph.D.

Unless otherwise noted, all quotations are from the *New International Version* (Zondervan, 1984) of the holy Bible.

### ***about this course***

*Christian Theology 2* is part of the approved course of study leading to ordination in the Church of the Nazarene, Africa region. For further information on the various certificates or the diploma in theology, please consult the NTI *Program Handbook*.

### ***course description***

This course follows *Christian Theology 1*. With an emphasis on orthodox Christian doctrine, it seeks to systematically identify elements that are essential to the universal community of faith while identifying Wesleyan-Arminian distinctives. It explores sin, Christology, the atonement, grace, justification, sanctification, the kingdom of God, the Holy Spirit, the church (its sacraments and mission), and last things.

### ***note on capitalization of terms***

The current trend in theology is away from the use of capital letters. For this reason, in this course, capital letters are maintained primarily in reference to the Trinity, i.e. God, Father, Jesus, and Holy Spirit. Other terms that in times past were capitalized (Church, Resurrection and Incarnation) now appear in small letters. For the sake of consistency, capitalization in older sources is modified without changing the meaning of the individual(s) cited.

### ***program outcomes***

The following program outcomes assigned to this course are identifiable competencies required of the student in this course.

- CN 4 Appreciation of the theological foundations of the Christian faith from the biblical point-of-view when read from a Wesleyan perspective
- CN 5 Realization of the biblical, theological, and practical implications of holiness doctrine when taught from a Wesleyan perspective
- CP 3 Ability to defend the doctrines and positions of the Church of the Nazarene
- CP 4 Ability to teach the word of God and make disciples that can make other disciples
- CP 5 Ability to plan and lead worship services
- CR 3 Ability to worship God by using personal and public means of grace
- CR 11 Ability to love God with all one's heart, soul, mind, and strength
- CR 13 Ability to live the experience of entire sanctification
- CX 4 Ability to understand the differences between the worldviews of the western world, that of Africa, and that of the Bible

## ***course outcomes***

For achieving the competencies listed above, this course organizes several learning activities and requirements around the following intended learning outcomes for this course.

At the end of the course, the student will be able to:

1. Understand the importance of the doctrine of the incarnation for Christian theology and transfer the principles and importance of the theology of incarnation into ministry (CN 4; CP 3; CP 4; CR 3);
2. Understand and explain the threefold office of Jesus Christ as prophet, priest, and king (CN 4; CP 3; CP 4; CP 5; CR 3);
3. Explain the theological meaning of 'atonement' and how one's view of atonement impacts one's doctrine of God (CN 4; CP 3; CP 4);
4. Expound biblical and historical foundations for the doctrine of grace, including the doctrine of prevenient grace (CN 4; CP 3; CP 4; CP 5; CR 3; CR 11; CR 13);
5. Explain the Wesleyan *via salutis* and contrast the Wesleyan and Calvinistic order of salvation (CN 4; CN 5; CP 3);
6. Explain and biblically defend the central affirmations of faith in Article X of the Nazarene articles of faith from the *Manual* (CN 4; CN 5; CP 3; CP 4);
7. Present biblical foundations for the divinity of the Holy Spirit and expound the importance of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the ministry of Jesus (CN 4; CN 5; CP 3; CP 4; CR 3; CR 13);
8. Give New Testament images of the church and explain the major themes from article XI from the *Manual* (CN 4; CP 3; CP 4; CP 5; CR 3);
9. Explain the meaning of the sacraments from the Scriptures and from the tradition of orthodox Christianity (CN 4; CP 3; CP 4; CP 5; CR 3);
10. Know the topics addressed under the general heading of "eschatology" and be familiar with representative Nazarene opinion on the "last things" (CN 4; CP 3);
11. Defend the Wesleyan theological position with a clear and concise interpretation of the holy Bible (CN 4; CP 3);
12. Translate these theological understandings into one's African context (CX 4).

The following sessions and exercises of this course offer the following percentages of the four Cs:

Content	20%
Competence	35%
Character	35%
Context	10%

## ***sources consulted***

The following texts or internet resources were consulted in the preparation of this course. Books with an (\*) are written at a more basic level, and are recommended for purchase by the NTI library in the country where you serve. For sake of brevity, internet sources consulted do not appear in this list, but are included in the body of the course.

*The Manual of the Church of the Nazarene* - current

Bosch, David J. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in the Theology of Mission*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991.

Bridge, Donald, and Phipers, David. *The Water that Divides: A survey of the doctrine of baptism*. Ross-shire, Great Britain: Mentor, 1998.

Bruce, F.F. *The Hard Sayings of Jesus*. Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1983.

Burpo, Todd (with Lynn Vincent). *Heaven is for Real: A Little Boy's Astounding Story of His Trip to Heaven and Back*. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 2010.

*Catéchisme de l'Église Catholique*. Nouvelle édition. Paris: Centurion-Cerf, 1998.

Chanda, Chanshi. *Christlike Justice and the Holiness Tradition*. Lenexa, Kansas: Prairie Star Publications, 2010.

Collins, Kenneth J. *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace*. Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2007.

\_\_\_\_\_. *John Wesley: A Theological Journey*. Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2003.

Crofford, James Gregory. *Streams of Mercy: Prevenient Grace in the Theology of John and Charles Wesley*. Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2010.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Justification in John Calvin and John Wesley: A Comparative Study." M.A. dissertation, University of Manchester (England), 2005.

Dunning, H. Ray. *Grace, Faith & Holiness*. Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1988.

\_\_\_\_\_, ed. *The Second Coming: A Wesleyan Approach to the Doctrine of Last Things*. Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1995.

Fudge, Edward William. *The Fire that Consumes: A Biblical and Historical Study of the Doctrine of Final Punishment*. Third Edition. Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2011.

\*Greathouse, William M. *Love Made Perfect: Foundations for the Holy Life*. Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1997.

Green, Michael. *Baptism: Its Purpose, Practice and Power*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1987.

Gonzalez, Justo L. *The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Present Day*. Peabody, Massachusetts: Peabody/Henderson, 2008.

Grider, J. Kenneth. *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*. Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1994.

- Heitzenrater, Richard P. *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*. Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1995.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Elusive Mr. Wesley*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2003.
- Ingersol, Stan. *Nazarene Roots: Pastors, Prophets, Revivalists and Reformers*. Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 2009.
- Ladd, George Eldon. *A Theology of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1974.
- Leclerc, Diane. *Discovering Christian Holiness: The Heart of Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*. Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 2010.
- Lodahl, Michael. *The Story of God: Wesleyan Theology and Biblical Narrative*. Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1994.
- \*Oord, Thomas J., and Lodahl, Michael. *Relational Holiness: Responding to the Call of Love*. Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 2005.
- Orjala, Paul R. *God's Mission is My Mission*. Kansas City, Missouri: Nazarene Publishing House, 1985.
- Powell, Samuel M. *Discovering Our Christian Faith: An Introduction to Theology*. Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 2008.
- \*Purkiser, W.T., ed. *Exploring our Christian Faith*. Revised edition. Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1960, 1978.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Gifts of the Spirit*. Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1975.
- Ridderbos, Hermann. *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia*. In *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1953, 1984.
- \*Staples, Rob. *Outward Sign and Inward Grace: The Place of Sacraments in Wesleyan Spirituality*. Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1991.
- Stinton, Diane B. *Jesus of Africa: Voices of Contemporary African Christology*. Nairobi, Kenya: Pauline Publications, 2004.
- Taylor, Richard S., ed. *Beacon Dictionary of Theology*. Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1983.
- Wiley, H. Orton, and Culbertson, Paul T. *Introduction to Christian Theology*. Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1946.
- Wright, Nigel. *The Satan Syndrome: Putting the Power of Darkness in its Place*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan/Academie Books, 1990.
- \_\_\_\_\_, N.T. *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*. New York: Harper One, 2008.
- Wynkoop, Mildred Bangs. *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism*. Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1972.

### ***course requirements***

1. Regular attendance to all course sessions and preparation of all assignments prior to their deadlines is expected. A student missing eight hours of class sessions will have a reduced final mark by 25%. If the student misses two full days of class, he or she will fail the course.
2. Read (or have read to you) articles of faith II, III, VI, VII, IX, X, XI, XII, and XIII and the biblical passages that support them. Cite observations and questions for class discussion to the instructor (or the instructor's designated assistant (course outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 11)).
3. Prepare a worship service that focuses on the grace that brings salvation through Christ. For this service, prepare a sermon on Jesus Christ in His threefold office as prophet, priest, and king. Include the Eucharist, explaining the deep meaning of this sacrament as you lead the congregation to the table of the Lord. (course outcomes 2, 3, 4, and 9)
4. In groups of two or three, discuss the scriptural basis for the Wesleyan *via salutis*. Groups may be assigned specific aspects of the way of salvation, such as:

- Group 1      prevenient grace
- Group 2      justification, regeneration, adoption
- Group 3      growth in the grace of regeneration
- Group 4      entire sanctification
- Group 5      progressive sanctification
- Group 6      final sanctification (or glorification)
- Group 7      eternity with Christ

Each group will find at least two supporting Scripture verses or passages and then discuss how the Wesleyan way of salvation is useful in imagining the biblical teaching, and in what way it might be improved. Each group will prepare to report their findings to the class

- 5). Explain in a clear, concise manner for 12-15 year-olds (or adult learners in a church membership class) articles III and X of the "articles of faith" from the *Manual*. Cite appropriate Scriptures (at least three) (Course outcomes 6 and 7).
6. Consider several (at least five) of the major theological themes presented in this class. Explain how they can best be taught and preached in the African context (Course outcome 1, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12).
7. Take a final exam. **Your teacher will compose this exam.** For this reason, no exam is included in this book.

### ***course evaluation***

class attendance and participation (no. 1)	15%
articles of faith project (no. 2)	15%
worship service/sermon (no. 3)	20%
* <i>via salutis</i> (No. 4)	10%

*articles of faith III & X (No. 5)	10%
*reflection paper (No. 6)	10%
*final exam (No. 7)	20%

*Please note:* For activities marked with an (\*), students at the certificate level should do these assignments out loud, in an individual session with the instructor.

## ***Course outline***

### ***Lesson 1 – The problem: humanity's rebellion against God***

- Original sin: rebellion in the garden
- What is an “act of sin”?
- Sin in relation to the community
- Punishment and forgiveness

### ***Lesson 2 – The solution: Jesus Christ and God's plan of salvation***

#### **Part 1 – Christology: The person and work of Christ**

- Jesus as the “God-man”
- African images of Jesus: life-giver, mediator, loved one, and leader
- Prophet, priest, and king
- Models of the atonement: penal satisfaction, moral influence, *Christus Victor*

#### **Part 2 – Soteriology: God's transforming grace**

- prevenient grace
- repentance and faith
- justification, regeneration, adoption, redemption, reconciliation and initial sanctification
- sanctification: progressive (growth in grace) and entire
- mutual accountability and the life of holiness

### ***Lesson 3 – The kingdom of God, the Holy Spirit and the church***

#### **Part 1 – The kingdom of God**

- What is the “kingdom of God”?
- Should a follower of Christ be involved in government?

## **Part 2 – Pneumatology: the doctrine of the Holy Spirit**

- Who is the Holy Spirit?
- The fruit and the gifts of the Spirit

## **Part 3 – The church: advancing God's kingdom in the power of the Spirit**

- What is the church? How is the church related to the kingdom of God?
- Preaching the Bible
- Sacraments: The meaning of baptism and Eucharist (the Lord's Supper)
- The priesthood of all believers: men and women together in ministry
- Holistic ministry: the church meeting the needs of the whole person
- *Missio Dei*: The missionary nature of the church

## **Part 4 – Special issues in ministry**

- Confronting the darkness: spiritual warfare and deliverance
- Divine healing
- The prosperity message
- Financial integrity
- Overcoming addictions
- Christian view of sexuality (homosexuality)

## ***Lesson 4 – Eschatology: the triumph of God's kingdom***

### **Part 1 – second coming and resurrection**

- Premillennial, postmillennial and amillennial views
- The danger of some types of "prophecy"
- Resurrection and the goodness of the human body

### **Part 2 – judgment, punishment and reward**

- Hell: unending, conscious torment, or final destruction?
- Heaven: living in the new creation



## ***Lesson 1***

### ***The problem:***

### ***humanity's rebellion against God***

#### **I. Introduction**

The world is beautiful. A colorful sunset, a majestic tree or the power of the ocean as it pounds upon the shore are all clues that point to a mighty and loving Creator. In all God's creation with its thousands of plants and animals, the most complex and awe-inspiring is the human being. The psalmist rejoices: "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well" (Ps. 139:14).

While there is much in the universe that inspires us, all is not well in God's creation. Earthquakes, volcanoes, and tsunamis are just some of the natural disasters that bring about pain and death. The apostle Paul writes in his letter to the Romans:

*The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.*

-Romans 8:19-21

What has happened to make the universe a dangerous place? Why has what God called "very good" (Genesis 1:31) taken such a menacing turn? The problem is humankind's rebellion against God, and to this we now turn our attention.

#### **II. Original sin: rebellion in the garden**

##### **A. The fall: a serpent, a temptation, and a catastrophic decision**

Ask three students to read Genesis 3 aloud for the class, assigning 8 verses to each. After the reading, lead the class in a discussion based on the following questions:

1. This account is often called the fall. Someone has said that if this one chapter of the Bible was deleted from Scripture, the rest of the Bible would make no sense. Do you agree? Why or why not?
2. At times, we speak of the sin of "one man." (Paul does this, for example, in Romans 5:12-19). However, according to Genesis 3, who else was involved in the first sin?
3. Gen. 3:6 explains why Eve ate of the forbidden fruit. What are the things that enticed her? Are these aspects still involved today when we choose to disobey God?
4. What punishment did Eve receive for her sin? What punishment did Adam receive? We know that these punishments continued for their offspring, down to our day. Can you think of anything that your ancestors have done (whether good or bad) that continues to have an impact upon you and your family or village? Take a few minutes to share stories of things both positive and negative.

## B. spiritual death

Theologians call the first sin committed by Adam and Eve "original sin." The term was developed by **Augustine** (354-430 a.d.) as a helpful way of picturing what the Bible teaches about how sin came into the world.

Romans 5:12-19 is the most important passage in the Bible that explains the sin of our first parents and how it continues to affect us. (*Take a few minutes and read the passage together*). Verse 12 explains: "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned..." (TNIV)

This explains why our world has been filled with hatred. It wasn't always that way, but because of our first parents' disobedience to God's command, "death" came into our world.

What is the nature of that "death"? Genesis 1-3 helps us understand. Prior to their sinful rebellion, Adam and Eve lived in perfect relationship with God. This is symbolized by their being naked, but not ashamed (Gen. 2:25). But after sinning, the first thing they did was to make coverings for themselves by sewing together fig leaves (3:7). The separation between God and our first parents was complete when they were thrown out of the garden, its entrance guarded by an angel wielding a flaming sword (3:24). *This rupture in relationship may be called "spiritual death" and it is the state of darkness and separation from God into which all human beings are born.*

David lamented: "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (Ps. 51:5). The original sin resident inside each of us is spoken of by the prophet: "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (Jer. 17:9).

Article of Faith V of the *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene defines original sin. The first part of section 5.1 states:

"We believe that original sin, or depravity, is that corruption of the nature of all the offspring of Adam by reason of which everyone is far gone from original righteousness or the pure state of our first parents at the time of their creation, is averse to God, is without spiritual life, and inclined to evil, and that continually..."

John Wesley often preached: "Know your sickness; know your cure" (See his 1759 sermon, *Original Sin*). Wesley held different views during his lifetime about how original sin is transmitted to us, but that we are all affected by it he never doubted. He believed that the **moral image of God** in each of us (Gen. 1:27) had been severely defaced. Original sin has affected everyone born, but the Bible teaches that sinners can be born again. God's grace – beginning with prevenient grace and continuing with saving and sanctifying grace – is sufficient to renew us in the image of God, pardoning the sinner and filling the believer with perfect love for God and neighbor. The last word from God is not bad news, but good news!

### III. What is an "act of sin"?

It has been said: "We are not sinners *because* we sin. Rather, *because* we are sinners, we sin." This recognizes that each of us is born estranged from God. Having no relationship with him, it seems somehow "natural" when we sin. Only as we surrender to God's grace in our lives will sin become distasteful and one day feel unnatural.

*Original sin* can be understood in two ways. First, it was the act of rebellion against God by Adam and Eve. Secondly, it refers to the negative consequences it brought on the entire human race, including depravity (evil) in our hearts. Yet beyond the sin we inherited are the sins we ourselves commit. This is called *actual sin*, which are sinful actions.

A simple definition of sin as an act is **disobedience to the commands of God**. Those commands can be either negative or positive.

#### ✦ *Negative commands*

A negative command is a prohibition, something God forbids us to do. For example, in the seventh commandment of the Decalogue, God instructs us: "You shall not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14). The person who disobeys God, willfully doing what God said not to do, has sinned.

#### ✦ *Positive commands*

Likewise, there are many positive commands in Scripture, things that God instructs us to do. In Matthew 10:8, Jesus orders his disciples: "Freely you have received, freely give." When we as Christians close our heart to the needy, refusing to do what Jesus has ordered us to do, we are sinning.

Sins may be classified as "sins of commission" (doing what God has forbidden) and "sins of omission" (neglecting what God has ordered us to do – James 4:17). John Wesley accepted this general classification, adding that our will must be involved for an action to be considered sinful – see 1 John 3:4. This is seen in the classic Wesleyan definition of "sin" as a "willful transgression of a known law" (Ray Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and Holiness*, 288) given by God.

Martin Luther saw **selfishness** as the spring from which all sin flows. He used the Latin phrase, *in curvatum in se*, the self curved in upon itself, as a picture of the egotistical attitude that leads to sin (*Global Wesleyan Dictionary of Theology*, see "sin"). In the same way, Mildred Wynkoop defined sin as "love locked into a false center" (*Theology of Love*, 158).

While the term "act of sin" emphasizes what we do, sin can also be manifested in our wrong attitudes. Jesus recognized that sinful actions stem from a diseased heart. He told the Pharisees that the only way they could be clean on the outside was first to "clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean" (Matt. 23:26). The Pharisees are the ultimate example of legalism, a form of religion that focuses on external factors such as dress or pious acts. They had forgotten David's prayer, that first God must create in us a "clean heart" and renew a "steadfast spirit" within us (Psalm 51:10). This can only happen as a result of God's grace at work in our hearts, the Holy Spirit transforming us through the work of sanctification.

Theologians disagree whether some actions should be called sinful or given a less severe label. Wesleyans acknowledge that there are many “infirmities” that we will never overcome in this life. For example, the teacher may forget the name of her student. This is a failure and in the strictest sense a “sin” (falling short of God's “glory” – Romans 3:23). However, unless the action was willful, most would agree that it is simply a sign of one's getting older. For this reason, it is helpful whenever discussing to what degree we can expect to live free from sin in this life to first agree on what one means by “sin.” In any case, we should be careful *not* to excuse what Wesley calls “willful transgressions” as merely an “infirmity.” While we will always be subject to errors or a hundred other failings, we believe that through the power of the Holy Spirit we can live lives that are pleasing to God and avoid known transgressions.

#### **IV. Sin in relation to the community**

The African proverb affirms: “I am because we are.” Theologians working from a western, individualistic frame of reference often overlook the implications of this communal worldview when constructing their theology. This is true when looking at *harmartiology*, the doctrine of sin.

##### *Individual and communal sin*

The Bible recognizes that not only individuals are capable of sin; groups can also sin. Old Testament prophets denounced individuals (such as Ahab and Jezebel) but also groups. Amos, the farmer turned prophet, warns: “This is what the LORD says: 'For three sins of Moab, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath...'” (Amos 2:1a). Likewise, Jonah pronounced doom upon Ninevah, unless they repented. In the NT, Ananias and Sapphira jointly sinned by lying about the price they had received for the sale of their land, and they jointly suffered the penalty of death (Acts 5:1-11). John's revelation on the isle of Patmos opens with letters to the seven churches in Asia Minor, congratulating them when they had done well and calling them to repentance where they had sinned.

##### *Against whom do we sin?*

In the parable of the two sons (Luke 15:11-31), the younger son comes to his senses and decides to return home to ask forgiveness from his father. Before setting out, he rehearses what he will say to his father when he sees him again: “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me one of your hired men” (vv. 18-19). Jesus recognized that sin harms not only our relationship with God, but also our relationship with others.

Many of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17, Deut. 5:1-21) were given to assure harmonious relationships between the children of Israel. The command to honor one's mother and father as well as the prohibitions against murdering, committing adultery, stealing, giving false testimony and coveting are all given to Yahweh's worshipers, and were intended to keep the bonds of community strong. So, to kill a young man is not only to wrong him, but to wrong the family from which he comes. Likewise, to steal a cow is not only to wrong the cow's owner but his children who will want for milk or meat.

### *Sex and sin against community*

Closely tied to community is sexual intercourse. While some have wrongly seen in the story of Onan (Gen. 38:8-10) a prohibition of masturbation, it is actually a refusal to follow God's law regarding his duty to his brother's family. (See Wade Cox, "The Sin of Onan," online: <http://www.ccg.org/english/s/p162.html>). In short, Onan's sin was one against community.

Gift Mtukwa, lecturer in religion at Africa Nazarene University, believes that homosexual practices also fall under the heading of sins against community. Most heterosexual unions produce children, but homosexual pairings by definition cannot. The continuance of a family, clan or tribe depends upon the next generation giving birth to offspring. Any practice that entirely frustrates that outcome may be deemed a sin against community.

Another example of the connection of sexual intercourse and sin against community is related to HIV-AIDS. One person who is HIV positive and who sleeps with multiple partners can spread the disease to many. A refusal to be tested or purposely sleeping with others when one knows oneself to be infected, is this not also a sin against community?

### **V. Blessings of obedience, consequences of sin**

We saw in the section on original sin that spiritual death (alienation from God) was the result of Adam's and Eve's sin. But the Bible teaches as well that the sinful acts each of us commits also produce negative consequences.

The apostle Paul often speaks of sin's bitter fruit. In Galatians 5:19ff, he lists some of the "acts of the sinful nature," sins that are a punishment in themselves, including dissensions, hatred, jealousy and fits of rage. The consequences of these sins can be immediate. For example, doctors have long known that anger raises our blood pressure, putting strain upon our bodies. On the other hand, forgiveness can have a calming effect, releasing tension and helping us to sleep better.

Galatians 6:8 instructs: "The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life." Likewise, Romans 6:23 warns that the "wages of sin is death." Thankfully, the "gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Paul is following an ancient tradition regarding sin and its consequences for both individuals and peoples. Deut. 27 records the curses awaiting those who break covenant with Yahweh, while Deut. 28 lists the blessings that are in store for obedience. These curses and blessings are not reserved for the final judgment, but can be expected in this life. Sin is a "reproach," but righteousness "exalts" any nation (Proverbs 14:34).

Whatever blessings we may receive or consequences we may suffer as a people in this life, God will judge us all at the last day on an individual basis (2 Cor. 5:10, Rev. 20:11-15). *See Lesson 4, Part 2 on final judgment for further information.*

**Group Discussion**

Throughout the course, the class will break into small groups for 15 minutes to discuss the ideas presented in the various lessons. The size of the groups will vary, depending upon the number of students enrolled in the course. The composition of the groups should stay the same, so that students can get used to working as a team.

Each group will treat only one question during the 15 minutes allotted. At the beginning of each discussion, choose a different spokesperson who will later give a 2 minute summary of their findings to the entire class. The spokesperson may want to take notes, or this task may be assigned to a permanent secretary. Following each two minute summary, the other groups may ask questions of the spokesperson or other members of the reporting group.

- 1.** In Psalm 51:4a, David says to God: "Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight..." Does David mean that no other humans were hurt because of his sin? (*Hint*: What is the background to this Psalm?) If not, then what does he mean by this prayer? Can you think of any sins where "no one else gets hurt"?
- 2.** According to the Bible, sin is not only what we do, but also what we neglect to do. Are there sins against community of which we as the community of faith are sometimes guilty, whether as individuals or as a people? If "yes," what would be the proper way to repent of those sins?
- 3.** Quickly review the whole of Ezekiel 18. What is the meaning of the proverb, "The fathers eat sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge" (v. 2)? Why do you think God forbids them to quote this proverb any longer? Do you think that God can punish a person for the sins of another? (See verse 4). Are there any proverbs that are commonly quoted in your country that have been understood in a sense contrary to biblical teaching?
- 4.** If children are born (as we believe) suffering the effects of original sin, then why do we provide them Christian education? One who is born depraved would seem to be immune to getting anything out of a catechism or Sunday school instruction, would she not? As Wesleyans, what other doctrine do we need to consider alongside original sin in order for Christian education to make any sense? (*Hint*: This doctrine appears in Part 2 of Lesson 2, under the section on soteriology).

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## ***Lesson 2***

### ***The solution: Jesus Christ and God's plan of salvation***

#### ***Part 1 – Christology: the person and work of Christ***

##### **I. Jesus Christ, the God-man**

**Christology** (Gk. *Christos* = messiah, or Christ) refers to the study of Christ. Traditionally, this study is divided into *who* Christ is, and *what* he has done. Theologians refer to this as the “person” and “work” of Christ.

In the early centuries of Christianity, there was much debate about Jesus of Nazareth. Even today, Christian thinkers still respond to the famous question Jesus asked his disciples: “Who do you say that I am?” (Matt. 16:15).

Sometimes heresy (false doctrine) arose when too much emphasis was given to Jesus' humanity, thereby denying that Jesus was God. Other times, so much accent was placed upon his being God that they lost sight of Jesus' humanity. In the end, the **Council of Nicaea (323 a.d.)** affirmed both the full divinity and the full humanity of Jesus. For this reason, it is most correct to say “Jesus Christ,” a reminder that only he is the God-man.

##### ***A. Fully human: Spirit Christology in Matthew, Mark, Luke and Acts***

In *The Story of God*, Michael Lodahl strikes a careful balance between the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ. The four Gospels plus the book of Acts paint a portrait of Jesus that underscores his humanity. Lodahl calls this “Christology from below” (p. 134). Throughout the story of the Synoptic Gospels, “Jesus' life and ministry are best understood in terms of the dynamic presence of God's Holy Spirit at work in and through Him in a unique and decisive fashion” (p. 135). On the day of Pentecost, Peter calls Jesus of Nazareth “a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know” (Acts 2:22). The Old Testament concept of the Messiah (Isaiah 53) or the anointed one is consistent with Spirit Christology.

By the end of the first century, some were questioning whether Christ was *really* human, or if he just *appeared* that way. These doubters were called docetists (Gk. *dokeo* = to seem). Most Bible scholars believe that John was answering the docetist heresy when he wrote his first epistle. Note in 1 John 1:1, for example, that John gives evidence that Jesus had a real body. They had “seen,” “looked at,” and “touched” Jesus Christ. He was no phantom, but a real live human being who ate fish and bread (John 21:13), grew weary and slept (Mark 4:35-41) and was tempted like any other human being (Matt. 4:1-11). Unlike other humans, Jesus was without sin (Hebrews 4:15). Our Lord had a mother, Mary, but Joseph was his father only as a guardian and not in the traditional biological sense (Luke 3:23). The birth accounts are clear that Mary was with child through the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18).

##### ***Why is it important that we believe Jesus Christ to be fully human?***

##### **1. The atoning death of Jesus necessitated a human body.**

We will look more at the atonement in a later section. Already, we can affirm that for our

sins to be atoned, a sacrifice was necessary. Jesus was bodily nailed to a cross, and God literally raised his lifeless body from the grave (Acts 2:32). The crucifixion and the resurrection both require a flesh-and-blood person. If Jesus were just a ghost, then he could not be the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

## **2. Christ became one of us so we could become like God.**

This was the teaching of the early church father, Athanasius (Ray Dunning, in *Grace, Faith, and Holiness*, p. 307) as he read passages like John 1:14. This is the doctrine of the **incarnation**, that God the Son took on flesh and became one of us. Irenaeus, another early church theologian, spoke of recapitulation, that "Jesus Christ effects a reversal of the fall at every stage of human life" (Dunning, 307). The ultimate goal was sanctification, to restore in us the lost image of God.

## **3. The intercession of Jesus Christ is more meaningful since he has been where we are.**

The famous evangelist, Billy Graham, was walking one day in the forest with his young son, Franklin. As they walked along the path, they accidentally knocked over an ant hill. Confused, the ants madly scrambled over each other, running in all directions. Franklin, upset by what he had done, cried to his dad: "I want to help them, but I am so big, and they are so small! If only I could become an ant, then I could help them. Then I could tell them that everything is going to be O.K." "Son," replied his father, "that is exactly what Christ did for us. He left heaven and became one of us, so he could tell us that God loves us, so he could tell us that everything is going to be O.K."

Because of the incarnation – because Christ took on human flesh and lived among us – he can now identify with us when he intercedes to the Father on our behalf (Hebrews 7:25).

Jesus knows what it means for us to suffer, since he himself suffered, was tempted, and knew every human emotion. This allows us to come boldly to the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:15-16).

### ***B. Fully divine: Logos Christology – John 1:1-18 and Philippians 2:5-11***

Some have called this way of thinking about Jesus Christ "Christology from above." It begins with the pre-existence of the Son of God as the second Person of the Trinity and emphasizes his coming to earth to save us.

John 1:1-18 is known as the "prologue" to John's Gospel. The first verse tells us that the "Word" (Greek *Logos*) was not only eternally existent with God, but also *is* God. Yet the Word did not stay in heaven; the Word came to earth as a baby boy. This is the incarnation, the Word that became flesh: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (1:14).

In the same way, Paul teaches that Jesus is God. Philippians 2:5-11 is commonly called the *kenosis* passage, a Greek word meaning to empty. Verse 6 affirms that Christ Jesus was "in very nature God". The "emptying" did not mean that he surrendered his deity when he came to earth, but refers to his humility: "But he made himself nothing...and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!" (v. 7a, 8b).



One of the strongest attacks on the full divinity of Jesus Christ was known as **Arianism**. (More information on Arius – a priest from Alexandria who lived from 256-336 a.d. – can be found in NTI course, “HE 201 – History of the Church 1”). Arius and his followers taught that Jesus was the first and greatest of all the beings created by God, but was not God. **Athanasius (296-373 a.d.)** was Bishop of Alexandria and strongly opposed Arius and his heresy. Lodahl summarizes Athanasius' central argument, namely, that “if Christ is not God, then we are not saved – and we are also guilty of idolatry, since we worship that which is less than, and other than, God” (*Story of God*, 150). Jesus must be “truly God” in order to provide salvation, but also “truly human” in order to save us (Lodahl, p. 151).

### **Summary**

The first paragraph of Nazarene Article of Faith # 2, “Jesus Christ,” provides an excellent summary. Let's read it in unison:

*We believe in Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Triune Godhead; that He was eternally one with the Father; that He became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and was born of the Virgin Mary, so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say the Godhead and manhood, are thus united in one Person very God and very man, the God-man.*

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### **Class activity**

Muslims criticize Christians because of our belief in the Triune God, which includes our belief that Jesus is God. *Read together as a class the entirety of Hebrews 1.* Make a list on the chalk board of the divine characteristics of the Son which call us to worship him in the same way that we worship God the Father. Some have described Christianity not as “simple monotheism” but as “complex monotheism.” Is this description helpful to you? Why or why not?

## **II. African images of Jesus: life-giver, mediator, loved one, and leader**

In her excellent book, *Jesus of Africa: Voices of Contemporary African Christology* (Nairobi: Pauline Publications, 2004), Diane B. Stinton summarizes images of Jesus presented by African theologians. As you think about these portraits of Jesus, ask yourself:

*Which one best represents what the Bible says about Jesus but at the same time would speak to the hearts of the people in the church I attend?*

### **A. Jesus as life-giver**

Benezet Bujo has noted that many African traditions view God as the one who both creates and sustains all life, culminating in human life (Stinton, 73). John Pobee likewise speaks of the “seven graces” for which the Akan (Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire) pray. These are:

- ♣ *nkwa* – life and good health
- ♣ *adom* – God's grace
- ♣ *asomdwee* – peace of society and mankind

- ✧ *abawotum* – peace and fertility of sex
- ✧ *anihutum* – powerful eyesight
- ✧ *asotatum* – good hearing power
- ✧ *amandoree* – rainfall/general prosperity of the clan and tribe

– from Stinton, 76

How does Jesus respond to these needs? In John 10:10, he proclaims: “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” The theme of life is dominant throughout the fourth Gospel, and includes eternal life (John 3:16).

Closely related to the theme of Jesus as life-giver is **Jesus as healer**. John Gichanga, pastor of the Nairobi Baptist Church, agrees that the image of Jesus as healer resonates with his flock: “It’s beyond a perception, it’s beyond an image. It is really recognizing that some of the things that were happening in Jesus’ time are possible in our day through his name” (Stinton, 84).

We must be careful not to imply that God will heal all people in all circumstances. Though Jesus healed many while on earth, he did not heal all. Paul prayed three times for healing from his “thorn in the flesh,” yet God did not heal him (2 Cor. 12:7-10). Following James 5:14-16, the Church of the Nazarene teaches that we should confidently offer prayers and anointing with oil for the sick – see Article of Faith # 14 on divine healing.

*For further discussion, see Lesson 3, Part 4 – special issues in ministry.*

## **B. Jesus as mediator**

The predominant view of sub-Saharan Africa is that the immaterial part of the human being (a soul, or spirit) survives the death of the body. Even after physical death, ancestors continue to exist as spirits, and are never far away. The “living dead” are those who have died recently, and may be approached in prayer for minor needs, since they can serve as a “bridge” to God (Stinton, 132).

One problem with viewing Jesus as an ancestor is that it may give permission to Christians to consult with ancestors in general. Richard Gehman, a German evangelical missionary in Kenya, underscores the biblical prohibition against consulting with the spirits of ancestors – see Deuteronomy 18:11. See also 1 Samuel 28:1-25 and 1 Chron. 10:13-14. Gehman explains:

*In biblical perspective, these are none other than the unclean spirits, the fallen angels who serve their master, even Satan. Nothing could be plainer in the Bible than the divine abhorrence and active opposition to any contact, communication or relationship with the ancestral spirits, divinities or other spirits.*

- cited by Stinton, 137

A practice similar in nature to contacting the ancestors is the Roman Catholic tradition of addressing prayers to the saints. There is no biblical basis for such a practice, and it should be seen as a form of idolatry. The Bible teaches that Jesus is the only mediator between God and humanity (1 Timothy 2:5-6). Avoiding use of the term “Jesus as ancestor” will

help avoid importing into Christian doctrine and practice non-biblical ideas from African traditional religion (ATR).

### **C. Jesus as loved one**

Diane Stinton rightly observes: "A cardinal point in African anthropology is that individual identity is established and fulfilled only in the context of community" (*Jesus of Africa*, 168). Likewise, Jesus was part of a family and had siblings (Mark 6:3), but was also part of the Jewish community into which he was circumcised as a newborn (Luke 2:21).

To say that Jesus was a family member includes images of Jesus as our brother. Peter Gichure, a Roman Catholic priest from Kenya, offers the following testimony:

*I think Jesus Christ for me today is really my brother. I think that's why he came, as the Son, to make that link, that I am to him as a brother, that God, in a very special way, wants me to have that close relationship. As Hebrews says, God wants us to be sons and daughters of God and Jesus Christ brings that union. So, for me, Jesus is the one who will treat me like my brother, a brother who loves me, who wants anything good for me, who will stand for me even when I'm troubled and who will rejoice with me when I'm happy.*

- Stinton, 173

### **D. Jesus as leader**

The image of Jesus as "king of kings and lord of lords" is a biblical one (Rev. 17:14), and Matthew's gospel speaks often of the "kingdom of God" and the "kingdom of heaven." Some African cultures – such as the Akan – have a strong concept of a king, and the king's stool symbolizes authority in both the political and religious realms (Stinton, 201).

Some have suggested that the position of *Okyeame* (spokesman for the king) is closer to the role that Jesus plays in the Trinity. The *Okyeame* may be seen as similar to the *Logos* spoken of in John 1:1-18 (Stinton, 205-206).

Some prefer to present Jesus as the chief. This has some problems, including the negative thoughts the word evokes in some places in Africa where – for example – chiefs are too often absent, living in the cities, and only return to the village for ceremonies (Stinton, 212). This does not fit the incarnational and servant-oriented image of Jesus we see in the New Testament.

## **III. Jesus Christ, our prophet, priest, and king**

In their *Introduction to Christian Theology* (or *ICT*; Beacon Hill Press, 1946, pp. 213-216), Orton Wiley and Paul Culbertson identify three "offices" of Christ. These are the prophetic office, the priestly office, and the kingly office.

### **A. The prophetic office** (from *ICT*, 214)

- ✦ Christ is the "perfect revealer of divine truth"
- ✦ As the *Logos* come from God, Christ was the "true light" (John 1:9).

- ⤴ Jesus spoke with authority as a teacher come from God (Matt. 7:28-29, John 3:2)
- ⤴ His prophetic work will continue in the New Jerusalem as the "Lamb" who is the light of the city (Rev. 21:23).

### **B. The priestly office** (from *ICT*, 214-215)

Orton Wiley notes: "The priestly office of Christ is concerned with objective mediation, and includes both sacrifice and intercession. *He offered up himself* (Heb. 7:27). He was at once the offering and the Offerer, the one corresponding to His death, the other to His resurrection and ascension, and together issuing in the atonement" (p. 214). Jesus assumed his priestly functions when he established the new covenant, symbolized by the Eucharist (Lord's Supper) and followed by what is commonly called his "high priestly prayer" (see John 17:1-26). Other passages that allude to priestly aspects of Jesus' sacrifice are 1 Cor. 1:23; 5:7; Eph. 5:2; 1 Peter 2:24; Romans 5:10; Col. 1:20. The entire book of Hebrews carefully describes Jesus as the high priest who once and for all sacrificed himself for us. Wiley/Culbertson conclude: "After Pentecost the priestly work of Christ is continued through the Holy Spirit as a gift of the risen and exalted Savior; and in the world to come our approach to God must ever be through Him as the abiding source of our life and glory" (p. 215).

### **C. The kingly office** (from *ICT*, 215-216)

- ⤴ Jesus assumed the full authority of kingship at the time of his ascension.
- ⤴ The so-called "great commission" (Matthew 28:18-20) affirms that God had given to Jesus "all authority" (v. 18).

Wiley notes:

Having already proclaimed His rule over the dead in the *descensus* (descent into hell); and having declared it to his brethren on earth, he ascended to the throne, there to exercise His mediatorial power until the time of the judgment, when the mediatorial economy shall end. God's efforts to save men will then have been exhausted, and the fate of all men, whether good or evil, will be fixed forever.

– pp. 215-216

The theme of the kingdom of God (or kingdom of heaven) is strong in Matthew's gospel, though the term "Son of Man" rather than "king" is used in Matthew 24:30-31. However, Daniel 7 presents the "Son of Man" as a messianic king (see the *New Advent Online Encyclopedia*; <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14144a.htm>). This fits with Matthew's picture of the Son of Man as one who returns "on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory" (Matt. 24:30).

Jesus did not reject the role of king. To the contrary, he agreed to enter Jerusalem on a donkey (Matt. 21:1-11), a clear fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy of how the "king" would arrive in Zion (see Zechariah 9:9). Of course, Jesus would redefine the meaning of "kingdom," saying that it was not of this world (John 18:36), meaning it is not a political entity like others. The book of Revelation tells of a rider on a white horse. The rider's name is "Faithfulness and True" (Rev. 19:11), and bears upon his robe and thigh the title: "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" (v. 18). The final vision from Revelation is not of God's people

“going to heaven” but of the Alpha and Omega bringing the New Jerusalem down to earth, descending from heaven. At last, the Lord's prayer will be a reality: “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10).

#### **IV. Models of the atonement: satisfaction/substitution, moral influence, and classical**

The disciples witnessed Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension. For many days afterward in Jerusalem, Peter and the rest of the 120 met in the upper room. Besides praying and choosing Mathias as the replacement for Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:26), they no doubt had time to quietly reflect upon the Lord's time on earth. In Acts 2, Peter preached what is considered the first Christian sermon. Its theme was the meaning of the resurrection. As time passed, others – such as the writer of the book of Hebrews – thought deeply about why Jesus had to die and what his death means for us. Theologians have come to call Christ's sacrifice on our behalf the **atonement**. Explanations of the “why” behind that great act are called theories (or models) of the atonement.

In *Exploring Our Christian Faith* (Beacon Hill, 1960, 1978), W.T. Purkiser outlines various models of the atonement. Let us look at the three major ones, namely, satisfaction, moral influence, and classical (*Christus Victor*).

##### **A. satisfaction/substitution**

There are various varieties of the satisfaction model, all of which contain the element of substitution. This is typified in the story of Abraham and Isaac at Mt. Moriah (Gen. 22:1-14) where the ram caught in the thicket takes the place of the boy Isaac on the altar of sacrifice. In the book of Leviticus, the “scape goat” bears the sins of the people into the desert (Lev. 16:9-11). Gospel songs have picked up on this theme, including a song from the Oakridge Boys:

I should have been crucified  
I should have suffered and died  
I should have hung on the cross in disgrace  
But Jesus, God's Son, took my place.

Source: (<http://www.allgospellyrics.com/?sec=listing&artist=2100>)

Saint Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) combined the idea of substitution with honor. God is like a king who has been wronged by his subjects, dishonored and disgraced (W.T. Purkiser, *Exploring Our Christian Faith*, 227). Because of this, Purkiser explains (Ibid.), there are only two possibilities:

1. sinners must be punished, or
2. satisfaction must be made.

Ray Dunning (*Grace, Faith, and Holiness*, 336) summarizes: "Thus God's honor must be satisfied, and so God sent His Son as the God-man in order that his death on the cross could perform the function of a substitute satisfaction." Some have criticized satisfaction models as denying genuine forgiveness from God. Kenneth Grider notes:

If the Father's justice must be and is satisfied by punishment, then no forgiveness is possible. It is either punishment or forgiveness, surely, not punishment and forgiveness. If a father were to punish his son with a whipping, he could not then say, 'Now son, I forgive you.' If the father were to say that, the son would see through it right away. He would likely say, 'No, you did not forgive me – you punished me.'

-*A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology* (Beacon Hill, 1994), 329

Is Grider correct? Take a few minutes as a class to discuss his idea.

## **B. moral influence**

Peter Abelard (1079-1142) is usually credited with developing the moral influence model. He emphasized the theme of love, and how Jesus' sacrifice on the cross – as the ultimate demonstration of divine love – was God's way of wooing humanity back to himself.

The New Testament certainly presents the death of Christ as an act of love. Romans 5:8 affirms: "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." John's gospel also picks up this theme. God sent his son to earth because of love (John 3:16). There is no greater love, according to Jesus, than laying down one's life for his friends (John 15:13). God gave his own son up to death for us all as an expression of His love (Romans 8:32, 39). We know what love is because "Jesus Christ laid his life down for us" (1 John 3:16a).

Some have viewed the moral influence model as too optimistic, as if we on our own can respond to God's love. Kenneth Grider (*A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, 327-28) thought that not only denied our inability to respond to God's overtures due to our original sin, but laid too much emphasis upon God's love and Jesus' humanity.

## **C. classical model: *Christus Victor***

This atonement model is the oldest, dating to the earliest centuries of the Church. It emphasizes the cosmic warfare between God and Satan and the role Christ's coming to earth played in that battle. Christ is victorious over the powers of darkness; he is *Christus Victor*. Gustaf Aulén, a 20<sup>th</sup> century Swedish theologian, has done much to discover the historical roots of this model. William Greathouse, the late General Superintendent and Nazarene theologian, applied the *Christus Victor* idea to sanctification, i.e. that through Christ, we can be victorious over sin.

Traces of the *Christus Victor* theme appear, for example, in Hebrews 2:14-15: "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he

might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.” Likewise, John affirms: “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work” (1 John 3:8b). John Wesley often preached on this passage, and saw it as a strong sanctification text.

Whereas the first two models we have looked focus on the cross, the classical model looks more broadly at the entire “Christ event.” **Irenaeus** (115-202 a.d.) the Bishop of Lyon (in France) taught that Christ came down from heaven to overcome sin, death, and the devil (see Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 21).

One version of the classical model is the idea of **ransom** (Gk. *lutron*) – see Matthew 20:28, 1 Tim. 2:6, Titus 2:14, Heb. 9:15. But to whom was the ransom paid? Wayne McCown writes: “The Early Church fathers (especially the Greeks)...interpreted the cross as a stratagem by which God hoodwinked Satan in bargaining for the souls of men” (*Beacon Dictionary of Theology*, see “ransom”). It should be noted, however, that the Bible never clarifies to whom the ransom was paid, leading some to suggest that it was God and not Satan who received the ransom (Ibid.).

More recently, Baptist theologian Gregory Boyd has looked at *Christus Victor* as not only an atonement model but as helpful when addressing theodicy (the question of why evil and suffering exist in our world). God is at war with the forces of darkness, including the devil, who led a rebellion against God. When bad things happen in our world – according to Boyd – we should not assume that they are part of God's “master plan.” Instead, we must realize that until Christ returns, we live on a battlefield and in all wars, there are casualties. For more information on Boyd's ideas, see *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy* (InterVarsity Press, 2001).

### ***Group Discussion***

Review the guidelines for group discussions given at the end of lesson one, then break into your discussion groups to address the following questions. (*Remember*: Each group will answer only the question whose number corresponds to their group).

1. Athanasius taught that Christ became one of us so we could become like God. Today, Mormons teach: “As man is, God once was; as God is, man may be.” (See the Mormon Research Ministry website: <http://www.mrm.org>). Are Mormons simply affirming what Athanasius taught long ago, or is there a difference? Read 2 Peter 1:4. How does the second part of the verse help us understand what Peter meant when he said that we may “participate in the divine nature”? In what ways will humans always be different than God? In relation to holiness, how are we to become like God? Support your ideas with Scripture.
2. Review section II, “African images of Jesus.” Which of the African images of Jesus do you think is the most helpful? Why? Do you already use any of these in your preaching? Which image of Jesus best fits the teaching of the Bible? What advantages are there to speaking of Jesus in these ways? Disadvantages?

3. Reflect on the life of Christ as presented in the four gospels. Identify one episode that corresponds with each of the roles of Jesus, as prophet, priest, and king. Which role would you find it easiest to preach about to your congregation? Why? In your experience, do we do a good job presenting all three elements? If not, which role (or roles) tend to be neglected? *Take a few minutes to read back over course requirement number three in the syllabus.* Be ready to present to the class a few preliminary ideas on how one might go about the assignment. (Note: This is NOT meant to make everyone's worship service the same, but *is* intended to get students thinking creatively).

4. Discuss the three atonement models presented in section IV of the lesson. Which model is most appealing to you? Why? Some have suggested that no one model can capture the full scope of what Jesus' death on the cross meant for us, so we should use *all* of them together to at least come close to understanding the atonement. Do you agree? Why or why not? Finally, do you think it is important to keep the cross and the empty tomb together? What would happen if one or the other suddenly disappeared from our theology? Back up your response with a Bible passage.

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## ***Part 2 – Soteriology: God's transforming grace***

### **I. Introduction**

The old and New Testaments do *not* present two different stories. It is one story, a story of our loving God who created us to be in loving relationship with Him. However, this story does have two parts. In the first part, the Old Testament, we understand what went wrong and read about God's attempts to win humanity back to himself. God sent prophets as messengers of his love, and as a warning of the consequences of disobedience. But in the second half of the story, the Triune God descends to be with us through the God-man, Jesus Christ. Thanks to his incarnation, death, and resurrection, Jesus opened up a way for us to return to God, to restore the loving relationship we lost because of our sinful rebellion. The way God opened up is the way of **salvation**, the *via salutis*. In this section of the lesson, we will consider this wonderful gift and the new life of holiness that God offers to us through Jesus Christ.

### **II. What is soteriology?**

Our English word "salvation" comes from the New Testament Greek word, *soterios*. Soteriology is the study of salvation.

**Salvation** can be a very broad term, encompassing the whole of Christian life (Leclerc, 191). Often, people identify "salvation" with the time when we are born again (John 3:5). John Wesley spoke of "full salvation," a term that includes both our pardon from the guilt



of sin at the time of our conversion and our deliverance from the power of sin through God's sanctifying work in our lives.

**From what exactly are we saved?** "Salvation" is both future and present. Looking ahead, it means being saved from (or spared) God's "wrath and anger" on the day of judgment; instead, followers of Christ will inherit eternal life (Romans 2:5-11). But salvation begins here-and-now, since we are already being saved from sin's power and tyranny in our lives (Romans 8:1-2, 10). We have been "rescued" from the "dominion of darkness" (Col. 1:13).

In his 1765 sermon, *The Scripture Way of Salvation*, John Wesley outlined the various steps in the believer's journey, according to the Bible. This is the *via salutis*, the "way of salvation," sometimes called the *ordo salutis*, "order of salvation." Wesley's teaching was not always identical in every point to what some later holiness theologians taught. However, Nazarene theologians agree with Wesley that the Bible knows two great "branches" to the tree of salvation, and that following our reconciliation with God in **justification** (branch one) we are to grow in our likeness to Jesus Christ through **sanctification** (branch two). All of this transpires because of God's **grace**. Grace is both God's unmerited favor and the power of God's Holy Spirit working inside of us. We cannot save ourselves, but God saves us for a reason, so that we can live as Christlike disciples. What's more, this holy relationship is not over at death. For the believer, resurrection is the promise of life's renewal, of better, enduring bodies and eternal fellowship with God as part of his new creation at the end of time (1 Thess. 3:17; Rev. 21:1-4). What a promise!

### III. The *via salutis*

#### A note on religious experience

Religious experience and our recollection of it can vary by individual. Some Christians have a very clear memory of the moment of their conversion. Others – especially those who were brought up since childhood in the church – may not remember the moment when they first trusted Christ.

When we look at a mango tree and taste its delicious fruit, do we say: "This *tastes* like a delicious mango, and that *looks* like a mango tree, but how can I be sure, since I don't know exactly *when* the seed that produced this tree first took root and began to grow"? While it might be nice to know such a detail, is it necessary? What counts is that the tree is there for all to see, and its fruit is sweet.

As with trees, so with people. Not every Christian can identify at what moment saving faith took root in their heart, particularly those who put their faith in Jesus at a very young age. Regardless, if the fruit of the Holy Spirit is apparent in the life of a person (Gal. 5:22-25), and he or she has the witness of the Spirit in their heart that they are a child of God (Romans 8:16), then is that not enough? Should we steal from such a person the joy and assurance of their salvation just because they do not fit the typical pattern?

Many Christians do, however, have a clear memory of how God drew them to Himself and how they first came to faith in Christ. Coupled with the teaching of Scripture, this leads theologians to outline the steps in the process, the “way of salvation.”

### **A. prevenient grace: preparation for salvation<sup>1</sup>**

The term “prevenient grace” was first developed by **Augustine (354-430 a.d.)** and comes from two Latin words:

*prae* = before  
*venire* = to come

- *source*: Crofford, *Streams of Mercy*, 10

Accordingly, Kenneth Grider asserted that prevenient grace has to do with “the many ways God favors us prior to our conversion” (cited by Crofford, 10). In *The Scripture Way of Salvation*, John Wesley related it to the drawings of the Father, the enlightening of the Son, and the convictions of the Holy Spirit (*Works* [BE], 2:156-57). Prevenient grace is provided for all humanity through the atonement of Christ (John 6:44, 12:32) and describes the universal ministry of Holy Spirit among unbelievers (John 1:9, 3:8, 16:8-9). Leaders in the church often notice that the same gospel message preached to a crowd can produce different results. This is the lesson, for example, in Jesus' parable of the sower – see Matthew 13. Why does listener A respond in faith, while listener B rejects the message?

Augustine and **John Calvin (1509-1564)**, reading passages like Acts 13:48, concluded that some respond because they have been chosen by God (elected) to eternal life. Others do not respond because they are not among those elected (or predestined) to believe. Though the *Articles of Religion* of his own church (the Church of England) seemed to teach the same thing, John Wesley struggled to reconcile the Bible's portrait of a just and loving God with Calvinism's seemingly unjust and hateful stance toward the non-elect. Calvin taught that Jesus' atoning death was exclusive, an act only for the elect; Wesley, for his part, saw in Scripture a universal atonement, that Jesus died for all, and not just for some (John 3:16, 2:32; 2 Peter 3:9). If Jesus died for all, then surely God's saving grace is available to all.

But Wesley had a problem. Wesley knew that salvation is by grace, through faith, and in no way depends upon our works (Eph. 2:8-9). Further – like Augustine and Calvin – he believed in original sin, that the human heart is depraved, dead in its sin and rebellion. *How then can a depraved person respond to saving grace?* Calvin's answer, as outlined above, was predestination, but Wesley rightly sensed that this takes away an individual's

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1 Information presented here on prevenient grace is drawn largely from J. Gregory Crofford, *Streams of Mercy: Prevenient Grace in the Theology of John and Charles Wesley* (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2010). The monograph form of Crofford's 2008 University of Manchester thesis of the same name, the book is available for purchase online through Amazon.com.

moral responsibility. How could God condemn to destruction those who – through no fault of their own – were never chosen to be saved? With time, and through the study of Scripture, the writings of the Quaker, Robert Barclay, and his own theological heritage in the Church of England, Wesley found part of the answer:

*Our response is enabled by God's grace freely given to all in Christ.*

This solved half the puzzle. Grace was for all, since Jesus died for all and is the light that enlightens all who come into the world (John 1:9). However, it still did not explain why some responded and some did not, continuing in their sin. In a 1785 sermon, just six years before his death, Wesley solved the rest of the puzzle, hammering out his clearest statement on prevenient grace. In the sermon, *On Working Out Our Own Salvation*, Wesley affirms:

1. No one is entirely “dead in sin by nature,” since each of us receives “preventing grace.”
2. Preventing (or prevenient) grace is “some measure of light,” is a “faint glimmering ray” closely related to our conscience.
3. It is possible to have a “seared conscience” by acting “contrary to the light.”

To close the paragraph, he concludes: “So that no man sins because he has not grace, but because he does not use the grace which he hath.”

- see Crofford, *Streams of Mercy*, 89

In other words, all without exception receive prevenient grace, but some extinguish it by resisting the light God has given them, or, to use Wesley's terms, by not using “the grace which he hath.” This is like the servant who received a talent from his master, but buried it in the ground. In the end, he forfeited his talent (Matt. 25:28). In the same way, each receives at least some prevenient grace (one talent), though many (like the wicked servant) through non-use will forfeit it in the end.

Prevenient grace is useful not only when thinking about an individual's salvation but also when we think about missions. Even before a missionary arrives preaching the gospel, we can be sure that God the Holy Spirit has gone before, that prevenient grace is not totally absent in the setting. The story of Cornelius (Acts 10) tells how the centurion – a God fearing man – received a vision before Peter arrived to preach the good news, an example of God graciously taking the initiative. Romans 2:14-15 likewise speaks of “conscience” and how the law – when referring to the Gentiles – is “written on their hearts.” This is not an excuse to neglect mission work, since what is only vague and general through prevenient grace needs further clarification through preaching (Romans 10:14-15). However, it is a reminder that – if Jesus is the great physician – then the Holy Spirit is the great missionary. He goes before us, breaking up the soil, preparing people to receive the seed of the gospel through proclamation.

Sometimes people wonder how God will judge those who lived before the time of Christ, or perhaps even some today who die without a gospel message. The servants in the parable of the talents were responsible only for the talents they had received, and not for what they had never been given. A servant who has been given much will be responsible for much (Luke 12:46-48). In the same way, we believe that all will be responsible only for the light they have received (Crofford, 92).

## **B. repentance and faith**

John Wesley called repentance the “porch” of religion, and faith its “door” (see Crofford, 2005, 27). To change the metaphor, salvation is a gift, provided by God in Jesus Christ. However, like any gift offered, it must be received. Repentance and faith are the two strong hands by which we hold the gift God gives to us.

### ***What is repentance?***

Kenneth Grider called **repentance** a “change of mind about sin that includes a willingness to obey and serve God” and a preparation for the “first work of grace” (*Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, 355). Grider outlined three steps in repentance (see pp. 355-62):

1. *Conviction* – This is the work of the Holy Spirit, who “makes us uneasy in our disobedience to God” (p. 355). Jesus predicted that when the Holy Spirit came, he would convict the world of both guilt and sin (John 16:8). John Wesley encouraged his preachers to frequently announce the moral law, which serves two purposes (Collins, 11):

- a) it awakens sinners to their spiritual need;
- b) it keeps believers steadfast in the Christian faith.

2. *Regret, or remorse* – Job 42:5-6 captures the idea: “My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.” Regret proves genuine when it is what Paul calls “Godly sorrow,” which always involves turning away from sin. On the other hand, “worldly sorrow” brings “death” (see 2 Cor 7:9-10). One can be truly sorry for sin, resolving – by God’s grace – to avoid it in the future, or one may merely be “sorry” that he or she was caught.

3. *Turning from sin* – Two Old Testament words related to repentance are *nahum* – which in Hebrew implies sighing or groaning, that we are grieving over our sins – and *shubh*, appearing frequently (see for example Deut 4:30, Neh. 1:9, Ps. 7:2, Jer. 3:14). Byron Dement defines *shubh* as “a radical change of one’s attitude toward sin and God” (cited by Grider, 357). A key New Testament word for repentance is *metanoēō*, literally, a change of mind (Grider, 358). Ralph Thompson (*Beacon Dictionary of Theology*, see “repentance”) is correct to underscore the role that God plays in enabling an individual to turn from sin, a teaching found in Acts 5:31, 11:18; Romans 2:4; 2 Tim. 2:25, and Hebrews 12:17.

Some evangelism plans make no mention of repentance. For example, a popular plan is *The Four Spiritual Laws* (see <http://www.campuscrusade.com/fourlawseng.htm>), which

emphasizes God's "wonderful plan" for our lives, our separation from God due to our sin, Christ's death and resurrection as the means of experiencing God's love and plan for our lives, and individually receiving Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Nowhere in this presentation, however, is mention made of repentance, though this message figured prominently – for example – in the early preaching of Peter (Acts 2:38, 3:19) and appears elsewhere in the New Testament (Luke 13:1-5, 2 Peter 3:9, Rev. 3:19-20).

As we dialogue with seekers about what it means to follow Jesus, it is important that we give them some indication about the positive changes that God will want to make in their lives. Make it clear that all God requires is our *willingness* for Him to change them as He sees fit. The rest will come with time.

### ***Faith defined***

The classic passage on this theme is Ephesians 2:8-10:

*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

Likewise, **grace** is "God's unmerited favor" (Purkiser, 260). There is nothing that we can do to earn it; God gives it freely! **But what is faith?** John Wesley's 1725 definition was accurate as far as it went. He defined "faith" as "a species of belief" or "an assent to a proposition on rational grounds" (Crofford, "Justification," 37). Yet this definition was inadequate; it captured only the intellectual (cognitive) aspects, neglecting the emotions and the will (the affect). In simpler terms, it was all "head" and no "heart." In retrospect, Wesley will call this the "faith of a servant" (Ibid.).

On May 24, 1738, John Wesley experienced what is commonly called his "heart warming." Was this his conversion, or merely the moment when he received the assurance of his salvation? Whatever conclusion we draw, it is clear that Wesley's old definition of faith no longer suited him. After reading the old Church of England homily, *On Salvation*, Wesley thereafter borrowed its language to define **faith** as "a sure trust and confidence which a man hath in God, that through the merits of Christ *his* sins are forgiven, and *he* reconciled to the favor of God" (Ibid., 39). Note the italics that Wesley inserted into the homily. From his head, Wesley had long affirmed that Jesus was the Savior of the world; now, from his heart and own religious experience, he could say that Jesus was *his* Savior. Later in life, Wesley would label his pre-Aldersgate religion the "faith of a servant." On the other hand, after May 1738, he knew the "faith of a son" (Kenneth Collins, *John Wesley: A Theological Journey*, 245).

This kind of faith – of "**sure trust and confidence**" – is apparent in the words of Paul, as he came close to the moment of his death: "...I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day" (2 Tim.

1:12b). Earlier in his ministry, he testified that the life he lived was “by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20b).

Sometimes people misunderstand the relationship between the teaching of Paul and James on faith, as if the two were contradictory. (Compare Eph. 2-8-10 with James 2:24). However, the two teachings are compatible. James is concerned to show the importance of works as evidence of faith: “Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do” (James 2:18b). Paul’s emphasis – on the other hand – is on grace and faith as *preliminary* to good works. Still, he would agree with James that when we have been saved, we will naturally produce good works. That is why we should always cite Eph. 2:10 along with vv. 8-9, since it clearly presents the proper order. Verse 10 speaks of the “good works” that God prepared for us to do. When do these happen? These follow salvation, like fruit on a tree. First the tree grows (grace/faith), then it brings forth fruit (good works). Paul is saying: “No faith? No fruit.” James teaches: “No fruit? No faith.” These are two sides of the coin, to be sure, but it is the same coin.

### **C. Salvation: justification, regeneration, adoption, redemption, reconciliation, initial sanctification**

Diane LeClerc’s chapter on soteriology is entitled “full salvation” (Leclerc, 173-92). She sub-divides the term into “salvation” and “sanctification” corresponding to Christian conversion and what is sometimes called “the deeper life.” For now, let us examine the six terms Leclerc includes under the heading of “salvation.”

N.B. – For study purposes, it is necessary to look at the terms in a certain order. However, the six aspects of conversion occur at the same time.

**1. justification** – The simplest definition of justification is **pardon or forgiveness of sins** (Wiley/Culberston, 279). Leclerc comments: “The guilt of our sins is taken away. God no longer condemns us for our transgressions. This is at the heart of the theme of the Reformation” (Leclerc, 176). *How is this possible?* The answer lies in the words of John the Baptist: “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Our forgiveness is possible because of the atonement made by Christ (1 John 1:8-9).

More than any of the Reformers, **Martin Luther (1483-1546)** clarified for the church the true meaning of justification, according to Scripture. On what basis can we be declared “not guilty” before God? Can we earn this pronouncement based upon our works of righteousness? Clearly not! Both Martin Luther and John Wesley discovered through years of unsatisfying moral endeavor that we cannot earn our way into God’s favor. Grace is God’s unmerited favor, and “the righteous will live by faith” (Romans 1:17b). We are saved “not because of righteous things we had done” but “because of his mercy” (Titus 3:5). Forgiveness is not ours to earn, but simply to accept. For this reason, the term “justification” is sometimes expanded to “justification by faith.” This means placing our confidence in God that the sacrifice of Jesus is all that it takes for our sins to be forgiven. His sacrifice was perfect; we can add nothing.

The essence of justification by faith is summed up in the 1891 hymn, "My Faith Has Found a Resting Place," with lyrics by Eliza Hewitt:

*Verse 1*

My faith has found a resting place  
Not in device nor creed;  
I trust the ever living One,  
His wounds for me shall plead.

*Chorus*

I need no other argument,  
I need no other plea.  
It is enough that Jesus died,  
And that he died for me.

*Verse 2*

Enough for me that Jesus saves,  
This ends my fear and doubt.  
A sinful soul, I come to him  
He'll never cast me out!

In Roman Catholicism, the relationship between justification and sanctification is not always clear. For example, the official Roman Catholic *Catechism* (Centurion-Cerf, Paris, 1998; revised edition) speaks of justification as purifying the heart of an individual (see section 1990). The Bible – on the other hand – speaks of purity as related to sanctification, not justification (Hebrews 9:14, 10:10, 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:23-24).

Rob Staples, professor *emeritus* of theology at Nazarene Theological Seminary, has gone further, arguing that Roman Catholic teaching places sanctification *before* justification. On the other hand, the biblical order is justification *preceding* sanctification (from Staples' courses, "Constructive Theology 1" and "Wesley's Theology"). This reversal from the biblical order was also typical of Church of England teaching in John Wesley's day (18<sup>th</sup> century), a school of thought sometimes called "moralism."

Summarizing Paul's and James' teaching on faith and good works, we can affirm the following maxim:

*We do not do good works in order to be saved, but because we are saved, we will do good works.*

**2. regeneration** – It is important when teaching about salvation not to focus only upon justification. To do so may leave the impression that the believer – once saved – can do whatever he or she pleases, since our salvation is dependent upon Jesus only and what he has accomplished for us. Yet Scripture teaches that at the same time we are justified

(forgiven), the renewing work of the Holy Spirit begins in earnest. We are “born of the Spirit,” also known as **regeneration**, or the **new birth** (John 3:5-8; 2 Cor. 5:17). Regeneration “plays a major role in breaking the power of sin in our lives...we should expect significant change in a person from the moment he or she enacts faith” (LeClerc, 176).

**3. adoption** – Following Jesus is not a solitary pursuit. We are always on a journey together as the family of God. In Romans 8:15, Paul says that we have received “the Spirit of Sonship” whereby we cry “*Abba, Father.*” When a person puts their faith in Christ, they become part of God's family. We have the **witness of the Spirit**, the confidence and **assurance** that our sins have been forgiven and that we are now heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:12-17).

In Colossians 1:13-14, Paul describes the same experience using slightly different language: “For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” We no longer play for Satan's football team; from now on, Jesus is our captain, and we play for the kingdom of God.

**4. redemption** – Redemption is liberation from sin (LeClerc, 177). In the same way that God redeemed (liberated) the children of Israel from slavery in Egypt, so the sinner is set free from the bondage of sin (Romans 8:1-4; Gal. 5:1). Redemption is also related to the concept of ransom (Mark 10:45, 1 Tim. 2:6, Heb. 9:15). For more information, review the *Christus Victor* atonement model in Lesson 2 of this book.

**5. reconciliation** – Concerning our alienation from God, Diane LeClerc explains: “The moment of salvation overcomes the estrangement and initiates us back into a relationship with God that then grows in intimacy as we grow spiritually” (*Discovering Christian Holiness*, 177). Preachers will sometimes call people to “surrender” their lives to Christ. This is another way of talking about our reconciliation to God through Christ that takes place at the moment of our conversion (Acts 10:36, Romans 5:1, Eph. 2:13-15).

Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862), a famous American essayist, was asked on his death bed: “Have you made your peace with God?” He replied: “I did not know that we ever quarreled” (see Wendy McElroy, in “Henry Thoreau and 'Civil Disobedience,' online: <http://thoreau.eserver.org/wendy.html>). Yet the New Testament assumes that we are at war with God until the time we make peace. For this reason, Paul speaks of the “ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:11-21). Jesus' followers are the “ambassadors” of Christ, and announce to the world: “Be reconciled to God” (verse 20).

**6. initial sanctification** – Titus 3:5-7 affirms:

*He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.*



John Wesley never used the term “initial sanctification,” but it nevertheless captures his emphasis upon the real change that begins at the moment of our conversion. When we are pardoned of our sins, or justified, the righteousness of Christ is credited to our account, or “imputed.” However, as the “washing” language of Titus 3:5-7 makes clear, God also begins to make us truly righteous (or holy). How does this happen? He “imparts” righteousness to us, in a “progressive way as we begin our journey as Christians” (LeClerc, 178).

Holiness does *not* mean that Jesus is like a “shield,” masking our impurity from the probing gaze of God the Father. Rather, holiness is *genuine moral transformation* beginning at conversion and continuing for the rest of our lives, a transformation resulting from God's ongoing gracious activity. We cannot save ourselves by works, nor can we sanctify ourselves by works. All is of God's grace, from beginning to end, as we submit to it; grace is unmerited, a direct result of God's Holy Spirit working powerfully in us, re-making us in the image of Christ.

#### **D. Sanctification: progressive (growth in grace) and entire<sup>2</sup>**

Peter compares the new follower of Jesus to a newborn baby. What does a baby need in order to grow? Mostly, he or she needs to be nourished by milk, either from the mother or from a wet nurse. It could even be another who gives the baby formula to drink from a bottle. What is important is not so much *who* gives the milk, but that the baby receives it somehow:

*Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.*

- 1 Peter 2:1-3

Elsewhere, he uses similar terms: “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen” (2 Peter 3:18).

Growth in grace – or what Leclerc calls “**progressive sanctification**” – ideally occurs from the time of our conversion until the moment of our “glorification” (or final sanctification) at death (Leclerc, 178). But what does this mean? Paul explained that the goal is resembling Christ, “being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18b). And so the motto of the Church of the Nazarene is “to make Christlike disciples in the nations.”

*What does being “Christlike” mean?* John Wesley was clear that the essence of holiness is love. Mildred Wynkoop argues that Wesley equated the two terms (*Theology of Love*, 22). Indeed, Wesley often quoted the two great commandments – the love of God and

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<sup>2</sup> This is necessarily only a summary of topics covered more thoroughly in “Holiness 1” and “Holiness 2.” For more in-depth information, students are encouraged to consult those courses.

neighbor spoken of in Mark 12:28-34 – as what it means for love to be made complete (or perfect) in us (1 John 4:17). To the extent that we love God and others, we are Christlike. The emphasis upon love as the “core notion” of holiness is sometimes described as “relational holiness” (Thomas Oord and Michael Lodahl, *Relational Holiness*, 37).

But what does the verb “sanctify” mean? Two meanings are clear in Scripture:

1. *To be set apart for sacred use* – This was true, for example, of the vessels used in worship and sacrifice to Yahweh (Numbers 7:1). Likewise, the Levites were “set apart” to “stand before the Lord to minister and to pronounce blessings in his name” (Deut. 10:8). The sense of being set apart (or distinguished from) the rest of humanity was also applied to Israel as a whole, for they were to be “a people holy to the LORD your God” (Deut. 7:6; see Purkiser, 312). As Christians, God calls upon us to give ourselves wholly to him as an act of consecration (Romans 12:1-12) so that he can use us fully for his sacred purposes.
2. *To be purified from sin* – The Old Testament word for purity is *qodesh* (Purkiser, 312). It carried both a ceremonial and moral meaning (Ibid.). To be pure is to be clean, and sometimes biblical writers related this to the human heart. For example, David prayed: “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Ps. 51:10). When Peter later testified about what God had done for Cornelius and his household, he likewise underscored the cleansing work of the Holy Spirit: “God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith” (Acts 15:8-9).

This background prepares us to look at the meaning of **entire sanctification**, a term that appears in 1 Thess. 5:23-24:

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

Scripture and experience teach us that many Christians long for a deeper walk with God, but find the way blocked by a persistent inner force that holds them back. This force has been called different things by theologians. Some call it the “sinful nature,” the “flesh,” “carnality” or “original sin.” Whatever the term one uses, the result is plain. They are like the doubting individual, who James says is “unstable in all he does” (James 1:8).

The clearest New Testament description of this battle in the heart of the believer is found in Galatians 5:16-18:

*So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*

The solution to this conflict appears in vv. 24-26, a solution that comes in a moment and is followed by continual reliance upon the Holy Spirit:

*Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.*

As in all things of God, victory lies in submitting to God's power in our lives, to his sanctifying grace. Only He can nail our sinful nature to the cross, and we ourselves must be willing to be "crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20), totally submitted to His purposes.

While the entirely sanctified Christian has new power over sin and the inner battle has ceased, he or she should not think that they have "arrived," that they are now excluded from the very possibility of sinning or that no further spiritual growth is possible. Jesus – though without sin – was still subjected to temptation as an external force (Matt. 4:1-11), and so shall we as long as we are on this earth. We can still fall into sin, though we need not. In *Christus Victor*, we can have victory over sin. Following entire sanctification, we continue to grow in grace, being filled in greater and greater measure with love for God and others. Entire sanctification is an important milestone in our walk with God, but it is only a means to a goal.

What is the goal? Ray Dunning observes: "The New Testament and John Wesley speak with one voice in proclaiming that the great purpose of redemption is to restore man to the image of God" (*Grace, Faith, and Holiness*, 478). The objective of God's sanctifying work in our lives is to make us holy as He is holy (1 Peter 1:16). To be holy is nothing less than experiencing the restoration of the **moral image of God** in us, the image lost through the sin of our first parents. God wants to repair what has been damaged, and we believe that this repair can happen in this life. This is the "optimism of grace."

### **E. mutual accountability and the life of holiness**

Theologians have often formulated doctrine with only the individual in mind. Too often, we forget that some of Paul's letters – including Romans, Galatians, Ephesians and 1 & 2 Thess., – are not addressed to individuals, but to communities of faith. So, while God indeed entirely sanctifies individuals, in the phrase "May the God of peace sanctify YOU through and through" (1 Thess. 5:23), the "you" (Greek *humas*) is the second person plural. In other words, he is writing his letter to more than one person; the "you" is a group. We can imagine what an entirely sanctified individual would look like, but what would it mean for a congregation to be holy?

Ephesians 5:25-33 takes up this question. Christ loved "the church" and "gave himself up for her" – see v. 25. What was his objective? We need look no further than verses 26-27. He did this "to make her holy, cleansing her by washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless."

God desires a people that is:

- 1) set apart for sacred use, and
- 2) pure.

That – after all – is the meaning of the verb “sanctify.”

As we examine the book of Acts, we see that God makes his people holy through mutual accountability. For example, Acts 5:1-11 is the story of Ananias and Saphirra. When they held back part of the price of the land, while claiming they had given it all to Peter, the apostle responds: “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land?” (v. 3) Later, his wife Saphirra repeated the lie. In the end, both had fallen down dead, and were carried out and buried. That is a dramatic story indeed, and we must be careful how we apply it in today's church! At very least, we can affirm that God has made us accountable to each other. Church discipline has its place, or else the people of God will become salt that has lost its savor (Matt. 5:13), unable to serve as a preservative in a corrupt and decaying society.

James 5:16 presents the confession of sin in the context of community. He exhorts his readers to “confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.”

But accountability is much more than holding each other to a standard of moral purity. On the positive side, we are accountable to love, and that means being responsible to take care of each other. In the early chapters of Acts, the church in Jerusalem pooled their resources so that no one would go without the basics of life. When the Twelve found that they did not have enough time to both care for the physical needs of the widows and preach/teach, they demonstrated the importance of compassionate ministry by choosing seven who were “full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom” (Acts 6:3) to care for this need. Paul exhorted the Galatians to do good to everyone, but “especially to those who belong to the family of believers” (Gal. 6:10). By spurring each other on to “love and good deeds” (Hebrews 10:24), we work out the meaning of holiness as a group of believers. The Christian “race” is not run alone. We run it together, as indicated by the repetition of the phrase “let us” in Hebrews 12:1-3 –

- ⤴ “**Let us** throw off everything that hinders...”
- ⤴ “**Let us** run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”
- ⤴ “**Let us** fix our eyes on Jesus...”

The corporate emphasis can also be found in the Old Testament. Solomon insists:

*Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep him warm. But how can one keep*

*warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.*

-Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Paul may have had this team effort approach in mind when he wrote to the Philippians. He addresses them corporately, calling them "dear friends," and exhorting them to "work out your salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12). If they would do this, refusing to complain and argue (v. 14), they would together "shine like stars in the universe, as you hold out the word of life" (v. 15b, 16a). What a picture a holy church's positive impact as – set apart and made clean by a holy God – she reaches out in unity and love to a dying world!

## **F. glorification**

At long last, we arrive at the final stage of the Christian life. Death is the doorway to **glorification**, a synonym of bodily resurrection. (See the *Beacon Dictionary of Theology*, which under the heading "glorification" simply states: "See the resurrection of the body"). Matt Slick defines "glorification" as "the future and final work of God upon Christians, where he transforms our mortal physical bodies to the eternal physical bodies in which we will dwell forever" (from "What is glorification?", online: <http://carm.org/glorification>). One who is asleep has no consciousness of the passage of time. It could be one hour or one thousand years, but for the deceased person, the next conscious moment will be the sound of the voice of Jesus, the trumpet call of God and rising to life (John 5:28-29, 1 Thess. 4:16).

Phil. 3:20-21 evokes the "glorious body" that Jesus already has and that one day we also will receive. We await the "Lord Jesus Christ" who will come from "heaven" and perform a work of transformation by the "power that enables him to bring everything under his control" (v. 21). Jesus will "transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body." For believers, our mortal bodies will be re-created and given immortality (1 Cor. 15:53-56 – For views of the fate of the unbeliever, see Lesson 4 on eschatology). We as followers of Christ will at the resurrection come to share in immortality, an attribute that until that time is reserved for God alone (Genesis 3:22; 1 Tim. 6:16).

When we are re-created with a glorious body like that of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, we will be free of certain limitations to which our current, imperfect bodies will always be subject. This includes temptations but also infirmities of many kinds, such as forgetfulness, weakness, and sickness. No state of grace in this life can liberate us from these nuisances, but our glorified bodies will be free of them forever.

## **Conclusion**

The *via salutis* is the way of salvation, God's rescue plan for rebellious humankind enslaved by Satan and the bondage of sin. The coming of Christ to earth and his death on the cross (the atonement) is the basis of our salvation. Though we have all been affected by the disobedience of our first parents and therefore are powerless on our own to choose God,

the cross provided prevenient grace whereby God the Holy Spirit universally draws all to the Father, enabling those who will to choose him. Those who do not resist that grace (or light) receive more light. Our willingness to turn away from our sins and to put our faith in Christ leads us to conversion.

What John Wesley called "full salvation" includes both our restoration to God's favor through forgiveness of our sins and real moral transformation. God delivers us from both the guilt and the power of sin. First, we are born again, liberated from sin's bondage and adopted into God's family; we begin growing in grace. Later, in response to our consecration, God crucifies the sinful nature within us, sanctifying us wholly. He fills us with love for God and others, cleansing our hearts by faith and empowering us for more effective service. Even then, our walk with the Lord grows deeper with time, as we encourage each other in the life of holiness. One day, we finish this life, awaiting new life at our glorification, the resurrection of the dead. "And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore, encourage each other with these words" (1 Thess. 4:18).

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**Discussion in groups of three: 20 minutes**

Rather than splitting into our regular groups, this time, each student should find two other students, making a group of three. Think about the "way of salvation" presented in this lesson. Then, take turns sharing about your spiritual journey. Feel free to share in your own words what God has done for you. In your testimony, you may want to include answers to some of these questions:

1. When do you remember first loving God?
2. What did repentance look like for you? In your view, is repentance only for "sinners," or is it also for believers?
3. For you, was coming to faith in Christ a sudden experience, like a lightning bolt, or was it more gradual, like the dawn of a new day?
4. Which of the six elements of salvation presented by Diane Leclerc are most meaningful to you? Why?
5. Has sanctification for you been more of a process, a crisis, or both?

After all three have shared, reflect on the testimonies. Do you find John Wesley's *via salutis* to be helpful when thinking about the Bible's teaching on "full salvation"? Why, or why not?

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## ***Lesson 3***

### ***The kingdom of God, the Holy Spirit, and the church***

#### **I. The kingdom of God**

Eldon Ladd observed: "Modern scholarship is quite unanimous that the kingdom of God was the central message of Jesus" (*A Theology of the New Testament*, 57). Yet strangely, the theme of the kingdom of God has received little attention from Wesleyan scholars. For example, in a systematic theology that exceeds six hundred pages, Ray Dunning devotes a paltry three pages to the topic (*Grace, Faith, and Holiness*, 399-90). This is an improvement over Kenneth Grider's *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, where the kingdom of God is never mentioned! Orton Wiley and Paul Culbertson, for their part, give a single paragraph to the concept, treating it only in relationship to the return of Christ (*Introduction to Christian Theology*, 424). On the other hand, Samuel Powell's more recent introduction to theology includes an entire chapter on Jesus and the kingdom of God (see *Discovering Our Christian Faith*, 173-195).

This neglect by Wesleyan scholars is typical of evangelical theology as formulated over the past two hundred years. Focus has been on "getting people saved" or – in the case of Wesleyan-Holiness Christians – getting them saved and sanctified, as if God had no concern for the here-and-now affairs of people on this earth. This attitude may be a bi-product of the majority view of **dualism**, a belief that people are "souls" and "bodies." The body decays, but the soul lives on forever. Isn't ministering to the bodies of people a distraction when the only enduring part of the person is his or her soul, a soul that will live somewhere eternally, whether in heaven or in hell?<sup>3</sup>

Yet if Eldon Ladd is correct – that the kingdom of God was the "central message of Jesus" – then we neglect it at our own peril. When the disciples asked Jesus how they should pray, the Lord replied: "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). Salvation from sin for individuals should be understood as an integral *part* of our *whole* mission as the church, but not its entirety. If Jesus inaugurated the kingdom, is it not our responsibility as his followers to continue what he started?

Paul instructs that the ministers of the church exist to build up the Body of Christ, but also are to equip God's people for "works of service" (Eph. 4:12-13). Surely, these works of service are not limited to other believers but extend outward. Is this not one way of furthering God's kingdom on earth? While Jesus' reign will only be fully established at his return, our task is to be the master's servants, busy working until the master returns (Matt. 24:45-46). Verse 45 describes that work as giving the servants of the household "their food at the proper time."

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3 The question of the make-up of the human being falls under the heading of theological anthropology. Since how we view this question directly impacts our view of eschatology (last things), further discussion of this point appears in Lesson 4, "Eschatology: the triumph of God's kingdom."

Yet some think that evangelism should be limited to inviting people to follow Christ. Again, this is an essential element of the gospel, as we saw in the last lesson. However, the model Jesus gave us was *compassionate* evangelism, ministering to the various needs of persons, whether physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual. It is never a choice between preparing people for the resurrection and judgment *or* alleviating suffering in this present life. Rather, God calls his church to do both. What a joy! What a responsibility!

Because denominations have committees, buildings, programs and statistics, we can get caught up in the "ecclesiastical machinery" and forget that the church itself is a temporary measure. Only God's kingdom is "unshakable" (Hebrews 12:28). Sometimes, we have acted as if "church" and "kingdom" are the same thing. They are not. The church is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. The objective is the heavenly kingdom come down, and God has ordained the church as a key means to attain the goal of God's will being done "on earth, as it is in heaven."

The church's business is kingdom work, in all its forms. If Jesus' prayer is taken seriously, then the church surely has a role to play in furthering the reign of king Jesus here on earth, of being "salt," "light" and "yeast" in the here-and-now in a wide variety of ways (Matthew 5:13-16; 13:32). Making "Christlike disciples" yet showing no interest in the bodily plight of those disciples or the systems that keep them enslaved is not how life in the kingdom is supposed to be lived out. It is a contradiction of the greatest commandments, to love God and neighbor as oneself (Mark 12:28-34).

If the church exists for the sake of furthering the kingdom of God, we must answer two important questions:

- ♣ What is the "kingdom of God"?
- ♣ How should a follower of Christ be involved in society and government?

## **A. What is the "kingdom of God"?**

### ***Old Testament roots***

The Syro-Canaanite understanding of "God most high" (Hebrew *melek*) refers to a king who is accorded unlimited authority (John Lown, in *Beacon Dictionary of Theology*; see "Kingdom of God"). God's kingship over his people was understood in the context of his covenant relationship with them. Though the northern and southern kingdoms later elected their own earthly kings, they never relinquished the idea that Yahweh himself was still actively their king, and one day would rule not only over them but over all the nations of the world and over all creation— see Isa. 24:23, Zech. 14:9. Later, Messianic expectations developed, becoming prevalent among the rank-and-file of Jews. These were closely tied to the concept of divine kingship (Ibid.).



## ***Greek and Roman influence***

In 6<sup>th</sup> century Greece, the concept of king (*basileus*) came to signify a wise, just ruler, one who could “trace his power and lineage back to Zeus” (Ibid.). With the rise of **Alexander the Great (356-323 b.c.)** and later the Roman Emperors, the concept of kingship took on tones of divinity, through the Roman Emperor cult, including **Augustus (reigned 27 b.c. through 14 a.d.)**. Christians instead affirmed the kingship of Christ by declaring “Jesus is Lord” (Ibid.).

## ***New Testament development***

Jesus' ministry followed on the heels of John the Baptist, who announced: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near” (Matt. 3:2). Following his baptism by John, the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) presented a picture of Jesus as the preacher and teacher of the kingdom of God (or kingdom of heaven). In many parables, Jesus describes this kingdom, using the phrase: “The kingdom of heaven is like...” It is like a mustard seed (Matt. 13:31, Mark 4:30-32, Luke 17:6), good seed sown in a field (Matt. 13:24-30), a net catching fish (Matt. 13:47) or the punishment of an unforgiving servant who was forgiven a great debt but refused to pardon a small one (Matt. 6:23-35).

The Greek word for “kingdom of God” is *basilea tou theou* (Ladd, 63). In the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), this expression (or the similar “kingdom of heaven”) appears again and again. The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) describes the values of the kingdom of God. The so-called Beatitudes (5:3-12) mention the “poor in spirit” as those who will “inherit the kingdom of heaven” (v. 3) as well as those who are “persecuted for righteousness' sake” (v. 10). Yet every Beatitude describes life in the kingdom as God in Christ intended it to be. This kingdom is characterized by “mercy” (v. 7) and the pursuit of “righteousness” (v. 6). It is populated by “peacemakers” (v. 9), an echo of the “peaceable kingdom” prophesied about in Isa. 11:1-9, where the “wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat (v. 6) and a young child can play near the cobra's hole with no fear of harm (v. 8).

*But when would this kingdom arrive?* As we saw, John the Baptist believed that he was announcing the imminent arrival of the Messiah, the just king who would establish his kingdom. Yet the kingdom of God did not arrive in the way that the Jews had expected. On the one hand, Jesus fulfilled certain expectations of this king, such as entering Jerusalem on a donkey to the shouts of the people (Zech. 9:9, Matt. 21:1-11). At the same time, no one expected this triumphant king to die a shameful death on a cross. Pilate's inscription over Jesus' head – “King of the Jews” – painfully mocked their seemingly misplaced hopes.

Some sayings of Jesus regarding the kingdom of God are difficult to interpret. One such saying is found in Mark 9:1: “And he said to them, 'I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power.’” F.F. Bruce called attention to two groups of sayings regarding the “Son of Man,” the one who introduces the kingdom of God: “In the one set the Son of Man is exposed to

humiliation and suffering, in the other he is vindicated and glorified" (*The Hard Sayings of Jesus*, 154). So when Jesus says that some present that day listening to him would see the kingdom of God come, Bruce sees it as a reference to the second set of sayings regarding the Son of Man which apply following his resurrection:

With the death and exaltation of Jesus and the coming of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost following, some of those who were witnesses of his mighty works in Galilee and elsewhere saw the power of the kingdom of God manifested on a scale unmatched during his ministry. Within a few weeks, the number of his followers multiplied tenfold; his kingdom was visibly on the march.

- Bruce, 154

George Ladd speaks of the kingdom as both present and future (*A Theology of the New Testament*, 64-65). Some have called this the tension between the **"already"** and the **"not yet,"** or – as Samuel Powell puts it – "revealed" and "hidden" (Powell, 183). In some sense, Jesus has already inaugurated the kingdom. In Matthew 12:28, Jesus observes: "But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." When the Pharisees asked when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus seems to say that it has already arrived: "The kingdom of God is within (or among) you" (Luke 17:21). Jesus was saying that the kingdom was already "in your midst" in his own person (Ladd, 68).

The already/not yet tension is seen in the incarnation vs. the second coming of Christ. In the first advent, the kingdom was inaugurated; in the second advent, it will be consummated (Dunning, 390). The most obvious evidence that God's kingdom has not fully dawned is the persistent presence of evil in our world. Only at the end of time will Satan and his minions be thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, to be "tormented day and night forever" (Rev. 20:7-10). The unrepentant – those whose names are not found in the book of life – will also be punished, thrown into the lake of fire, which is the second death (Rev. 20:1-15). The final destination for those who enter at the wide gate and follow the broad way is "destruction" (Matt. 7:13). Only then will "the kingdom of the world" become "kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 11:15).

***What is the kingdom of God like?*** Samuel Powell (183-193) speaks of the kingdom as a "call" for us to respond. This call is characterized by six aspects:

1. *a call for wisdom* – Read Matt. 7:24-27. Who is the foolish person? What makes him foolish? Who is the wise person? What makes him wise?
2. *a call for righteousness* – Obeying the Law of Moses was secondary to obeying a higher law, that of justice, mercy, and faith (Matt. 23:23). It was a call to "abandon all pretensions" and to "bear fruit in the form of works of love" (Powell, 185-86).
3. *a call to trust in God* – It is foolish to put our trust in riches (Matt. 6:19-21). Instead, we must put our trust in our loving God who will take care of our needs (Matt. 6:33).

4. *a call to humility* – Hubris (pride) makes us think we are better than others because of our riches or generosity. It also shows up in a critical spirit that judges others (Matt. 7:1-5). On the other hand, humility is willing to abase itself, serving others first (John 13:1-17). Powell (p. 190) concludes: “In the kingdom, the distinction between the righteous and the sinner was replaced by the distinction between the proud and the humble.”

5. *a call for renewal of awe* – God does not exist to serve us; we exist to serve God (Powell, 190). The presence of Jesus inspired awe in Peter: “Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!” (Luke 5:8). At the transfiguration, Peter, James, and John were terrified (Luke 9:34). What Powell calls a “spirit of familiarity” leads us to expect things from God as our right. Awe and fear of the Lord, on the other hand, are the proper response to serving in God's kingdom.

6. *a call for praise* – Do we like little children receive Jesus' words as the very revelation of God, or do we stand in judgment on that revelation, demanding “signs” (Matt. 16:4)? Powell calls demand for proof the “spirit of idolatry,” an attempt to “create the presence of God at our convenience” rather than gratefully receiving the gift of God's divine presence “as God wills” (Powell, 191). Commenting on Zechariah 68-69, Powell concludes (p. 192):

We see here that praise and worship resulted from embracing God's kingdom with faith and trust. The spirit of idolatry makes demands on God's revelation – it asks for proof. The attitude of faith and trust simply receives God's revelation and responds with praise. The spirit of idolatry expresses itself in unbelief; faith and trust express themselves in worship.

## **B. Should a follower of Christ be involved in government?**

It sounds good to say that the church exists to expand the kingdom of God, a kingdom inaugurated by Christ. But how exactly is this done? Different ideas abound. Here are just three of the many that could be cited.

### ***1. Luther's "two kingdoms": discouraging Christian involvement?***

Some have developed ideas that seem to discourage Christian involvement in governing. In his 1523 treatise, “On Secular Authority,” **Martin Luther (1483-1546)** spoke of two separate realms that operated independently:

- a. the kingdom of God, composed of all true Christians, and
- b. the kingdom of the world.

*Religion Facts* describes Luther's view:

Those who belong to God's kingdom are ruled by the Spirit and do good works naturally - therefore they have no need of the law or the sword. But the remainder of humanity must be externally restrained from sin and evil, and therein lies the necessity of secular law. It has been established by God to keep safety and order in the world of nonbelievers.

(Source: <http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/people/luther/works.htm>)

Paul's teaching in Romans 13:1-7 seems clear enough. The "governing authorities" (v.1) have been established by God. To rebel against that authority is "rebellious against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves" (v.2) since rulers "do not bear the sword for nothing" (v.4). Authorities are the "servants of God" whom we must "respect" and "honor" and to whom we should pay our taxes (v.7). While this is a general rule for Christians, many wonder whether it is absolute. Does the "two kingdoms" idea allow room for the church to be prophetic, a voice of conscience to rulers? Also, on the basis of Romans 13, should Christians blindly obey a dictator who is godless and tortures citizens?

The "two kingdoms" concept may prevent Christians from positively influencing government, whether individually or through the church. Yet salt can only preserve meat if it is sprinkled. Likewise, light can only overcome darkness if it's "put on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house" (Matt. 5:15). Out of fear of somehow being contaminated by being involved in the political process, any good that a Christian might have done through his or her holy influence is likewise negated. On the other hand, history tells us that often the church has been corrupted when it became too cozy with rulers.

In any case, Luther's vision has clearly had a lasting impact. The doctrine of the "separation of Church and State" prevalent in the United States is similar to the Reformer's idea, though it came from other sources, especially **Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826)**.

## ***2. Christian Reconstructionism: one view of a Christian society***

For much of the twentieth century, evangelicals in the United States followed in the tradition of Luther's "two kingdoms," even if most knew nothing of his ideas. They kept their distance from politics. A popular maxim was: "Religion and politics don't mix." Many churches – and the Christians who attended them – focused primarily on "soul winning." The idea was that if enough people "got saved," society would necessarily change for the better.

But not all embraced Luther's (or Jefferson's) vision of a wall between church and state. One dissenting voice was that of Calvinistic theologian, **R.J. Rushdooney (1916-2001)**. He was the founder of Christian Reconstructionism (sometimes called "Dominionism") and author of the 1973 *Institutes of Biblical Law*. In general, Rushdooney would limit the role of women to work inside the home (Frederick Clarkson, in "Christian Reconstructionism,"

<http://www.publiceye.org/magazine/v08n1/chrisre2.html>). In *Reason Magazine*, Walter Olson summarizes other facets of this view:

- ⤴ It is based on a post-millennial view of eschatology (last things) where believers work for the full establishment of God's kingdom here-and-now.
- ⤴ Its model is the development of biblical theocratic republics.
- ⤴ It seeks to put into practice a hard-line version of Old Testament law, which would mandate the execution of homosexuals, women who have an abortion, or even one who curses or strikes a parent (see Exodus 21:15-17).

Since Rushdooney's passing, Gary North, his son-in-law, has been a strong voice for the movement.

source: <http://reason.com/archives/1998/11/01/invitation-to-a-stoning>

### ***Class discussion***

What do you think of Christian Reconstructionism? In your view, is it similar in spirit to the movement in some countries to impose *sharia* law? How would non-Christians fare in a society run on Rushdooney's principles? Read John 8:1-11. Should Old Testament laws about capital punishment be applied in modern society? If so, why? If not, why not? Debate.

### **3. Chanshi Chanda's *Christlike Justice and the Holiness Tradition***

Because promoting the kingdom of God necessarily includes the "call for righteousness" as Samuel Powell affirmed above, the theme of justice cannot be absent from a well-rounded preaching of the gospel. Chanshi Chanda does not frame his argument in relation to the kingdom of God. Instead, he uses the term "social holiness" (p. 31). However, his ideas are relevant to our topic. He insists: "The most important and powerful body to combat injustice and oppression is the church at the level where the evil is taking place" (*Christlike Justice and the Holy Tradition*, 112). To do nothing in the face of injustice and oppression means others may assume that the church is collaborating with the oppressors and "she will eventually be contaminated and lose the sense of right and wrong" (p. 68).

Religious leaders are to congratulate the "powers" when they have done well (p. 85) but also "have the moral mandate to bring the powers to account" (p. 77). Yet here, Chanshi Chanda issues a caution. The church cannot correct corruption in society if the church is itself corrupt (p. 78):

It is very difficult for the clergy to speak with authority, on disputes in the public square for instance, if the ecclesiastical constituency suffers the same as the other social structure the church is trying to correct. As Jesus said: 'How can you say to your brother, "Let me take the speck out of your eye," when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?' (Matt. 7:4). There are, unfortunately, many examples of ecclesiastical corruption from which to choose. Some clergy members are guilty of

unfair elections and leadership selection in their churches. Other church leaders are guilty of collusion, racism, tribalism, and many other forms of sectarianism. This does not mean that the church is not holy. It simply means that the few who are not careful can make the church look bad in the eyes of the enemies of holiness.

Chanda's philosophy is not one of withdrawal from the world but engagement with it. We do not need to worry about being tainted by involvement with civil authorities; rather, members of the church are to be "ambassadors of holiness...in their places of work and communities and articulate the connection between faith and profession...By mingling with the powers, our holiness members will infect the powers they serve with and bring them to the point of salvation in Christ" (pp. 91-92).

Unlike Rushdooney, Chanda does not call for establishing theocracies modeled after the Mosaic Law. Rather, the basis for the church's advocacy on behalf of others is what he calls "the Freedom Gospel" as expressed in Jesus' citing in Luke 4:18-19 of the prophet's call to action (Isaiah 61:1-2). Because the "Spirit of the Lord" was upon him, Jesus preached to the poor, bound up the brokenhearted and released prisoners who dwelt in darkness.

Chanshi Chanda challenges those in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition to work out the social implications of our doctrine. Though the book would be improved if he had directly related it to the kingdom of God, it is an important conversation starter, especially for those who follow in the footsteps of John and Charles Wesley. After all, the Wesley brothers not only preached full salvation for individuals but were unafraid to speak out against social ills, including the plight of the poor and the evil of slavery. Can we do any less in our time?

***Class activity: 15 minutes***

Split into your regular small groups and discuss the following scenario:

One of your female church board members, Margaret, applied for a job at the anti-corruption commission. She had an interview with the director of the commission, a position directly appointed by the President. During the interview, she spoke openly about her faith in Christ. The director was pleased to see that she attended church regularly. He told her that she was "just the kind for person we're looking for" and hired her on the spot as an inspector. She was excited to be joining the team, even is she was the only female in an all male office. More importantly, she was happy to be helping her country and – as a Christian – to advance the kingdom of God.

Her first assignment was to visit the various offices at the port. During the course of her visit, she found several irregularities in how things were done. Though there was a central computer system where all transactions were to be entered, many employees never entered transactions on the computer. Further, she witnessed customs officers holding private meetings with importers where large amounts of cash were traded. Several business owners took her aside and complained about the long waits to get their goods cleared through the port and the constant quoting by customs officers of a tired proverb: "If you don't anchor your papers with stones,

the wind will blow them away.” Others said they were required to pay money for mysterious “fees” and never received receipts.

Margaret had seen enough. She went to the director and made her report. At first, he listened attentively, and seemed sympathetic to her concerns. Margaret was confident that he would let her pursue the investigation. As she spoke, suddenly, there was a knock at the door. It was Mr. Harrison, an adviser to the President. The Director asked Margaret to step outside the office for a minute so that he could speak privately with Mr. Harrison. Fifteen minutes later, the adviser left, and the director invited Margaret back in. “I’m afraid the port is just going to have to wait,” he said. “Something more urgent has come up, and I’m re-assigning you.”

That night, Margaret couldn't sleep. She had taken the job because she thought she could make a difference, yet here she was on the anti-corruption committee, which seemed itself to be corrupt! On the one hand, she was tempted to resign. Hadn't the others at church warned her that “those who lie down with dogs get fleas”? On the other hand, she knew from reading the Sermon on the Mount that Christians must be “salt” and “light.” If she quit, what chance would she have to be a witness to others?

DISCUSS: What should Margaret do? As her pastor, what would you advise her if she came to you with her dilemma?

The teacher should take a few minutes at the end to bring the class back together. Invite a spokesperson from each group to briefly share they concluded.

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## **Part 2 – Pneumatology: the doctrine of the Holy Spirit**

To speak of the kingdom of God, one must speak of the Holy Spirit. Jesus inaugurated his ministry and the kingdom by claiming that the “Spirit of the Lord” was upon him (Luke 4:18-19). Indeed, whenever in the Bible we see the advance of God's purposes on earth, the Holy Spirit is deeply involved.

The word “pneumatology” – the doctrine (or study) of the Holy Spirit – comes from *pneuma*, the Greek word for spirit.

Let us look at the Holy Spirit under two headings:

- ⤴ Who is the Holy Spirit?
- ⤴ The fruit and the gifts of the Spirit

## A. Who is the Holy Spirit?

The third Article of Faith of the Church of the Nazarene, entitled "The Holy Spirit," affirms:

*We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Triune Godhead, that He is ever present and efficiently active in and with the Church of Christ, convincing the world of sin, regenerating those who repent and believe, sanctifying believers, and guiding into all truth as it is in Jesus.*

Let us look at the various phrases of this statement.

- ⤴ **"Holy Spirit"** – The adjective "holy" distinguishes God's spirit from all other spirits. In Jesus' ministry, he often confronted *evil* spirits. Yet Jesus promised that the apostles would receive the Holy Spirit (Greek *hagiu pneumatos* – Acts 1:8). John 14-16 contains much teaching about the *parakletos*, the "Comforter" (or Counselor) whom Jesus would send after he returned to heaven. The Old Testament speaks of the Holy Spirit who would sometimes seize individuals (see 1 Sam. 10:6ff, 19:20ff) for a time and for a specific task. However, in the New Testament, Christians become the permanent "temple" of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19).
- ⤴ **"the Third Person of the Triune Godhead"** – God has revealed Himself in Scripture as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Some Christian traditions have taught that the Holy Spirit proceeds only from the Father, while others believe he proceeds from the Father *and* the Son. This is called the double procession of the Holy Spirit.
- ⤴ **"ever present and efficiently active in and with the Church of Christ"** – The Holy Spirit is first mentioned in Genesis 1:2 as the Spirit of God that hovered over the waters. The Holy Spirit is present in all of creation, but his activity is especially pronounced in the Church. On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit birthed the church when He descended upon the 120 gathered in the upper room (Acts 2:1-2). The book of Acts is sometimes called the "Acts of the Holy Spirit" since he empowers the church, its evangelists and missionaries to reach the world with the message of the Gospel.
- ⤴ **"convincing the world of sin"** – John 16:9 says that one of the tasks of the *parakletos* is to "convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment." As Wesleyans, we believe this conviction is related to prevenient grace, the "drawing" of the Father (John 6:44) and of the Son (John 12:32), the enlightening of conscience given to all at birth (John 1:9). John Wesley taught that the "repentance of believers" was the conviction of sin remaining in the life of a follower of Christ. By faith, God can subsequently give the Christian a pure heart and clean hands (see the 1767 sermon, *The Repentance of Believers*, in John Wesley's *Works* [Bicentennial Edition], 1:349).
- ⤴ **"regenerating those who repent and believe" and "sanctifying believers"** – John 3:5 speaks of those who are "born of water and the Spirit." Some have seen



the reference to “water” as a reference to the first birth, the “water” that breaks when a woman gives birth. Others see it as a reference to Christian baptism. The second birth is the “new birth,” (or regeneration), when God makes the sinner a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17; 1 Peter 1:23).

Many evangelicals equate the terms “born of the spirit” with “baptism with the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13), understanding them as describing a single experience at conversion. According to this position, being “filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18) can happen multiple times afterward – “one baptism, many fillings.” Most scholars believe this was also the position of John Wesley. However, later Wesleyan-Holiness theologians (S.S. White, Kenneth Grider, and Richard Taylor, among others) saw baptism with the Holy Spirit as a subsequent event resulting in entire sanctification. The experience of entire sanctification was confirmed by a greater love for God and others and the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-26). This position is sometimes called the “classical” holiness view.

Some Pentecostal/Charismatic groups begin with this classical view of Spirit baptism but modify it, teaching that speaking in tongues (mysterious heavenly languages) is the necessary evidence of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. The Church of the Nazarene has historically rejected the Pentecostal/Charismatic position as incompatible with a careful interpretation of the gift of languages as taught in the New Testament – see *Manual* paragraph 903.11.

Recent years have seen a re-evaluation by Wesleyan scholars of the classical holiness position, especially following the re-discovery in the late 1970s of John Wesley's views on the matter. Reflecting this re-appraisal, subsequent books on holiness – including William Greathouse's *Wholeness in Christ: Toward ad Biblical Theology of Holiness* [Beacon Hill, 1998] and Keith Drury's *Holiness for Ordinary People* [Wesleyan Publishing House, 1983, 1994, 2004, 2009] – approach sanctifying grace without recourse to the language of Spirit baptism. Changes proposed by the 2010 General Assembly to the wording of Nazarene Article 10, “Christian Holiness and Entire Sanctification,” continue this trend, adding “infilling of the Holy Spirit” as an alternate description of God's sanctifying work in the life of the converted. These changes in wording, if finally adopted by the denomination as a whole, would broaden the church's official stance, formally creating theological space for both John Wesley's position and the classical holiness view.

### ▲ **“Guiding into all truth as it is in Jesus”**

In John 16:13, Jesus told his disciples: “But when he, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth.” Practical examples of this guidance can be found in the book of Acts. For example, in Acts 13:1-3, while they worshiped and fasted, the Holy Spirit spoke: “Set apart from me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them” (v. 2). Other times, the Holy Spirit guided by giving a vision, including one about Gentiles while Peter prayed on a rooftop in Joppa (Acts 10:17-23). Likewise, during the night, Paul had a vision of man of Macedonia who stood and begged him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us” (Acts 16:9). Just prior to this dream, they had tried to enter Bythynia, “but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysa and went down to Troas” (16:7-8). In the same way,

in our time, God the Holy Spirit often guides Christians by making them profoundly uneasy about a given course of action. Popularly, this is called being “checked by the Holy Spirit.” Jesus affirms that “the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and he leads them out” (John 10:3). Truly, “a person's steps are directed by the LORD” (Proverbs 20:24a).

## **B. The fruit and the gifts of the Spirit**

While all believers should demonstrate the **fruit of the Holy Spirit** in their lives (Gal. 5:22-26), the gifts of the Spirit are given by divine decision (1 Cor. 12:11). Leslie Parrott explains:

The Spirit bestows his gifts severally according to his sovereignty, for usefulness in the church. The fruit of the Spirit expresses growing Christlikeness of character and is the product of the Spirit's indwelling. No one gift is God's will for all believers, but every manifestation of fruit is God's will for all.

- in *Beacon Dictionary of Theology*; see “fruit of the Spirit”

It is significant that Paul in Gal. 5:22 speaks not in the plural of the *fruits* of the Holy Spirit; rather, the term (Greek *ho karmos*) is in the singular. It is a “unity” (Ridderbos, 207), like a single bunch of grapes, all stemming from a common vine. There is no question of choosing to be joyful but not kind, as if a person could opt to display one aspect of the Spirit's presence yet reject others. Nevertheless, Parrott (Ibid.) groups the nine aspects of the fruit into three categories:

- ⤴ *love, joy, peace* – describe the state of the person's relationship to the Holy Spirit
- ⤴ *patience, kindness, goodness* – describe the outworking of the Holy Spirit through the believer in relationship to others
- ⤴ *faithfulness, gentleness, self-control* – relate to the influence of the Spirit on the character of the believer

Besides the fruit of the Spirit, the New Testament also details various **gifts of the Spirit** – see Romans 12:3-8, 1 Cor. 12-14, and 1 Peter 4:7-11. W.T. Purkiser (*Beacon Dictionary of Theology*, see “gifts of the Spirit”) correctly notes that the Holy Spirit himself is God's gift to all believers. In turn, the Holy Spirit becomes the Giver who bestows as he sees fit “grace gifts” (Greek *charismata*). Purkiser defines *charismata* as “capacities or abilities for carrying on the work of the Church” (Ibid.). It is from this Greek word that we derive the term “charismatic,” a description of groups/churches that place a strong emphasis upon the pursuit of spiritual gifts, especially those that seem spectacular, such as tongues, prophecy, or healing. Because of the excesses that can result from stressing these gifts, those in the Wesleyan tradition have sometimes cautioned: “Seek the Giver, not the gift.”

In the African context, it is not the more ordinary gifts (for example, helping or administration – 1 Cor. 12:28) that cause controversy. Rather, it is those considered more

extraordinary that cause division. For this reason, let us briefly consider tongues, prophecy, and healing as examples of miraculous gifts.

**1. Tongues (or languages)** – What is the so-called “gift of tongues”? In Greek, the word translated as “tongue” is *glossa*. It is the word that appears throughout Paul’s comparison of prophecy and tongues in 1 Cor. 12-14. Importantly, the same root word appears in Acts 2:4: “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues (or languages - Gk. *glossais*) as the Spirit enabled them.” It is clear from the Acts 2 account that the *glossais* in question were not “heavenly languages” (or so-called “prayer languages”) but earthly languages spoken by groups of people. In amazement, they ran to see what was going on, and exclaimed: “How is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?” (Acts 2:8). Were the disciples speaking these languages they had never studied or learned, or was this a miracle of listening, the Holy Spirit interpreting simultaneously so that these unbelievers could understand the gospel message? Both positions have been advanced. In any case, it was a “miracle of communication” (W.T. Purkiser, *The Gifts of the Spirit*, 55) allowing evangelism to happen when it otherwise would not.

The same phenomenon appears to have happened on two other occasions in Acts: First, at the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:44) and later in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-7). In both instances, large, multi-cultural groups were present who benefited by hearing the Gospel proclaimed in their heart language through the gift of languages.

The lessons of Acts should not be forgotten when we come to 1 Cor. 12-14. Some have suggested that pagan, non-sensical babble may have been imported into the church in Corinth, perhaps from one of the temples to the various Greek gods or goddesses or even local mystery religions. However, if this was true, it is hard to see why Paul would have allowed it at all, though Purkiser suggests that Paul may have been keen to separate what was “genuine” from what were “human imitations” (*Gifts of the Spirit*, 62). These “imitations” may be indicated by the use in 1 Cor. 14 of the term *pneumatika* (spiritual phenomena) instead of *charismata* (Ibid., 59). Since the Greek root word (*glossa*) is identical with what appears in Acts, it is possible that even in Corinth they were dealing with foreign languages, especially since Corinth was an important seaport that welcomed sailors and merchants from around the world. Such worshipers should not be forbidden from speaking, but in every case, their messages should be interpreted into a common language so that all can benefit (1 Cor. 14:26). On the other hand, when Paul says that tongues are a sign for unbelievers (14:22), he would seem to have the miraculous phenomenon of the Day of Pentecost in mind, a miracle of communication in genuine earthly languages.

Some who today practice speaking in tongues (*orglossolalia*, a compound word never appearing in the Greek New Testament) say they are speaking the “language of angels” (1 Cor. 13:1). Yet a fair reading of 1 Corinthians 13 does not support such a conclusion. Paul – good Pharisee that he was – is crafting a hypothetical argument, as indicated by the word “if” (v.1). Even *if* he could speak languages both human and angelic, if he neglected love, he would be nothing more than “a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.” In any case, Paul is not promoting a private “prayer language” or encouraging us to speak the language of angels, whatever that might be.

*Summary:* There is a genuine gift of languages, and the New Testament model for this gift is most clearly seen in Acts 2. Tongues are given by God at key times to further the advance of the gospel by miraculously allowing clear communication despite language barriers.

**2. Prophecy** – The clearest definition of prophecy appears in 1 Cor. 14:3 – “But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.” W.T. Purkiser calls it “the characteristic gift of those who preach the gospel” (*Gifts of the Spirit*, 26). Paul says that people should be eager to prophesy (14:39). Before preaching at the All Saints Anglican Church in Nairobi, a visiting Baptist minister said: “Today, I don't have a sermon, but I do have a message.” He then read his text from the Bible, and preached a wonderful, Bible-based message, truly a word from the Lord. While prophecy in the Bible includes an element of foretelling the future, it is more typically a “forth-telling,” proclaiming the word of the Lord to those who need to hear.

Like the issue of languages, the issue of prophecy can be controversial, particularly when it is understood as a spontaneous revelation from God, or a “message of knowledge” (1 Cor. 12:8; “word of knowledge,” KJV). At a Nazarene congregation in Benin, a stranger approached the missionary before the service. “Good morning,” he said. “I have a word from the Lord for the people today. May I have a few minutes to address the congregation?” The missionary politely replied: “Thank you, but someone else has already been chosen and has prepared a message from the Bible this morning.”

In Ephesians 4:12-13, Paul gives a list of roles in the Church. This includes “prophet.” The Church of the Nazarene in belief and practice equates the “prophet” (or prophetess) with the preacher. A call to prophesy is a call to preach *via* biblical exposition, and this role is open to both women and men (Acts 2:17; Gal. 3:28).

**3. Gifts of healings** – In 1 Cor. 12:28, Paul speaks of “gifts of healings” (Gk. *charismata iamaton*). The plural usage suggests that “these are specific gifts for specific instances of healing” (*Gifts of the Spirit*, 42). In other words, like the gift of languages – which is given by God in specific instances to further the gospel – the gifts of healings should be understood as specific instances of divine blessing in the life of the local church. It is questionable for an individual to claim a “gift of healing” if by that they mean that that all whom they touch are healed. Even Paul claimed no such capacity. Sometimes those he touched were healed, and sometimes they were not, such as when Paul left Trophimus sick at Miletus (2 Tim. 4:20) or when he urged Timothy to take care of his weak stomach (1 Tim. 5:23). *Further discussion on divine healing appears in Part 4 of this lesson, under the heading “Special Issues in Ministry.”*

### ***Class activity: 30 minutes***

When studying spiritual gifts, the Romans 12:3-8 and 1 Peter 4:7-11 passages are often neglected. Split the class into two groups, assigning one of these passages to each group. Give them 20 minutes to read the passage together and discuss it. Determine what spiritual gifts are mentioned by Paul (or Peter) and explaining how they are to be used in the Church.

Later, have a spokesperson from each group give a 5 minute summary report on their group's discussion. *Each report should end with a specific suggestion for how local churches can help their members find and practice their spiritual gifts.*

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### **Part 3 – The church: advancing God's kingdom in the power of the Spirit**

#### **I. What is the church, and how is it related to the kingdom of God?**

The word "ecclesiology" refers to the study (or doctrine) of the Church. The word for "church" is *ecclesia*, meaning "called out" (Richard Taylor, *Beacon Dictionary of Theology*, see "Church"). Apart from a few instances where the word is translated differently, Taylor observes: "*Ekklesia* is reserved exclusively in the NT for followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, viewed collectively, either as a local body of believers or the aggregate of believers everywhere" (Ibid.). To describe the church, the New Testament also compares it to the New Israel (1 Peter 2:9-10, Romans 9:25-26) and the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-31 – see full discussion in Ray Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and Holiness*, 509-16). The Day of Pentecost as described in Acts 2 is considered the time when the Holy Spirit gave birth to the church (Dunning, 519).

We have already seen that Jesus emphasized the importance of the kingdom of God (or the kingdom of heaven) in the Synoptic Gospels. Yet how is that kingdom to be furthered? It is here that the church plays a key role, not as end in itself, but as the most important means by which God has chosen to further the kingdom already inaugurated by Christ, even as we await its full consummation at Jesus' return.

A key passage when considering the relationship between the church and the kingdom of God is **Matthew 16:13-20**, Peter's famous confession that Jesus is the Messiah, the "Christ" or anointed one. (Take a minute to read this together).

The title "Christ" had royal overtones, as we have seen earlier in this course. As the king, Jesus had the authority to give the "keys to the kingdom of heaven" (v. 19) to whomever he pleased. But before he offers them to Peter, he speaks of the "church" (v. 18). Contrary to the Roman Catholic Petrine theory – that Jesus would build his church on Peter – Protestants hold that Jesus founded the church on a confession, namely, that Jesus is the Son of God. Christ himself is the "cornerstone" of the Church (Eph. 2:20). So the order in this passage is important. Jesus says:

1. I will build my church;
2. I will give you the keys to the kingdom.

**The mission of the church is to further the kingdom of God on earth.** What is temporary (the church) promotes what is permanent (the kingdom). In this sense, it is the kingdom that "calls the church into existence" (Dunning, 518).

Paul says that our "citizenship is in heaven" and that we "eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20). In Ephesus, Paul spent three months at the synagogue "arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God" (Acts 19:8). The last we see of Paul in the book of Acts is after his arrival at Rome: "From morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets" (Acts 28:23; – see also 20:25 and 28:31). The kingdom of God was Paul's passion, and it must be ours. To say "your kingdom come" is to say "*maranatha*" (Rev. 3:20), meaning "Come, Lord Jesus."

Jesus has appeared for the first time and will come again. For this reason, Paul says, we are to "preach the word" (2 Timothy 4:1). As we await the return of the king, who will consummate his kingdom, we are busy inviting people to become citizens of the kingdom (Col. 1:13). John says that Jesus Christ has "freed us from our sins by his blood" and "has made us to be a kingdom and priests" (Rev. 1:5-6).

Salvation is the way into the kingdom. The kingdom is composed of believers who are walking on the "way of salvation," the *via salutis* discussed in a previous lesson. Like a school is no school without students, so the kingdom is no kingdom without citizens. To "make Christlike disciples in the nations" is how we enroll kingdom citizens. All earthly allegiances pale in comparison with our allegiance to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and we as followers of Christ are his happy subjects.

## **II. The Word rightly preached and the sacraments rightly administered**

Three believing men meet together for prayer on Thursday nights. Are they are a "church"? On a Tuesday morning, five women regularly study the Bible. How about them? Are they also a "church"? Some would answer "yes." Did not Jesus say that "where two or three come together in my name, there I am with them" (Matt. 18:20)?

The Apostles' Creed affirms: "I believe in the holy catholic (universal) church, the communion of saints..." Acts 2:42-47 helps us understand what that "communion of saints" looked like in the years just after Jesus' ascension. What did the early Christians do when they gathered? Verse 42 clarifies: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."

Though various images of the church were developed across the centuries, **Martin Luther** adopted a view of the church that fits well with this early picture from Acts. Luther taught that the church is brought into existence when two conditions are met:

1. When Scripture is rightly preached and
2. the sacraments (baptism and the Lord's Supper, or Eucharist) are rightly administered.

- Dunning, p. 522

John Wesley by his actions accepted this definition of "church" as largely accurate. He refused to call the building where Methodists gathered "churches." Rather, they were

“preaching houses” or “chapels” where lay preachers expounded Bible and lead prayers, and where those gathered sang hymns, including many composed by his brother, Charles. But for baptism or communion, Methodists were directed to their local Church of England parish. In this way, John Wesley maintained his vision of Methodism as a reform movement within the Church of England. Though Wesley eventually ordained pastors for America, it was only upon his death that the Methodist Church was founded. After this, it officially and regularly celebrated preaching, sacraments, and ordinations. (For more details, see Chapter 6, “Tensions and Transitions,” in Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, Abingdon, 1995, 261-308).

### **A. The Word rightly preached**

While the Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions include preaching, the focal point of their worship is Eucharist. Beginning with Martin Luther, a significant modification was made in Protestant worship, namely, the high point of worship became preaching. Many churches in the Protestant tradition still reflect this idea through the manner of placing furniture in the sanctuary. Typically, a pulpit is located front-and-center. Wesley Tracy, former professor of preaching at Nazarene Theological Seminary, once described the pulpit as the “throne of the word of God.” Even if this image might wrongly lead some to suggest that Protestants worship the Bible, it nevertheless underscores the primacy of Scripture as our “rule of faith and practice.” In non-Protestant traditions, on the other hand, it is the communion table that is placed front-and-center, directing the attention of the worshiper to the Eucharist. On the other hand, the pulpit is typically placed to one side.

The New Testament underscores the centrality of teaching and preaching in the life of the early Church (see Acts 6:1-7). On the other hand, the frequent practice of Eucharist is also mentioned (Acts 2:42). Preaching and communion should not be seen as in competition, but are both **means of grace**, i.e. ways of deepening our faith and through which God conveys prevenient, justifying or sanctifying grace. (See John Wesley’s 1746 sermon, *The Means of Grace*. Also, see below in this lesson for further teaching on the Lord’s Supper, its meaning and the recommended frequency of communion).

Preaching is one of the important ways by which the gospel is made known. Paul asks: “How can they hear without someone preaching to them?” (Romans 10:14). Though Paul did not diminish the importance of Christian baptism, he affirms: “For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel – not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power” (1 Cor. 1:17). The Church of the Nazarene, like Paul, places an emphasis upon preaching as one of the key ways not only of reaching people for Christ, but also establishing them in their Christian faith.

### **B. The sacraments rightly administered**

Augustine defined “sacrament” as a “visible word” (Staples, *Outward Sign and Inward Grace*, 21). Abridging the definition from the Church of England’s *Book of Common Prayer*, John Wesley described it as “An outward sign of an inward grace, and a means whereby we receive the same” (Ibid., 21). From this explanation, we speak of the sacraments as a

**“means of grace,”** which we earlier saw can broadly refer to any practice that helps us draw closer to God. Roman Catholicism acknowledges seven sacraments (baptism, confirmation, Holy Communion, confession, marriage, holy orders [ordination] and the anointing of the sick). Protestants celebrate only two, namely, baptism and the Lord’s Supper, also known as Holy Communion or Eucharist. No matter the tradition, celebrating the sacraments is the church’s way of acknowledging that God can take material things – like bread, juice, or water – and use them for spiritual ends (Ibid., 62-63).

Why do Protestants and those in the Anglican tradition only acknowledge two sacraments? Rob Staples (*Outward Sign*, 92-93) explains that three elements must be present for a practice to be considered a sacrament:

**1. *Jesus himself must have established or initiated it*** – This is clearly true of the Lord’s Supper, (or Eucharist, from the Gk. verb *eucharistō*, to give thanks – Luke 22:17 ). Jesus broke bread and gave it to his disciples saying: “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19). He also gave them the cup to drink, calling it the “new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you” (Luke 22:20). Paul re-affirms that this ceremony is meant for the church for all time when he speaks of it in 1 Corinthians 11:23-32. As for baptism, while it is true that baptism existed prior to Christ, Jesus commands Christian baptism as part of the church’s mission (Matt. 28:18-20).

Note: Rob Staples agrees with Luther that anointing with oil for healing was initiated not by Jesus, but by James (see *Outward Sign*, footnote 24, p. 94) On the other hand, Mark 6:12-13 shows Jesus sending the Twelve out to – among other things – anoint the sick with oil. So perhaps James was merely continuing what his brother, Jesus, had already begun. Also, there is no “divine word of promise”– see below for further explanation. For these reasons, the Church of the Nazarene – while practicing anointing the sick with oil following James’ command in James 5:14 – has followed the Protestant tradition, allowing for only two sacraments.

**2. *A sacrament must have a physical “sign” or element*** – Luther argued that sacraments had to include both promise and a sign, or symbol. On that basis, only baptism and Eucharist passed the test (Ibid., 93). For baptism, the sign is water, whether the quantity is great or small. Communion includes the symbols of bread and wine.

**3. *The physical sign must be accompanied by a divine word of promise*** – This word of promise must be believed by the person receiving the sign. Baptism’s promise according to Paul is new life (Romans 6:4). As for the Lord’s Supper, the promise is directly tied to Jesus’ atoning death. His blood is poured out “for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:28). While taking communion does not pardon our sins, it does point us to the forgiveness that comes through Christ’s death on our behalf.

### **III. The meaning of baptism and the Lord’s Supper**

Let us now examine the meaning of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Through careful teaching on both, it is hoped that much confusion can be cleared up and that a more



joyous and frequent celebration of the sacraments will take hold in our churches.

## **A. The meaning of baptism**

Michael Green opens his book, *Baptism: Its Purpose, Practice, and Power* by citing the teaching of Paul in Ephesians 4:4-6

*There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

Green (pp. 50-53) then outlines five aspects of baptism, as presented in the New Testament:

### **1. Baptism embodies God's challenge to repentance and faith.**

Repentance is clearly in view on the Day of Pentecost, when Peter challenges his listeners: "Repent and be baptized" (Acts 2:38). This is a continuation of John the Baptist's emphasis, that submitting to baptism is a public declaration of changing our ways, of taking a new direction in life, by the grace of God.

### **2. Baptism offers the blessings of the covenant.**

Green (p. 51) observes: "We respond in faith and repentance, and baptism signs and seals us to all the blessings of the covenant. Forgiveness, sonship, the Spirit, the new birth, justification, and the promise of life after death. All these covenant blessings are pledged to us in baptism." In the same way, John Wesley called baptism the "initiatory sacrament which enters us into covenant with God" (cited by Dunning, 546).

### **3. Baptism plunges us into the death and resurrection of Jesus.**

Read Romans 6:1-4. Baptism symbolizes our death to sin and our being born into a new way of living. Green calls baptism "the gateway to a complete revolution in morals and lifestyle" (*Baptism*, 51).

### **4. Baptism initiates us into the worldwide Christian church.**

Green calls baptism "the adoption certificate into the family of God" (Ibid.). Baptism is the mark that we belong to one another (p. 52). It "makes us part of the Body of Christ, with all the privileges, partnership, and responsibility which that entails" (Ibid.). Once we are baptized, it is a sign that our decision to follow Christ as part of a community of faith is irrevocable. There is no turning back!

## **5. *Baptism commissions us for the work of the kingdom.***

Green (p. 53) tells the story of Azariah, Bishop of Dornekal, in South India. When he took over the diocese, there were very few Christians. Whenever he baptized someone, he had them repeat this phrase: "I am a baptized Christian. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" Baptism is "a sign of the kingdom" (Ibid.). It is the beginning of a life of service to King Jesus.

### ***Questions about baptism***

#### **1. *Does the Church of the Nazarene baptize infants and young children?***

Yes, the Church of the Nazarene has always offered both infant baptism and infant dedication as options. Indeed, from the earliest editions, the *Manual* has included rituals for both ceremonies, a recognition that our denomination was formed from diverse ecclesiastical streams.

While infant baptism is part of our heritage from Methodism, first and foremost, it is a biblical practice. Colossians 2:11-12 infers that baptism replaces circumcision as the New Testament sign of the covenant of God with His people, and circumcision under the old covenant was performed at the age of 8 days (Luke 2:21). This thinking is reflected in Nazarene Article of Faith 12, "Baptism," which reads in the second paragraph:

*Baptism being a symbol of the new covenant, young children may be baptized, upon request of parents or guardians who give assurance for them of necessary Christian training.*

This is in the spirit of Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost. Peter called on his listeners to repent and be baptized, promising the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). Was it only adults who were promised this blessing? Not at all, for Peter continues in verse 39: "*The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call.*" In all probability, among the three thousand were families with young children. This is also very likely in two other instances in the book of Acts, where entire households (Gk. *oikos*) were converted and baptized – see Acts 10, the story of Cornelius, and Acts 16, the conversion of the jailer. On the Acts 16 episode, Green comments: "The conversion and baptism of the father are grounds for the baptism of all that are in his household, so strong is the solidarity of the family. It brings them all within the covenant" (*Baptism*, 70). Surely this would have pleased Jesus, who scolded his disciples for trying to prevent children coming to him: "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" (Mark 10:14).

In part because of these strong words from our Lord, the church from the earliest times has baptized infants and young children. The Roman theologian, Hippolytus, in 215 a.d. wrote in his *The Apostolic Tradition*: "First, you should baptize the little ones. All who can speak for themselves should speak, or another who belongs to their family" (Green, 72).

Other early church theologians, including Iranaeus (130-200 a.d.) and Origen (184-253 a.d.), also gave it their stamp of approval (Ibid.).

Unlike Roman Catholicism, Nazarenes do not believe that a child bears the *guilt* of Adam's sin, though he or she is born with a sinful nature. Additionally, we do not believe that infant baptism is the moment when a child is regenerated. However, it "signifies for this young child God's acceptance within the community of Christian faith on the basis of prevenient grace" (*Manual* 800.2).

It is important for the baptized child to be given a strong Christian education, looking to the day when he or she experiences the new birth, claiming as his/her own the Christian faith into which they were previously baptized. Traditionally, children around the age of 11 or 12 receive special instruction about their faith, called catechism. The Church of the Nazarene publishes such a catechism, titled *Discovering My Faith*. At the end of the course, children already baptized can be taken directly into church membership. Those who were dedicated as infants should be baptized prior to being received into membership.

## ***2. How is baptism administered?***

The minister baptizes the infant or older person using the Trinitarian formula: "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). Baptism in the Church of the Nazarene may be administered by immersion, pouring, or sprinkling – see *Manual*, Article of Faith 12.

There are good reasons to allow for multiple modes of baptism. Christian art dating to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century a.d. depicts believers being baptized standing in water up to the waist, while someone pours water over their heads (Grider, 499-500). For likely instances of pouring in the Bible, see Acts 9:18, where Paul stands to receive baptism from Ananias in a house, possibly from a water jug nearby. Further, Grider (p. 500) argues that pouring was the likely mode of baptism for the 3,000 on the Day of Pentecost and for the jailer and his family in Acts 16, since quantities of water large enough to immerse so many were not readily at hand. This was particularly probable in the case of Pentecost in Jerusalem, where Christians were a persecuted minority. Would the Jewish officials have given them free and open access to a reservoir large enough to immerse? Also, the imagery of Pentecost is of the Holy Spirit being "poured out" (Acts 2:33) which in conjunction with the pouring language of Titus 3:5-7 lends credence to the baptism by pouring position. Even the argument from burial as indicating immersion can be seen otherwise if we remember that Jesus was not "immersed" in dirt at the time of his burial, but laid above the ground in a sealed tomb. Women came with the intention of *pouring* spices on his body (Mark 16:1). Finally, baptism by sprinkling should be considered an adaptation of pouring, but for the elderly or bed-ridden, where larger quantities of water would be impractical.

### ***3. Is it possible to baptize a person more than once?***

The best way to answer this question is to ask another: "Is it possible to circumcise a person more than once?" Such a question is odd, because by definition, circumcision is an unrepeatable operation. A Jewish male child was "marked off" once and for all as belonging to the people of God at the age of 8 days. This was the sign of the old covenant. Similarly, baptism is the sign of the new covenant (Col. 2:11-12). If one baptizes a person twice, why not three times, a dozen a more? But baptism, like circumcision, is once-and-for-all, an initiation into the people of God, the church. By its very nature, baptism can only happen once. Any "baptisms" after that is only getting the person wet.

For a child of churchgoing parents, baptism is most naturally administered when he or she is a baby. However, for a person who grew up in a non-churchgoing home, they may only hear the gospel and come to Christ when they are older. If such a person has never received Christian baptism, then they have never identified themselves as part of God's covenant people, the church. Such a person can be baptized upon request as the rite of initiation into the church. Many Nazarene churches now hold concurrent baptism and church membership ceremonies, since initiation into the church universal naturally is followed by joining the membership of the Church of the Nazarene.

There is "one baptism" (Eph. 4:5) into the Body of Christ. Therefore, the Church of the Nazarene recognizes infant and adult baptism administered by other Christians churches, whether Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Baptist, Presbyterian, Pentecostal, or a host of other historically Christian groups. For this reason, it is always inappropriate to re-baptize individuals from those traditions who are now joining membership in the Church of the Nazarene. Except for rare cases where individuals were baptized into non-Christian groups or cults, insisting upon re-baptism is a sectarian act, branding the Church of the Nazarene as outside the mainstream of Christianity and not belonging to the universal Church of Jesus Christ. This is clearly in conflict with the historical statement contained in the Nazarene *Manual*, where the denomination affirms itself to be part of the "one, holy, universal, and apostolic church" (*Manual*, 2009-2013, p. 14).

### ***4. Is baptism necessary for salvation?***

Strictly speaking, baptism is *not* necessary for salvation, as evidenced by the case of the repentant thief on the Cross (Luke 23:39-43). As someone has observed, the only way Jesus would have been able to baptize the thief hanging on the cross would have been for Jesus to spit upon him, yet the Lord said: "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise" (v. 43). On the other hand, we should not make of the exception the rule. William Greathouse observes: "In the New Testament church there simply were no unbaptized Christians..." (*Outward Sign and Inward Grace*, 11). The pattern in the book of Acts was for individuals to be baptized quickly upon their repentance and profession of faith (see Acts 2:41, 8:36-38, 9:18, 10:48, 16:33, 19:5). We believe that baptism, like communion, is an "outward sign of an inward grace" (*Ibid.*, 21). It symbolizes outwardly what the Holy Spirit has already done inwardly. Baptism does not save us; Jesus saves us, but he also commands us to be baptized (Matt. 28:19-20), so we follow his command.

## B. The meaning of Eucharist (the Lord's Supper)

The term "Lord's Supper" refers to the institution of the "new covenant" established by Jesus when he celebrated the Passover with his disciples just prior to his arrest in the garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:20). Some churches use the term "Eucharist" from the Greek verb *Eucharistō* (to give thanks): "After taking the cup, he gave thanks..." (Luke 22:17; see also Mark 14:23 and 1 Cor. 11:24). A third label given to this ceremony is Holy Communion, derived from *koinōnia*, meaning "sharing" or "fellowship" (Acts 2:42; George Allen Turner, *Beacon Dictionary of Theology*; see "Holy Communion").

If baptism is the sacrament of initiation, Eucharist is the "sacrament of sanctification" (Staples, 201). What does Staples mean by this? He explains:

The Eucharist may be understood as that means of grace, instituted by Jesus Christ, to which we are invited for repentance, for self-examination, for renewal, for spiritual sustenance, for thanksgiving, for fellowship, for anticipation of the heavenly kingdom, and for celebration of our pilgrimage toward perfection in the image of Christ.

- *Outward Sign and Inward Grace*, 202

Historically, there are four interpretations of what the Eucharist is all about:

- 1. transubstantiation** – from the Latin *trans* (across) – Roman Catholicism holds that when Jesus said "This is my body" and "This is my blood," he meant it in a very literal sense. This idea was most clearly developed by **Thomas Aquinas (1225-74 a.d.)** who made a distinction between the "substance" and the "accidents." At the miracle of the Mass, the underlying "substance" of the bread and wine are transformed into the actual body and blood of Jesus, even if the "accidents" (sight, smell, and touch of bread and wine) remain the same to our senses (Staples, 214). Protestants have rejected this understanding of Eucharist for two reasons. First, it implies that in every Mass, Christ's atoning sacrifice is repeated, while Scripture teaches that his sacrifice was made once for all time (Heb. 9:12, 10:12). Secondly, the words "this is my body" do not clearly teach a transformation or *change*, so must be understood otherwise.
- 2. consubstantiation** – from the Latin *con* (in, with, or under) – Martin Luther rejected the idea of the Mass transforming bread and wine into the actual body of Jesus. However, he remained literal in his interpretation of Jesus' words, "This is my body" and "This is my blood." Luther spoke of the "real presence" of Christ in the Eucharist. This "real presence" does not depend upon a word spoken by the priest, but "is actualized by the communicant's laying hold on the promises of God by faith" (Dunning, 554). Like transubstantiation, John Wesley also rejected consubstantiation, considering the latter little different from the former (Ibid.).
- 3. memorialist view** – **Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531)**, a Swiss Reformer, rejected the Eucharistic views of both Aquinas and Luther. Instead, he saw the "This is my body" phrase

as symbolic rather than literal. In other words, Jesus was saying that the bread represented his body, and the cup represented his blood. Importantly, Jesus also said to "Do this in remembrance of me" (1 Cor. 11:24). When we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we are remembering His sacrifice for us by re-enacting His last meal with the disciples. Rob Staples summarizes Zwingli's view as both a "profession of adherence to Christ in the presence of the congregation" and a "memorial designed to remind us of the redemption accomplished by the death of Christ" (*Outward Sign and Inward Grace*, 223). John and Charles Wesley's theology of communion contains memorialist elements but goes further, coming close to the "spiritual presence" view of John Calvin outlined below (Ibid., 224).

**4. spiritual presence** – John Calvin (1509-64) thought that the Roman Catholic and Lutheran views made no sense Christologically. Jesus ascended to heaven with a body, and still exists bodily at God's right hand. How then can he be present bodily in the bread and wine? (Dunning, 554). At the same time, Calvin believed that the Holy Spirit is active in the Eucharist, as he "penetrates the heart, stirs up the affections, and procures access for the sacraments into our souls" (cited by Dunning, 554). Staples explains: "There is a real reception of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper, but they are received *in a spiritual manner*" (*Outward Sign*, 225). John Wesley never openly credits Calvin for his own thinking on the Eucharist. It is most likely that he received it indirectly, through his Church of England heritage (Ibid., 228).

### ***Class Activity***

Take some time to read the following two passages out of the Manual of the Church of the Nazarene: 1) Article of Faith XIII, "The Lord's Supper"; 2) Paragraph 802, "The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper." As the teacher reads the passages aloud, students should jot down on paper words or phrases that remind them of the one of the four views outlined above. Afterward, write the key phrases on the chalk board. Together, decide which of the four views appear most clearly in our Article of Faith and communion ritual.

### ***Questions about the Lord's Supper***

#### ***1. Who is eligible to participate in the Eucharist?***

The *Manual* answers this question. Article of Faith XIII and the ritual in paragraph 802 lay down the following guidelines:

- a. It is "distinctively for those who are prepared for reverent appreciation of its significance" (AOF 13);
- b. It is only for those who have "faith in Christ" and "love for the saints" (AOF 13);
- c. The feast is for "his disciples" (paragraph 802);
- d. It is for those who have with "true repentance forsaken their sins, and have believed in Christ unto salvation" (paragraph 802).

Because baptism is the New Testament witness that one has repented (Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38), some have taught that communion may only be taken by baptized Christians.

However, the Nazarene *Manual* – which contains our interpretation of the Bible on this issue – does not clearly state this.

The Church of the Nazarene historically has never endorsed “closed communion” (for members only). Rather, it has since its inception celebrated “open communion.” Any follower of Christ of any denomination present in our services is invited to take part in Eucharist as a joyous means of grace. This would not exclude children old enough to understand that Jesus died for them and who are able to participate in a dignified manner.

Rigidly insisting on a “baptized members only” policy is contrary to the Nazarene spirit. Since communion is for the disciples of Christ, participating in the Lord’s Supper can be for an individual of any age a first act of discipleship. More importantly, turning individuals away from the table of the Lord may grieve the Holy Spirit, repelling a person at precisely the moment when God was drawing them to himself through prevenient grace (John 6:44, 12:32). The Holy Feast is spread before us. The Lord's word is “Come!”

## ***2. If I take communion "unworthily," will I get sick or die?***

One of the most misunderstood passages regarding the Lord’s Supper includes Paul's warnings about those who eat the bread and drink from the cup “in an unworthy manner” (1 Cor. 11:27). Paul cautions that some because of this had become “weak and sick” while others had “fallen asleep” (v. 30). Because of this warning, some otherwise devoted followers of Christ avoid attending on Sundays when they know communion will be celebrated. What a shame!

Something was going on in Corinth that was bringing down God's judgment upon them (v. 29). Verses 20-22 explain the background:

*When you come together, it is not the Lord’s Supper you eat, for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anyone else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not!*

This may be a reference to the *agape*, the love feast that the early church often celebrated prior to observing the Lord’s Supper. In any case, the two celebrations appeared to have blurred together, becoming a time of drunken revelry not appropriate for a church gathering. What was worse, some overdid while others went without. Mark Mattison notes:

The Corinthians' behavior contradicted the whole point of the communion experience. Rather than celebrating their unity, they were revealing their division. Hence Paul's question, "Do you despise the church of God?" They were eating and drinking "without recognizing the body of the Lord" (v. 30), that is, the Body of Christ of which they were part. As such, they were eating and drinking "in an

unworthy manner" and bringing judgment on themselves. The "unworthy manner" relates to the way they abused the Lord's Supper.

-from "The Meaning of Communion," <http://www.auburn.edu/~allenkc/openhse/communion.html>

In the strictest sense, no Christian is "worthy" to take communion. Matt Slick observes: "Our worthiness comes from Christ, not ourselves...Christians should not withhold themselves from the table if they are trying to repent of their sins and are struggling to gain victory but have not yet attained it." (<http://carm.org/questions/about-church/what-does-it-mean-to-take-communion-unworthy-manner>). If during the celebration of the Lord's Supper the Holy Spirit brings a sin to our attention, we should confess it and receive God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9).

As Wesleyans, we believe that participating in the Eucharist is a means of grace. As we have seen, John Wesley taught the table of the Lord was a channel of prevenient grace, justifying grace, and sanctifying grace, according to our need (Staples, 98). At all times in our walk with God, we should seek the Lord's purifying work in our hearts, but communion is a special time where God wants to draw us closer to Himself. Because of this, it is a mistake for the Christian to abstain from a sacrament designed to be a joyous and faith-deepening celebration of Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf.

### ***3. How often should a local church celebrate the Eucharist?***

Justo Gonzalez noted the central place that the celebration of the Eucharist has held in Christian worship since the earliest times, calling it the "highest act of worship" (*The Story of Christianity*, 94). He continued: "Only at a relatively recent date has it become common practice in many Protestant churches to focus their worship on preaching rather than on communion" (Ibid., 94). Communion was a weekly celebration.

Practices vary widely among denominations today. For those who hold strictly to a memorial view of the meaning of the Lord's Supper, once per year seems adequate, but most Christians long for more. In 18<sup>th</sup> century England, the young John Wesley was dissatisfied with the three times per year communion requirement. Instead, while a student at Oxford, he took communion with a group of close friends as often as possible, usually once per week (Heitzenrater, *The Elusive Mr Wesley*, 66).

In part due to Wesley's example and a heightened appreciation for the place of the sacraments in our ecclesiology, there has been a recent movement in Nazarene circles toward a more frequent celebration of the Lord's Supper than the once per quarter required by the *Manual*. The 2009 General Assembly modified paragraph 413.9, which now explains one of the duties of the pastor as: "To administer the sacrament of the Lord's Supper at least once a quarter. Pastors are encouraged to move toward a more frequent celebration of this means of grace..."



One Kansas City area congregation celebrates communion monthly, but on the other Sundays makes it available on a come-and-go basis in a large room off the main sanctuary. This has proven especially meaningful for new Nazarenes coming from other Christian traditions where they were used to receiving the sacrament on a weekly basis.

#### **IV. The priesthood of all believers: together in ministry**

There are three "Protestant principles" that resulted from the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation of the Church:

1. Justification by grace through faith;
2. *Sola Scriptura*, i.e. only the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments are the rule of Christian faith and practice;
3. The priesthood of all believers.

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines the priesthood of all believers as the doctrine which asserts that "all humans have access to God through Christ, the true high priest, and thus do not need a priestly mediator" (<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/475966/priesthood-of-all-believers>). 1 Timothy 2:5 teaches: "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus..." To be forgiven of our sins, we do not need to confess them to a priest. Rather, we can pray wherever we are and God will hear our prayer; he will forgive our sins (1 John 1:9). The entire community of believers is a "holy priesthood" (1 Peter 2:5). Likewise, we can offer ourselves as "living sacrifices" (Romans 12:1-2) without the benefit of an earthly priest. Morris Weigelt explains:

The priesthood of believers is not a special caste of ministry, but involves every member of the Body of Christ both in individual and corporate responsibility. Each person is indeed his own priest through immediate access to God through Christ, but each man shares as well in the mediation of Christ to the world.

- *Beacon Dictionary of Theology*; see "priesthood of all believers"

Martin Luther understood that if every Christian had direct access to God, then every Christian should also have access to the Bible. In his day, only the priests had copies of the Holy Scriptures, and these were in Latin. Luther decided to translate the New Testament from Greek into German, the common language of the everyday citizen. Today, Wycliffe Bible Translators (among others) works to translate the Bible into the mother tongue of people groups around the world. This is a practical result of the then revolutionary concept of the priesthood of all believers.

Martin Luther and John Calvin did not take this doctrine to its logical conclusion. They continued to ordain clergy, and most Protestant churches still recognize that God sets apart some to special ministry roles. In the same way, the Church of the Nazarene recognizes many types of ordained ministry, but the most important is **pastor**. Like the prophet Joel

(see Joel 2:28-32), we believe that God is pouring out his Holy Spirit, and because of that, both men and women (“sons and daughters” – Acts 2:17) will “prophesy” (preach). Because there is “neither male nor female” but we are “all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 28), all roles of ordained ministry in the Church of the Nazarene are open to both men and women.

Churches thrive whenever they put into practice the priesthood of all believers. While there may be one (or just a few) pastors, all Christians are ministers. The purpose of the various offices outlined by Paul in Ephesians 4:11 is to “prepare God's people for works of service, so that the Body of Christ may be built up...” (v. 12). General Superintendent *Emeritus* Nina Gunter once said: “In the church, there are just two categories of people: participants and critics.” As believers identify their spiritual gifts, they will become joyful participants in furthering the kingdom of God through the ministry of the local church.

## V. Holistic ministry: the church meeting the needs of the whole person

Whether as an ordained minister or a lay minister, God calls us to minister to the full range of needs that people have, people for whom Christ died. John Riley explains that the word “minister” is derived from the word for “servant” (*Beacon Dictionary of Theology*, see “minister, ministry”). Jesus declared: “Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister” (Matt. 20:26b, KJV). The Lord himself modeled the importance of well-rounded servanthood. What are the kinds of needs to which the church must minister if it is to be an effective agent of the kingdom in our world today?

- ✧ **spiritual needs** – The greatest need of the human being is to be reconciled to God. Paul put it simply: “We preach Christ crucified...” (1 Cor. 1:23a). Jesus is the only way to the Father (John 14:6). Charles “Chic” Shaver, Professor *Emeritus* of evangelism at Nazarene Theological Seminary, reminded students that while there are many organizations in the world that provide *physical* relief to the hungry, only one organization provides *spiritual* relief through the preaching of the Gospel, and that organization is the church of Jesus Christ. We must clearly point people to the way of salvation, or no one else will.
- ✧ **physical needs – Francis of Assisi (born 1181 a.d.)** told his monks: “Preach the gospel always; when necessary, use words.” Nothing speaks of our love for God more than our actions (James 2:18), and the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matt 25:31-46) makes it clear that those actions include taking care of the physical needs of people. A cup of cold water, given to the thirsty in Jesus' name, is a living testimony to a living faith. Because our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19), the church should provide opportunities for the youth of the community to keep their bodies strong by organizing sport teams and athletic events. Courses in proper nutrition will help prevent obesity in white collar city workers and malnutrition among those whose diets lack variety.
- ✧ **intellectual needs** – An old slogan puts it well: “A mind is a terrible thing to waste.” Jesus told us to love God with “all our mind” (Mark 12:30). Because we

believe in the priesthood of all believers, we also believe that followers of Christ should be able to read the Bible for themselves. The Church is the natural place to hold literacy classes, giving our members the precious gift of reading. Literacy opens not only the door to sacred writ, but helps believers better inform themselves about the full range of knowledge, from history to science and literature. Youth can participate in programs like Bible quizzing, sharpening the memory while hiding God's work in the heart (Psalm 119:11). Starting elementary, middle and high schools help prepare our children intellectually to meet the challenges of our world and to influence the culture at-large for Christ.

- ✧ **emotional needs** – God has ordained the family as the ideal atmosphere for a husband, wife and children to love and to be loved. The church is called to come alongside families in multiple ways to help them remain stable. Courses in child rearing help teach parenting skills, and instruction in family finance and micro-enterprise assist mothers and fathers in providing for basic family living expenses. When families are under severe stress due to the infidelity of one of the spouses, bereavement, drug/alcohol abuse, loss of work or other crises, trained counselors from the church can bring comfort and healing.

## **VI. *Missio Dei*: the missionary nature of the Church**

The mission of the Church of the Nazarene is "*To Make Christlike Disciples in the Nations.*" While the message of holiness is for all God's church in all its branches, the Church of the Nazarene was founded with a special concern to preach and teach the message of holiness of heart and life. Yet even this mandate fits within a broader mandate from Scripture. As we have seen in this course, Jesus taught us to pray: "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). The church universal is a key means by which God wants to further the kingdom of heaven here on earth, as we await the kingdom's final consummation at the return of Christ.

Theologian Emile Brunner noted: "The church exists by mission as fire exists by burning." Paul Orjala defines **mission** (singular) as "the whole church sharing the whole gospel with the whole world" (Orjala, 11). Sometimes the word **missions** (plural) is used to describe the specific ways in which the *Missio Dei* – literally, the "mission of God" – is carried out. Missions includes the church sending missionaries (Acts 13:1-3) who cross cultural and (often) linguistic barriers to spread the good news (Romans 10:14). This differs from **evangelism**, which also involves gospel proclamation, but to people who share the evangelist's culture and language – see, for example, Philip the evangelist in Acts 8.

Furthering the *Missio Dei* is hard work. Sometimes, it seems like we take one step forward and two steps back, yet the church must be relentless: "In its mission, the church witnesses to the fullness of the promise of God's reign and participates in the ongoing struggle between that reign and the powers of darkness and evil" (Bosch, 391).

### ***Small group discussion***

Break into your regular discussion groups to treat the following topics.

**Group 1 – church and kingdom** – At a conference, a theologian lamented: “Jesus promised us the kingdom, and all we got was the church.” What do you think he meant by this statement? Are you in agreement with the idea that the church is the primary means by which God intended to bring about the kingdom? Why or why not? What would you say to someone who tells you that you're wasting time, since only Jesus can bring about the kingdom in his own time, and he doesn't need our help?

**Group 2 – re-baptism** – You are pastoring your first congregation. One day while preparing your Sunday message, you hear a knock on the door of your church office. You shake Joseph's hand and invite him to come in. “Pastor,” he says, “you know that I was baptized in another Christian church when I was just a baby. But now that I'm an adult and understand what it means to follow Christ, I would like to be baptized again.” Using the information we studied in class, help Joseph to understand what his baptism meant. In what other way might Joseph be able to publically affirm his baptism?

**Group 3 – turned away from the Communion table** – Sam is 9 years old and the son of Pastor Elizabeth. When he was a baby, his parents had him baptized. Though he is young, he is growing in his faith in God. Every night he takes part in family prayers, and he invites his friends from school to come to church. Just the day before, Sam had told Daniel, also 9, about Jesus, and Daniel had prayed to accept Christ. Sam invited Daniel to come to church the next day. At the end of the service, it was time for the Lord's Supper. Pastor Elizabeth read the ritual, calling forward to the Communion table all who had “with true repentance forsaken their sins and believed in Christ unto salvation.” With smiles on their face, Sam and Daniel quietly joined the line leading to the front, and waited their turn to take the bread and dip it into the cup. Suddenly, an usher took the boys aside: “I'm sorry, he said, “but you have to be baptized to take communion, and you're too young to be baptized.” After the service, Pastor Elizabeth looked for Sam and Daniel. She found them sitting sadly on a bench outside. “Mom,” said Sam, tears streaming down his face, “I don't understand. We both love God. Why wouldn't the usher let us take communion? Did we do something wrong?” If you were Pastor Elizabeth, what would you say to your son and his friend? How could you possibly remedy the situation so that they go home joyful, not sad? What would you say to the ushers as a group? How could you prevent this scenario from repeating itself?

**Group 4 – A new pastor, a new vision** – The Grace Church of the Nazarene had always been active in the community, hosting sports teams, collecting clothing for the poor, teaching the illiterate how to read, and participating in city-wide evangelism campaigns. That was, at least, when Pastor Job was at the helm. But now Pastor Harry was in charge. For the past month, he has been preaching only about “saving souls.” Repeatedly, he has criticized most of the programs that the church runs, calling them a “distraction” from their primary task of “soul winning.” Last month, Betsy and five other women had together distributed clothes to the poor in the neighborhood around the church. This month on

distribution day, only one other woman showed up. Of the three literacy teachers, two canceled at the last minute, leaving Gerald all alone to try to teach 30 students. Betsy and Gerald don't like what they see. Both are members of the Board. They don't want to get into a battle with Pastor Harry, but both fear that if the trend continues, some of the most effective outreaches for the church will collapse. "Maybe the pastor's right," sighs Betsy. "Maybe all this is just a distraction." What should they do?

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## **Part 4 – Special Issues in Ministry**

### **▲ Confronting the darkness: spiritual warfare and deliverance**

In Jesus' ministry, he often confronted demonic powers. Likewise, when Jesus sent out the Twelve, they encountered people who were under the devil's power. Mark 6:12-13 tells us:

*They went out and preached that people should repent. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.*

There are some medical conditions that appear to be a demon problem but are not. For example, an epileptic may fall on the ground and foam at the mouth. This is a neurological condition, and the person should seek medical attention. Likewise, a child who is overactive may be suffering from a chemical imbalance that can be only be diagnosed by a doctor after running tests. Because of this, a pastor should consider himself (or herself) as part of a care team, including medical professionals who can help discern when a case is due to medical factors.

In his book, *The Satan Syndrome: Putting the Power of Darkness in its Place*, Nigel Wright gives thirteen words of advice to the pastor who thinks he or she might be facing a case of demon influence upon a person (pp. 126-128 – where a (\*) appears, the author's words have been abridged by Dr Crofford):

1. It is wise to be highly reluctant to conclude that a person is demonized. Therefore, every previous avenue needs to be explored before coming to this conclusion.
2. Deliverance ministry should never be undertaken under pressure either from the individual concerned or from a group. It should only be attempted if there is a clear sense of direction and conviction from God.
3. Wherever possible, it is wise to have medical and psychiatric support when ministering to an individual. Some church disciplines require that permission be gained from a higher church authority before anything is done.
4. Where it is possible to consult a more experienced minister this should be done. Some church structures appoint consultants for this task.

5. Deliverance should never be attempted alone. There should be at least two mature and experienced Christians present and it is preferable that one should come from another church to provide objectivity. Obvious care needs to be taken when ministering to members of the opposite sex.

6. Sessions of deliverance should not be protracted but should be for a set time and in a suitable context. It is important that those who minister should not find themselves being exhausted or their home life disrupted.

7. Intense situations of mutual dependence should be avoided and a sense of critical distance maintained about the deliverance process.

8. Every person should be treated with gentleness and respect at all times. There should be an avoidance of aggressive words, gestures or expressions and a reliance upon the authority of Christ.

9. Demons should not be talked to, argued with or given any attention other than that of rejecting, refusing and scorning them.

\*10. There is no need to use holy water, crosses, sacred objects, communion wine or anointing oil. Confrontation in the powerful name of Christ is sufficient.

\*11. Deliverance ministry is not a show. It should not be glorified in (Luke 10:20) but should be seen as a routine task. Remember to keep details of the situation confidential, as you would in any counseling situation.

12. As in the ministry of Jesus, the demonic factor and its remedy should not be given any more than incidental attention. "Demonophilia" (seeing demons all over the place) is offensive to God and bad for the soul.

13. Those who receive deliverance should be treated as individuals who bear responsibility for their own lives. It must be recognized that their freedom is consequent upon their will to repent and be free. Deliverance is not a substitute for sturdy and responsible discipleship.

### ▲ **Divine healing**

#### *Note to the reader:*

This is an outline of a sermon on divine healing given by Dr. Greg Crofford at the ANU University Church of the Nazarene on November 27, 2011. At the close of the sermon, he lead in a one minute moment of silence, inviting all present to search their hearts and see if there was any sin standing between themselves and God and – if so – to confess it. Afterward, he invited those seeking healing (whether physical, emotional or spiritual) to come to the altar to kneel. Those requesting anointing were given the option of sharing with those gathered what the specific need was, allowing for more specific prayers. Dr

Crofford and Rev. Gift Mtukwa then invited the “elders” of the church (leaders) to lay hands on the sick person, at which time either Mtukwa or Crofford made a small cross of oil on the head of the individual, anointing in the name of the Lord Jesus, followed by a prayer for full healing. Approximately thirty came forward for prayer and anointing that morning, some on behalf of others not present. (Healing by proxy occurred in the case of the centurion who asked for healing for his servant, though the servant was back at home – see Matt. 8:5-13).

The original sermon contained illustrations that have been taken out. Anyone using this sermon is encouraged to develop their own contextualized illustrations for the various points.

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***Title: “Three questions, three answers”***

*Text: James 5:13-16*

**I. INTRODUCTION**

Three questions, three answers – That's what we find in the passage from James 5 that we read earlier. That shouldn't surprise us. James, after all, is a simple book, and a practical one. It addresses a range of everyday issues, like temptation, trials, listening before speaking, faith and deeds, compassion toward the poor, taming the tongue, wisdom, and submission to God.

And so here again at the close of the book, James raises practical issues. He quickly and simply addresses them as answers to questions. Let's look one-by-one at those three questions:

1. Is any of you in trouble?
2. Is anyone happy?
3. Is any of you sick?

**II. QUESTION 1 – IS ANY OF YOU IN TROUBLE?**

One of the things that modern science has taught us is the close relationship between our emotions, mental state and our bodies.

Stress is like a rubber band. The further you stretch it, the tighter it gets. Stretch it enough, and it will break.

James offers us a solution to the stresses of life, whatever they may be. When we are in trouble, we should *pray*.

They say that “prayer changes things.” But it's more than that. Prayer changes *us*.

Verse 17 says that Elijah prayed, and the rain stopped for 3 ½ years. When he prayed again, rain fell. Prayer changes things.

But prayer also changes us. It is a soothing medicine that releases our stress. It calms us and helps us focus our eyes back on Almighty God.

### **III. QUESTION 2 – IS ANYONE HAPPY?**

James asks a second question: “Is anyone happy?” What should he do? Verse 13:

“Let him sing songs of praise.”

Now, if I'd been the one writing that verse, I'd have said:

“Is anyone sad? Let him sing songs of praise.”

And in some ways, that would make sense. In Acts 16, Paul and Silas were in jail, arrested for the sake of the gospel. What did they do in that dark and lonely cell? They sang songs of praise to God, and it lifted their spirits. Proverbs 17:22 reminds us: “A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.”

But James does not say: “If you're sad, sing songs of praise.” Rather, he advises: “If you're happy, sing songs of praise.” This praise is not so much for yourself; it's medicine for others.

Like James 5, Eph. 5:19-20 is in the context of community. Paul instructs the Ephesians:

*Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

James writes:

1. Is any of you in trouble? He should pray.
2. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise.

### **IV. QUESTION 3: IS ANY ONE OF YOU SICK?**

Finally, James adds a third question: “Is any of you sick?”

There are some non-believers who put their trust only in medical science. For them, praying to a so-called “God” who doesn't exist is foolish. They believe only what they can see with their eyes.

Others go to the opposite extreme. They say that if you *really* trust God to heal you, then to see a doctor only proves your lack of faith. To take medicine – according to them –



means you're not putting your full confidence in God, so how can he heal you?

But in the Church of the Nazarene, we believe that God does not force us to choose between physicians and Jesus, the Great Physician. The Lord can heal directly himself, or indirectly, with the assistance of doctors and nurses. It's up to him.

Listen to Article of Faith 14, titled "Divine Healing," as found in the *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene:

"We believe in the Bible doctrine of divine healing and urge our people to seek to offer the prayer of faith for the healing of the sick. We also believe that God heals through the means of medical science."

When a child falls and breaks a bone, we take her to the doctor, and she sets it for her. In the same way, when we come down with malaria, there are medicines that we take to purge the infection from our bodies.

But in Africa, medicine is not limited to a doctor with a medical degree from a university, or a nurse who has cared for patients in hospitals. Common sense remedies have been passed down from one generation to another. These might be medicinal teas, made from leaves gathered in the forest, or perhaps herbs that are ground up to make powders. When our Article of Faith talks about "medical science," in Africa, this includes the informal science of these natural remedies. But we need to be very clear. We must not go to traditional healers or witch doctors who use magical means to bring healing. To do so is to expose ourselves to forces of darkness that – in the long run – will not bring us healing, only misery.

There are other errors to avoid. Sometimes today we speak of Christian "faith healers," but in fact, James 5 never speaks of "faith healers," people who supposedly possess a gift that allows them to cure all ailments. In James 5, there are no stadiums, no healing crusades, no public spectacles. We do not say "faith healing" but *divine* healing, and for a very good reason. God is the healer, and the setting in James 5 is the local church, the community of faith where we know each other and where charlatans cannot possibly use tricks to fool people. *Healing is a ministry of the local church.* How do we know this? Let's read v. 14 –

*Is any of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray..*

Rev. Habib CHABI pastors in Parakou, Benin. Every Sunday at the close of the service, they invite the sick to come forward for prayer and anointing with oil. Many people have received miraculous healing as they obey the words of James 5.

There are a few more observations that we should make, based on this passage:

### *1. Sin can stand in the way of healing.*

Verse 16 reads: "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other, so that you may be healed."

Notice the last phrase of v. 15 – "If he has sinned, he will be forgiven."

When you put the two verses together, the teaching is clear. Sickness can be caused by many things, and in some ways will remain a mystery. Not all sickness is a result of sin, but there are some who are sick because of sin in their lives. Sin is like a poison to our soul and body. Because of this, James calls us to examine our hearts before God, to see if (perhaps) the reason for our illness is that we are literally sin-sick.

### *2. A prayer is offered in faith.*

We must believe that God can heal us. Your faith may only be small, like a mustard seed, but with a mustard seed of faith, Jesus said we can move mountains (Matt. 17:20).

So, if we pray and are not healed, does that mean it's because of our lack of faith? Probably not – after all, how big is a mustard seed? Something else is going on. While faith is part of the equation, there is another part, and that is God must be willing to heal us.

The book of Acts recounts multiple times when God used Paul to heal others, yet we know of a time when Paul himself was *not* healed. Are we to say that Paul didn't have enough faith? Of course not! 2 Cor. 12 says that Paul had a "thorn in the flesh," a "messenger of Satan to torment me" (v.7). Bible scholars have speculated what that was. Perhaps it was poor eyesight, or even recurrent malaria, but whatever it was, three times Paul prayed, asking God to take the thorn away. But God did not heal Paul. Instead, God said to him: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

And so here is the biblical pattern, when we put the teaching of James and the teaching of Paul together:

*Where our faith meets God's willingness, there is a healing every time.*

We see this in Matthew 8:1-3, the story of a man with leprosy. The leper came and knelt before Jesus. "Lord," he said, "if you are willing, you can make me clean." Then Jesus reached out and touched the man. "I am willing," he said, "Be clean!" Matthew reports: "Immediately he was cured of his leprosy" (v. 3).

Again: *Where our faith meets God's willingness, there is a healing every time.*

### **3. We anoint with oil in the name of the Lord Jesus.**

There is nothing magical about the oil. It can be simple olive oil from the kitchen, if you'd like. What matters is the symbol. In the Bible, oil points beyond itself to three things:

a. *It is a symbol of the Holy Spirit.* We see this when Samuel anointed David as king (1 Samuel 16:13). The oil represents the power of the Holy Spirit coming to rest on David.

b. *It is a symbol of joy.* Psalm 45:7 speaks of God anointing us with “the oil of joy.”

c. *It is a symbol of healing.* Mark 6:12-13 speaks of the Twelve whom Jesus sent out on a mission. The passage reads: “They went out and preached that people should repent. They drove out demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.”

Like baptism, we may be tempted to anoint in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But James is clear that we are to anoint in the name of the “Lord.” The Greek word for “Lord” in this passage is *kurios*. In the NT, *kurios* always refers to Jesus Christ. So we anoint with oil, in the name of the Lord Jesus.

CONCLUSION: Re-read James 5:13-16.

At this time, follow the instructions at the beginning of the sermon to hold a time of prayer and anointing for the healing of the sick.

### ⤴ **Prosperity theology**

Like a stubborn weed in an otherwise beautiful garden, the so-called “prosperity gospel” is not easily uprooted. Pastor Dany GOMIS of Dakar, Senegal has suggested the alternative label of “prosperity message” since this false doctrine is not *good* news, but *bad* news.

In his article, “The problem for the prosperity gospel,” Scott McKnight offers a description of this attractive but deceptive school of thought:

The prosperity gospel (or the health and wealth gospel) teaches that God desires the material, spiritual, and physical prosperity of his people. To become prosperous, all one has to do is believe, receive, and act upon God's promises. The prosperity gospel is a half-truth, perhaps less.

*Source: <http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/Christianity/2009/03/The-Problem-for-the-Prosperity-Gospel.aspx>*

The first question of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* asks: “What is the chief end (or purpose) of man?” The correct response is: “To glorify God, and to enjoy him forever” (<http://www.reformed.org/documents/WSC.html>). But as McKnight observes, the prosperity message wrongly reverses this. It teaches us in a subtle way that we do not exist for God; rather, God exists for us: “Every day, from the moment you get up to the closing of your eyes, happiness is the aim of life. In the prosperity gospel, God is there for us; we are here for God to bless” (Ibid.).

It is not that the Lord does not care for us. He loves us infinitely, and wants to provide for our needs. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught us to pray: "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11). In the same way, Paul affirms: "And my God shall meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19). We are not to seek riches, but to seek the kingdom. When we do, we have our priorities straight, and "all these things will be given to you as well" (Matt. 6:33). Those "things" to which Jesus refers are not wealth, but the basic needs of life, food, drink, and clothing – see vv. 28-32.

Jesus' teaching is in line with Proverbs 30:8-9:

*Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.*

The balance is important. If prosperity can be a stumbling block, so can poverty. There is no inherent virtue in being poor.

But today, it is not the "poverty message" that is leading Christians astray. Rather, it is prosperity theology that is creating confusion in our churches. What is the danger? The prosperity message wrongly focuses our attention upon ourselves and our own material gain. The late Oral Roberts – among the earliest of the prosperity preachers – was criticized for promoting the idea of "seed faith giving." Nevertheless, his son, Richard, still endorses this unbiblical concept on the Oral Roberts Ministries website, which teaches:

*When we put our faith in God's hands like a seed we plant, we are giving God something to work with, and He will send the miracle we need. No matter how small our faith seems to be, it will meet needs and solve problems that appear as impossible to move as mountains. This is because each act of faith is a seed planted and will be multiplied many times.*

- source: <http://www.oralroberts.com/teaching/seed-faith/>

A chorus sung in some sub-Saharan African churches picks up on this theme, claiming that God will give us "dabo, dabo" (double, double). But is this the teaching of Scripture? Has God ever promised that giving to him is like putting money in an investment bank, with a guaranteed "rate of return"? The problem with this idea is that it ignores Jesus' warning not to lay up treasures on earth (Matt. 6:19). The prosperity message promises fancy houses, expensive cars and jewelry, conveniently omitting that the Son of Man had nowhere to lay his head (Luke 9:58).

Jesus advised us that our treasure is to be in heaven, "where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal" (v. 20). The person who gives his rent money to the church, thinking they will receive "dabo, dabo" from God because that's what the preacher said, will be sorely disappointed when the rent comes due and the double-portion

promised is nowhere in sight. He or she may wrongly conclude that Christianity is false, rather than realizing they have simply been the victim of a false idea.

*We must be careful to remain balanced and biblical in our thinking.* Money has a role to play in ministry and pursuing God's purposes in our world. John Wesley clearly understood this. At the beginning of the Methodist revival in 18<sup>th</sup> century England, John and Charles Wesley labored mostly among the poor. But as the decades passed and God made changes in the lives of his people, Methodists became more frugal and grew more wealthy. This accumulation of wealth concerned John Wesley so much that in 1760 he wrote a sermon, *The Use of Money*. Based on Luke 16:9, Wesley developed three points:

1. Gain all you can.
2. Save all you can.
3. *Give all you can.*

In the spirit of Wesley, the follower of Jesus must realize that he or she is not meant to be a reservoir, hoarding the financial resources God gives to us. Rather, we are to be channels, passing along God's blessings to others. We are "blessed to be a blessing." Money itself is not evil; rather, the *love* of money is "a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Timothy 6:10). Where God abundantly blesses an individual materially, this is often accompanied by an additional gift from God, namely, the spiritual gift of giving. This gift gently prods the well-heeled individual to generously contribute to the needs of others (Romans 12:8). A good example of this is Tim Tebow, quarterback of the NFL Denver Broncos. When he received a \$ 2.5 million dollar bonus, he decided to give it all away, sponsoring (among other projects) a hospital in a poor part of the Philippines. In this way, for Tebow and for us, money does not become an idol. Wealth is never an end in itself, but merely another tool to help build the kingdom of God on earth.

The lessons from Scripture are clear:

- ✧ Both the hoarding of riches and grinding poverty can be stumbling blocks for the believer.
- ✧ God has promised to meet our needs, but has never promised to make us rich.
- ✧ God may entrust some among us with wealth, but always to so that we can be channels of his resources, serving the needs of others.

While the so-called "prosperity gospel" is bad news, these lessons from Scripture are good news indeed. When we obey God's principles – remembering that we exist to glorify God, and not *vice versa*– then we can know the meaning of the words: "Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim. 6:6). See also Hebrews 13:5.

#### ✧ **financial integrity**

The first crisis in the Church at Jerusalem revolved around money. Ananias and his wife, Saphirra, sold a piece of land. Rather than giving the full amount to Peter for the support of the community, they held back part of the price for themselves, then proceeded to lie

about it – see Acts 5:1-11. Because they had lied to God and tested the Holy Spirit (vv. 4, 9), husband and wife fell over dead. Luke concludes the story: “Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events” (v. 11).

If God chose to deal today the same way he did in that episode, how many in our churches would be falling over dead? Like that unfortunate couple, we too often forget that nothing belongs to us. We are merely stewards of all that God has given, whether our time, talents, or treasure. As “living sacrifices” (Romans 12:1-2), we offer all that we are back to God for his purposes in our lives.

The parables of Jesus are replete with the concept of stewardship. Unlike an owner, to whom something belongs, a steward manages money or property for the benefit of the owner. One of the best known stewardship illustrations is the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30). As a class, take 10 minutes to read the parable, then together, answer the following questions:

1. Why did the master entrust talents to various servants?
2. According to v. 18, to whom did the money belong?
3. Read v. 19. What did the master do upon his return?
4. Why were the servants entrusted with five talents and two talents rewarded upon the return of the master? Why was the servant who had been entrusted only one talent later punished by the master?

As related to the subject of financial integrity in the church, there are two key principles taught by this story:

*a. The money never belonged to the servants, even if it was for a time in their possession.*

A steward is not an owner. For this reason, he or she is never free to help themselves to the money. This goes against some African proverbs, including this one from Benin: “The one who draws water from the well never dies of thirst.” Sometimes this proverb is used to excuse the treasurer who has free access to the “well,” i.e. the treasury. But a steward is not an owner, and access does not give permission to help oneself to money that belongs to the church, even if it’s for a “good cause,” like buying medicine for a sick parent. The one taking the money may say it is “only a loan” and intend to pay it back. However, loans can only be approved by those with authority to loan the money, and in this case, that would be a decision of the Church Board.

*b. A proper accounting must be given.*

Upon the master's return, he “settled accounts” with the servants (v. 19). If the master had given the money for them to keep as their own, he never would have done this. But the

servants were only entrusted with the master's money as stewards. Therefore, they had to explain what they had done with it.

In the Church of the Nazarene, the treasurer is to give a written monthly accounting of all monies received by the church as well as how monies were spent. This includes getting receipts for every purchase, even though this can be difficult to do. Not only should the Board receive a detailed finance report, but a general report should be posted from time-to-time on a bulletin board or in a place where all churchgoers can see. Offerings should always be counted by two persons, and these two should not be members of the same family. If money is deposited in a bank, two church members entrusted with that task should go together to make the deposit. This will help deter robbers and – if there is a problem – church members will not be left wondering if someone made up a story so they could pocket the funds. A police report should be made, and two different individuals chosen to make the deposit the next time, going by a different route and at a different time.

Those giving to the church must have confidence that money given is really being used in the way intended. Transparency is essential. If churchgoers suspect fraud, they will stop giving, and the cause of Christ will suffer.

## CONCLUSION

Holiness of heart and life includes integrity in how we handle money. Good stewardship and proper accounting is an important way that we “shine our light before men” so that they will “praise (our) Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:16).

### ✧ **Overcoming addictions**

*The Medical Dictionary* defines “addiction” as an “habitual or compulsive involvement in an activity” (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/addiction>). These activities often have negative effects not only on the person practicing them but also upon their loved ones and friends. Examples of such behavior include gambling, drug abuse, excessive consumption of alcohol, and the viewing of pornography. While Christians often view addiction as a spiritual problem, it is more complex. Some medical experts have come to understand addiction as a chronic disease affecting the brain (Live Science website: <http://www.livescience.com/15563-addiction-defined-brain-disease.html>). Whatever its complexity, for those trapped in addictive behavior, despair can result, even resulting in suicide.

The best treatment for addictions is prevention. Here are some tips for helping prevent our members and their children from becoming involved in these addictions:

**alcohol**– For a recovering alcoholic, even one taste of beer or wine can cause a relapse. Be careful to use only grape juice or its non-fermented equivalent when your church serves communion. Talk with your children about the health risks and social costs of alcoholism. Explain why Nazarenes have chosen the safer path of avoiding alcohol altogether.

**drugs** – Church youth groups can hold seminars talking about the dangers of illegal drugs. Use skits to act out situations where children or youth may be offered drugs (for example) by a classmate and strategies for saying “no.” Talk about how our bodies are the “temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 6:18) and how we must take care of them, avoiding substances that can cause injury or even death. Consider having youth sign a “pledge” to not take any illegal drugs. Have their friends or family members sign as witnesses.

**gambling** – Many African nations host lotteries. Preach on the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30). Frame gambling in terms of poor stewardship of God's money entrusted to us. If you know someone who became addicted to gambling but is now free, ask him or her to come to speak in church to warn others of the danger.

**pornography** – Do some research on the danger of pornography, then present your findings during a male only gathering of the church youth group. Create an atmosphere where those struggling with pornography addiction feel safe speaking up and asking for help. Hold a meeting of parents who have an internet connection at home. Give practical advice, such as encouraging parents to ask their children from time-to-time about what sites they are visiting. Keep computers in the family room where they are in plain sight of everyone. Recommend wholesome websites (including those that have harmless games). Consider limiting computer time to 30 minutes per day. If your children use FaceBook or other social media, require that they “friend” you as a condition for using that service. For families who visit cybercafes, find out which ones in town have strict rules against viewing pornography and encourage your people to support only those locations.

### ✧ **Christian view of sexuality (homosexuality)**

God's plan for marriage and sex appears early in the Bible. Genesis 1:27 notes that God created humanity as “male and female.” Likewise, a man is to “leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24).

Sexuality serves two purposes:

1. *God created sex for procreation.* Following the flood, God said to Noah and the others on the ark: “As for you, be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it” (Gen. 9:7). It is through sexual intercourse between a man and a woman that the human race replenishes itself as individuals die due to sickness, accidents, or old age.
2. *God created sex for joyous pleasure between husband and wife.* The Song of Solomon celebrates sensuality in all of its aspects as joyfully experienced between a husband and his wife. The “act of marriage” creates solidarity between marriage partners, reducing tension and promoting good health.

God intended sex to be reserved for a husband and a wife. It is a powerful force that – kept within God's bounds – builds a family up. However, when practiced outside of God's parameters, whether before marriage (fornication) or outside marriage (adultery), sex can be a destructive force. See Exodus 20:14, 1 Thess. 4:3-8, Hebrews 13:4.



*Helping believers who experience same-sex attraction (SSA)*

Recently, there have been concerted efforts by western countries to promote the practice of homosexuality around the world as a "human right." Based on Bible passages including Romans 1:21-32, 1 Cor. 6:9-11 and 1 Tim. 1:9-10, the Church of the Nazarene, like the vast majority of Christian churches, views homosexual acts as sin and therefore outside the bounds of God's intentions for humankind. See *Manual* paragraph 37, "Human sexuality," for more information.

Pastors and church leaders are strongly encouraged to demonstrate both discretion and a spirit of loving support toward those who are struggling with sexual sin of any variety, including homosexuality. Loving God and neighbor will mean gently pointing them to the One who is an "ever present help in time of trouble" (Psalm 46:1). Because the Lord Jesus himself was tempted yet did not sin (Matt. 4:1-11), he can help his children in times of temptation, providing a way to "stand up under it" (1 Cor. 10:13).

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***Activity in small groups: 20 minutes***

Below, each group will find a section of part 4, "special issues in ministry," assigned to them. You are asked to:

1. Read together back over your notes from the section.
2. Decide what information you found helpful. What parts were less helpful? Why?
3. Together, discuss what you might ADD to the lesson if you were the one writing the course.
4. Be ready to give a short report to the entire class.

Group 1 – confronting the darkness: spiritual warfare and deliverance

Group 2 – divine healing

Group 3 – prosperity theology and financial integrity

Group 4 – overcoming addictions and Christian view of sexuality (homosexuality)

## ***Lesson 4***

### **Eschatology: the triumph of God's kingdom**

#### **Part 1 – second coming and resurrection**

##### **I. Introduction**

**Eschatology** – from the Greek word *eschatos*, meaning “last” or “last things” – refers to the “biblical teaching concerning events which will occur at the end of the world” (Fred Layman, in *Beacon Dictionary of Theology*, see “eschatology”). Samuel Powell clarifies:

The New Testament presents the eschatological end of the world as the completion of God's redemptive new creation. This completion embraces the return of Jesus Christ, judgment, resurrection, and the restoration of the created order. These events constitute the *eschaton*.

– *Discovering Our Christian Faith*, 293

As Powell maintains, Jesus will bring a dramatic conclusion to history as we know it, followed by a new beginning. Let us look at the various elements he mentions.

##### **II. The second coming: Christian hope, millennial views and date setting**

One reason the Jewish people have not accepted Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah is their contention that he did not fulfill all of the Old Testament prophecies. On the one hand, from the Christian perspective, a prophecy like that of the “suffering servant” (Isaiah 53) was clearly fulfilled in the sacrificial death of Jesus at Calvary. The same book, however, speaks of a child being born, and that “the government will be on his shoulders” (Isa. 9:6). The Messiah would re-establish David's throne, ruling ever after with “justice and righteousness” (v. 7). Yet Jesus was crucified, with a mocking sign over his head: “The King of the Jews” (Matt. 27:37). This was hardly the conquering King the people had anticipated!

Christian theology has answered this charge by understanding Jesus' mission as unfolding in two stages. In his first coming, he fulfilled some prophecies. At his second coming, the remainder will be fulfilled. Among these is the consummation of the kingdom of God, a kingdom quietly begun at the incarnation and furthered by the church between Jesus' ascension and his return.

There is little question that Paul expected an imminent return of Jesus. When the early Christians began to die and Jesus had not yet come back, the Thessalonians were concerned about the fate of their loved ones. If they have died in the meantime, are they thereby excluded from life in the kingdom that Jesus would decisively bring to fruition at his return? Paul comforts them by explaining that Jesus will come back, and when he does,

“the dead in Christ will rise first” (1 Thes. 5:16), joining those who are still alive. All will be “caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore, encourage one another with these words” (5:17-18). With the delay in Christ’s return, Peter reminds his readers that, with the Lord, “a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years a day” (2 Peter 3:8). If two thousand years have passed and Jesus still has not come, this is no cause for concern. It merely demonstrates God’s “patience” and his desire for “everyone to come to repentance” (v. 9).

While all Christians affirm that Jesus will return, there is disagreement about the sequence of events. Rev. 20:1-8 speaks of a thousand year reign of Christ, or a “millennium.” The view called **postmillennialism** teaches that Christ will return “following the period of 1,000 years of peace, prosperity, blessing and grace known as the millennium of golden era” (Harold Ockenga, *Beacon Bible Commentary*; see “postmillennialism”). On the other hand, **premillennialism** believes that Christ will first return to establish his 1,000 year reign with the the saints before the final consummation (George Lyons, *Beacon Bible Commentary*; see “premillennialism”). A final view, **amillennialism**, interprets the passage symbolically. Many in this camp see the millennium as a reference to the reign of the Church during the absence of Christ (George Eldon Ladd, *Beacon Bible Commentary*; see “amillennialism”). Rob Staples favors a non-literal interpretation of the 1,000 years, calling the number a “superlative,” a “great number for him (John) and other people of that time” (Rob Staples, *The Second Coming*, 265). It was John’s way of praising the final reign of Christ, of saying: “It doesn’t get any better than this – ever!” (Ibid.).

Among Nazarenes, those who are concerned for issues such as social justice or lifting up the poor tend toward a postmillennial view of eschatology, seeing the task of the Church as preparing for the final consummation of the kingdom at Christ’s return. Others see the calamities of Matthew 24 (earthquakes, wars, etc.) unfolding in our time and prefer premillennialism with its belief that only Christ can make things new. The Church of the Nazarene adopts no official position on the millennium. At the same time, **we caution against setting a date (or time) for Christ’s return**, since the Lord Jesus himself does not know this, only the Father (Matt. 24:36). Such date setting brings ridicule to the Body of Christ when the prediction proves false, as in the case of Harold Camping’s widely publicized prophecy that Jesus would come back on May 21, 2011, later adjusted to October 21 of the same year. (See article in “The Christian Post,” online: <http://www.christianpost.com/news/harold-camping-oct-21-rapture-christians-should-chastise-family-radios-false-prophet-says-pastor-58820/>).

### **III. Resurrection, the body’s goodness and the kingdom of God**

The most important event connected with the return of Christ is the resurrection of the dead. John 5:28-29 provides the most vivid description of that eschatological event:

*Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out – those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.*

Many Christians have understood the human being to be a **dualism** of body and soul. At the death of the body, in this conception, the immortal soul leaves the body to live elsewhere, either in torment (see Luke 16:19-31) or to be comforted in the presence of Jesus (2 Cor. 5:8) awaiting the resurrection, when soul and body will be reunited. Another view historically held by some Christians is **holism** (sometimes called **monism**), that the human being is a unity, a body animated by the breath of life (Heb. *nephesh*, Gen. 2:7) given by God, sometimes called "spirit." At death, the spirit (breath of life) returns to God who gave it. Some have called this "soul sleep," a state of non-consciousness following death, pending the resurrection. A pastor might be asked by a parishioner: "Where is my loved one now?" To this question, the pastor (whether a dualist or holist) can truthfully respond: "He is in God's hands, awaiting the resurrection." We are not God, and it is never our place to speculate on the destiny of individuals.

Holism maintains that our material body is not just what we "have;" it is who we are. On the other hand, God is spirit (John 4:34) as are angels (Hebrews 1:14) and demons, whom the Bible calls "evil spirits." Holism denies the possibility of communication with the spirits of ancestors, since human consciousness ceases at death. By default, holism would consider communication with ancestors to be contact with evil spirits.

### ***Weaknesses in dualism and holism***

Dualism ascribes to the human being inherent immortality, but Paul says to Timothy that God alone is "immortal" (1 Tim. 6:16). This is consistent with Genesis, where after the disobedience of Adam and Eve, the LORD placed cherubim to "guard the way to the tree of life" (Gen. 3:24). Why did he do this? This was to prevent them from eating its fruit and living forever (see v. 22). If, on the other hand, as Plato, the ancient Greek philosopher taught, the human soul is immortal, then God's concern to prevent human access to the tree of life makes no sense.

Some forms of dualism, such as Gnosticism, considered substance (including our bodies) evil, but spirit the Gnostics deemed to be pure (Wayne Caldwell, *Beacon Dictionary of Theology*, see "gnosticism"). In this view, salvation is the liberation of the soul from the corrupt prison house of the flesh. Some types of evangelism that speak only of "winning souls" seem to buy into this non-biblical dualism. Other Christians will speak of a deceased loved one being "in heaven" and doing physical activities, like gardening, playing golf or cooking. Yet one wonders how disembodied souls could participate in embodied activities. Such idyllic descriptions lead one to wonder why God would even bother recreating the bodies of the dead at the last day! Indeed, Paul's mention of the resurrection provoked ridicule from some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers with whom he spoke in Athens (Acts 17:32). Apparently, they saw such a doctrine as incredible.

Holism is attractive, but also has its problems. On the positive side, it seems closer to the Old Testament view, resembling the belief of Jews at the time of Jesus, including Mary the brother of Lazarus (John 11:24). However, some question whether holism can account for the "near death" experiences that some Christians have had, times where God gave them a

glimpse of heaven. A recent example is the 2010 book, *Heaven is for Real*, the story of Colton Burpo, a four year old American boy who during an operation for appendicitis spent time in heaven with Jesus. He later gradually recounted his experiences to his mother and father. Cody's dad, Todd Burpo, a Wesleyan pastor, recorded these vignettes in his bestselling book. The dualism view certainly comes closer to the dominant sub-Saharan cosmology. Selected New Testament passages (Luke 23:43, Phil. 1:22-26, 2 Cor. 12:1-6) appear dualistic. On balance, it is fair to say that while the New Testament whispers about what some have called the "**intermediate state**" – continued non-bodily human existence after physical death but before Christ's return – it shouts about the resurrection! If we allow that there is some semblance of existence immediately after death, but prior to the resurrection, the biblical emphasis may be diagrammed like this:

#### LIFE ON EARTH – intermediate state – RESURRECTION LIFE

N.T. Wright keeps the focus where the New Testament does by discouraging us from speaking of "life after death," a phrase that underscores the disputed "intermediate state." Instead, he suggests the alternative term "life *after* life after death," which keeps the spotlight on our final state, namely, resurrection to endless and joyful life with Jesus in the kingdom of God (*Surprised by Hope*, 148).

#### ***What does the resurrection teach us?***

a) *The resurrection affirms the worth and goodness of all that God has created, including the human body.*

Genesis 1 describes creation in general as "good." After making man and woman, he pronounced the creation "very good" (v. 31). Unlike the Gnosticism, both Judaism and Christianity celebrate the goodness of embodied human existence. Food, singing, dance, and sex are all good gifts from the hands of a good Creator. In the kingdom of God, and particularly in the new creation at the end of time, our good bodies will be re-made, improved, ready to enjoy "eternal pleasures at (God's) right hand" (Psalm 16:11).

b) *The resurrection is a reminder that our just and loving God will have the last word.*

On the Day of Pentecost, the birthday of the Church, Peter put an accent on the resurrection and its importance. God raising Jesus from the dead was a vindication of his Son. David's words from Psalm 16:8-11 were strangely prophetic: "You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay" (Acts 2:27). Because God raised Jesus from the dead, Peter could confidently proclaim: "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (v. 36).

When early Christians mourned loved ones burned at the stake or torn apart by lions in the coliseum, it was not to the Greek notion of the immortality of the soul that they turned for comfort. Rather, they pinned all their hopes on the resurrection, God had raised Jesus from the dead, the "first-fruits" of a great harvest yet to come (1 Cor. 15:20). And so they trusted that the God who had done this for Jesus could do it for them, that the God who

had made them the first time could make them all over again in the new creation. And so Rob Staples affirms: "Christ is not the *only* one to be raised; He is the *first* one" (Second Coming, 258).

Paul said that "death has been swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15:54). This looked both backward and forward; it looked back to the resurrection of Christ on the third day (15:20) but also forward to the resurrection of the faithful, when at the sound of the trumpet the "perishable" would be "clothed with the imperishable," and the "mortal with immortality" (vv. 52-53). The Apostles' Creed – dated to the third century a.d. – affirms not "I believe in the immortality of the soul" but "I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting." Life unending in the "new heaven and new earth" (Rev. 21:1) awaits the Christian post-resurrection.

c) *Future resurrection inspires us to build for God's kingdom in the here-and-now.*

The new creation refers to God's pronouncement in Rev. 21:5 – "I am making everything new!" Resurrection of the body is an important part of that renewal. But resurrection in the future guides us how we live our lives in the present. N.T. Wright asks:

How does believing in the future lead to getting on with the work in the present? Quite straightforwardly. The point of the resurrection, as Paul has been arguing throughout the letter (1 Corinthians), is that *the present bodily life is not valueless just because it will die*. God will raise it to new life. What you do with your body in the present matters because God has a great future in store for it. And if this applies to ethics, as in 1 Cor. 6, it certainly applies to the various vocations to which God's people are called. What you *do* in the present – by painting, preaching, singing, sewing, praying, teaching, building hospitals, digging wells, campaigning for justice, writing poems, caring for the needy, loving your neighbor as yourself – *will last into God's future*. These activities are not simply ways of making the present life a little less beastly, a little more bearable, until the day when we leave it behind altogether...They are part of what we may call *building for God's kingdom*.

– *Surprised by Hope*, 193

### ***Discussion***

What do you think of the dualistic view? The holistic view? Which do you prefer? Why? What do you think of the pastor's answer to the grieving family member, when they asked the pastor where their loved one was now? Why can it be dangerous in a funeral sermon to "preach someone into heaven"?

## Part 2 – Judgment, punishment and reward

It is difficult for us to imagine how persons long dead, buried and decayed will be resurrected. We know, for example, that following a person's death, the molecules in the human body are recycled by nature for use in other organisms. How then shall we be raised? Paul replies that resurrection is a function of God's great power (Phil. 3:21). Nothing is too hard for God. Theologians in recent times speak of "new creation," of beginning again, knitting us back together like he did the first time. God has not forgotten who we are, and when Christ returns, all those who have lived in the past will miraculously return to life, even those who have been scattered in the depths of the sea (Rev. 20:13). This will be the last judgment before the great white throne of God (Rev. 20:11-15), the "judgment seat of Christ" before which Paul says we all must appear (2 Cor. 5:10).

Samuel Powell describes the *eschaton* (the end) in these terms: "The *eschaton* is the completion of God's judgment upon the world. Judgment results in reward, which is the perfection of life in God, and punishment, which is life without God" (*Discovering Our Christian Faith*, 295).

### I. The necessity of judgment

Judgment is a frequent theme in Scripture. Jonah went to Ninevah to announce God's judgment upon the city. Amos is representative of an important strain in Old Testament prophecy when he declares the word of the LORD: "For three sins of Moab, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath" (Amos 2:1). In the New Testament, John the Baptist prepares the way for Jesus, warning his listeners: "The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matt. 3:10).

Jesus pictures the return of the Son of Man as a time of judgment when he will separate the sheep from goats based on whether we have ministered to the physical needs of the "least of these" (Matt. 25:45). The scales of justice will be publicly balanced not only in regards to heinous crimes such as genocide but even for wrongs that no one on earth knew had been done (Luke 12:3). On the other hand, those who received little recognition for good done during this life will be openly commended. As Jesus said, "The first shall be last, and the last, first" (Matt. 20:16).

*Theologically, judgment is an aspect of the holiness of God.* Because God is holy, citizenship in the kingdom of God requires that we participate in his holiness (Hebrews 12:14), a participation in the "divine nature" that God offers to everyone here-and-now (2 Peter 1:4). For Christians, this participation in divinity does not mean that we suddenly share in all the attributes of God. Choosing to follow Christ does not grant us unlimited power or knowledge. On the other hand, resurrection for the Christian will include the gift of immortality (2 Tim. 1:10). Meanwhile, we already participate in the divine nature when we demonstrate God's love to others (1 John 3:16-18). In the same way, Jesus defines "perfection" not in terms of perfect performance, a thing impossible for humans. Rather, it is a perfection of love (Matt. 5:43-48).

Sadly, because some refuse to participate in the loving life of God here on earth, God will judge them unfit for everlasting participation in his life in the world to come. Only those who have made their start on the "way of salvation" through putting their faith in Christ – a faith evidenced by good works – will inherit the kingdom of heaven. Rob Staples calls this "our response to the love of God revealed to us in Christ" (*Second Coming*, 267). Even this response is possible because of grace (Eph. 2:8-9). No one on that day will feel that they earned God's favor. The "water of life" is a "free gift" for all who are thirsty (Rev. 22:17). Like the twenty-four elders who fell down in worship to the Lord God Almighty, casting their crowns before his throne (Rev. 4:10), the hearts of his children will well up in gratitude to the Triune God for his incredible grace.

## **II. The nature of punishment**

One of the most difficult doctrines in Christian theology is hell. N.T. Wright laments that unbiblical ideas about hell have tainted our outlook:

Part of the difficulty of the topic...is that the word *hell* conjures up an image gained more from medieval imagery than from the earliest Christian writings. Just as many who were brought up to think of God as a bearded old gentleman sitting on a cloud decided that when they stopped believing in such a being they had therefore stopped believing in God, so many who were taught to think of hell as a literal underground location full of worms and fire, or for that matter as a kind of torture chamber at the center of God's castle of heavenly delights, decided that when they stopped believing in that, so they stopped believing in hell.

- *Surprised by Hope*, 175

Let us briefly outline the traditional view that Wright references, and compare it with an interpretation that is gaining ground in evangelical circles, namely, that hell is the final destruction of the wicked.<sup>4</sup>

### **A. Unending, conscious toment (UCT)**

In his *Introduction to Christian Theology*, Orton Wiley marshals the evidence for the UCT position. The strongest text is Matthew 25:41-46: "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." The dominant picture of hell is from Jesus, who spoke of *Gehenna* (Mark 9:43-44, Luke 12:5). This Greek word referred to the Valley of Hinnom, a gorge outside the city walls of Jerusalem used as a garbage dump (Fudge, 118).

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<sup>4</sup> Two other views not treated here are universalism, the belief that all will eventually be accepted by God into heaven, and purgatory, the Roman Catholic view that most of the deceased spend a time of "purging" before being admitted to God's presence. For a response to both, see the June 2011 series, "Re-thinking hell," on Dr Crofford's weblog, at: [www.gregorycrofford.wordpress.com](http://www.gregorycrofford.wordpress.com).



Some have seen in this image a picture of eternal suffering, a place where “their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:48). But Edward Fudge has called into question the Mark 9:48 argument. Mark is quoting Isaiah 66:24, where the dead bodies of rebels lay heaped up and burning. This is an image of destruction, of worms consuming the bodies of the bodies of the dead, hardly an image of everlasting torture (Fudge, 76).

Others have questioned whether the word “eternal” (Gk. *aiōnios*) – such as in Matt. 25:41-46 – must always be interpreted as “everlasting.” It may also signify “the permanence of the result rather than the continuous operation of the act of punishment itself” (Staples, *Second Coming*, 271). In this interpretation, “eternal” means “irreversible” rather than unending (Ibid.). Clark Pinnock has rightly noted that behind the traditional position lies the presupposition of the immortality of the soul. Pinnock observes:

If a biblical reader approached the text with the assumption that souls are naturally immortal, would they not be compelled to interpret texts that speak of the wicked being destroyed to mean that they are tortured forever, since according to that presupposition souls cannot go out of existence?...If souls are naturally immortal, they must necessarily spend a conscious eternity somewhere and, if there is a *gehenna* of fire, they would have to spend it alive in fiery torment. It is this belief in natural immortality rather than biblical texts that drives the traditional view of the nature of hell as everlasting conscious torment and prevents people reading the Bible literally.

– *Four Views of Hell*, 147

## **B. Conditional immortality**

Pinnock represents a growing movement in theological circles that questions the traditional view of hell as unending, conscious torment. These experts – including the late renowned Bible scholar, John R.W. Stott – see in a plain reading of Scripture another conception of hell that fits better with the Bible’s description of God’s character as both holy and loving. This position is sometimes called **annihilationism**, but more recently has taken the name conditional immortality.

Like the traditional view, there are presuppositions behind the conditional immortality viewpoint. An important one is holism, which we have already seen as the view that the human being is a unity of matter and “spirit,” a body animated by the breath of God. As such, humans are not immortal, but mortal (Job 14:1). Immortality is God’s gift to the righteous at the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:53-55). Meanwhile, God holds our “breath” in His hands (Job 12:1). To die is to no longer exist, or to use poetic imagery, is to have fallen asleep (1 Thess. 4:15). Rachel weeps for her slain children “because they are no more” (Jer. 31:15; Matt. 2:18).

A second aspect of this view is a tendency to interpret words literally, so when Jesus says that the “wide gate” and “broad road” lead to “destruction” and the “small gate” and “narrow way” leads to “life” (Matt. 7:13-14), we do not need to explain that destruction

*really* means eternal torment. God's judgment can have two outcomes, either "honor and immortality" for those who do good, or "wrath and anger" for evildoers (Romans 2:5-11). The one who "sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life" (Gal. 6:8). Our God is a "consuming fire" (Deut. 4:24, Heb. 11:29). What is consumed, in the simplest terms, passes out of existence, or "perishes" (John 3:16). Truly, the wages of sin is death; eternal life is the gift of God to the righteous (Romans 6:23). Immortality is conditional, reserved for believers as our post-resurrection inheritance (1 Tim. 6:16).

Two additional points commend the conditional immortality view:

1. *It better takes into account God's justice and fairness.* The concept of an "eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" (Exodus 21:24), the *lex talionis*, was not divine permission for humans to exact vengeance. Rather, Kevin van Hoozer calls it a law that "limits revenge and takes the first step toward leaving revenge to God and ultimately to forgiving one's enemies" (*Theological Interpretation of the Old Testament*, Baker Academic, 2005, p. 56). Punishment must "fit the crime," so if a victim loses an eye, it would be disproportionate to blind the perpetrator in *both* eyes and cut off his ears. If God requires this of humans, would he not require it of himself? Yet hell as unending, conscious punishment goes far beyond any wrong a single human being could have committed in the span of a seventy year lifetime. Like Abraham, we expect fair play from God, asking: "Will not the judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:25). Edward Fudge (p. 374) puts forth the possibility that – before destroying evildoers in hell – God will punish them according to the severity of their misdeeds. The "many blows" and "few blows" of Luke 12:48 fits this conception, as does Paul's teaching that we all must "receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:17).

2. *It brings all humanity back under the peaceful rule of God.* Satan and his demonic minions will suffer eternally (Rev. 20:7-10), never again able to deceive us. As for evil humans, their ultimate destruction in the lake of fire is described by John as the "second death" (Rev. 20:14-15). For them, it will be a just end for those whose names are absent from the book of life (v. 15), those who stubbornly and persistently rejected repentance and therefore rebuffed God's gift of eternal life. It is a choice for non-being made by those who repeatedly refused to say to God: "Your will be done." To these, God – honoring their free will – will finally and reluctantly declare: "Your will be done."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> This idea – cited by Staples (*Second Coming*, 269) – is adapted from C.S. Lewis' *The Great Divorce*. In this book, Lewis espoused a modified view of the traditional view of hell, seeing punishment primarily as selfishness resulting in the individual's permanent isolation from God and all others.

## ***Conclusion: Should Article of Faith 16 be modified?***

John 3:16 is one of the best known and loved verses of the New Testament. It affirms:

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

This is the simplest presentation of human destiny. Stubbornly sinful mortal beings, resurrected and justly judged by God, will endure a second death. They will finally “perish.” Believers, on the other hand, who already experienced abundant life on earth (John 10:10), will also be judged and rewarded; they will “have eternal live.”

In light of the current re-evaluation of the traditional doctrine of hell as unending, conscious punishment, it is time to ask whether Nazarene Article of Faith 16 – “Resurrection, Judgment and Destiny” – should be modified to reflect a more biblical understanding. The Nazarene statement of belief currently ends with these words:

*“The finally impenitent shall suffer eternally in hell.”*

A slight change in wording would reflect the more biblical understanding:

*“...but that the finally impenitent shall perish in hell.”*

### ***Class activity***

In the Church of the Nazarene, the General Assembly considers “memorials” (resolutions) sent to it by the districts (*Manual* 305.1). Imagine that your class is the General Assembly and your teacher is the presiding General Superintendent. Divide the class into those who favor the change to Article 16 suggested above and those who are opposed. Give each group 10 minutes to develop its arguments, then as teacher (G.S.), for 10 minutes, take turns letting individuals from the two groups debate “for” and “against.” Make sure that you keep things orderly. Only one person can speak at a time. Do they have an amended wording that would improve the proposal? Tell the students that they are allowed to change their mind if during the course of the debate an argument convinces them of the truth of the other position. At the end, distribute small slips of paper and have the students cast a secret ballot “for” or “against.” Did the memorial pass?

### **III. Reward: Living in the new creation**

Talking about heaven brings to mind Paul's comment in 1 Cor. 13:12 – “Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.” What can a caterpillar know of the life of a butterfly? The caterpillar crawls low to the ground, thinking that the blades of grass around it and the dirt are all that there is. Later, after a time a cocoon, the transformation is complete. The butterfly bursts forth and flies into the air! It sees reality from a whole new point-of-view. The grass and dirt are still there, but now it knows of trees, lakes, and beautiful horizons.

When we speak of heaven, we are the caterpillars, wondering what lies in the vast expanses above. The Bible gives us hints of what life in the unshakable kingdom of God will be like, but in many ways, we are left to speculate about the "New Jerusalem" (Rev. 21:1). In John's vision, we see:

*v. 1 – There is "no more sea"* – William McCumber, in an address at Eastern Nazarene College, noted that most Jews (like John) were not comfortable on large bodies of water, so for them the "sea" was a symbol of terror. But in the heavenly city come down to the new earth, terror will be a thing of the past. God's reign is a reign of safety and security for all His children.

*v. 3 – God will be our God, and we will be His people* – The story of the Old Testament is Israel as the people of God. Now all of humanity is under His covenant. God will never seem distant, as He sometimes does during this earthly life. He will "live with them" and "be with them" (21:3). Our worship will be fulfilling and face-to-face with our Lord.

*v. 4 – Sickness, death and sorrow will be no more* – God will wipe away our tears. Cancer, birth defects and a thousand other maladies will be but a distant memory, part of the "old order" that has "passed away." Our resurrection bodies will be healthy and durable.

### ***Some common questions about heaven***

If you have internet access, visit Peter Kreeft's article in the June 2003 *Christianity Today* where he answers thirty common questions about heaven:

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2003/juneweb-only/6-2-51.0.html?start=3>

The questions and answers below draw on Kreeft and other resources.

#### *1. How will we fill up our endless days in heaven?*

Popular images of heaven include people sitting on clouds and playing harps. Some might find that appealing, but to many, it sounds boring. But in heaven, we will never grow tired of worshiping God (Rev. 19:1-5). Lively banquets with Jesus as our host may be implied by the term "wedding supper of the lamb" (Rev. 19:9). These feasts might include delectable fruit to eat and crystal clear water to drink (22:1-2).

When not worshiping or enjoying the fellowship of others, we will have work to do! If the parable of the ten minas in Luke 19:11-27 is interpreted from heaven's perspective, then our time in God's kingdom will be filled with meaningful labor. The king assigns "ten cities" or "five cities" to his servants (vv. 17, 19). Assuming heaven exists on a different plain in time than our earthly existence, distances between planets that are now impossibly large may in heaven's dimension be more easily traversed. As we are earthly stewards of what God has entrusted us, in the heavenly kingdom God may put us in charge of stretches of the universe that we never knew existed (Grider, 547). Further, Rev. 5:9 hints that God will

use our musical talents to have us compose new songs (Ibid.). Is it too far-fetched to believe that other creative gifts – such as art, woodworking, metal craft, gardening, composing poems, writing novels or athletic prowess – will be encouraged as part of our well-rounded service to God and others?

### *2. Will there be sex in heaven?*

Some have argued that Matt. 22:23-33 teaches there will be no sex in heaven, since there will be no marriage or procreation. This view neglects that God created our earthly bodies not only to produce children but for joy and intimacy. The kingdom will not be for disembodied spirits but an arena of laughter and joyful relationships experienced by embodied people. Peter Kreeft comments that “sex is part of our divinely designed humanity” and that in heaven, we will be “transformed” but not “neutered” (Ibid.) After all, are we to categorically rule out a beautiful and honorable aspect of life that inspired a book of the Old Testament (Song of Solomon)? If God is “making everything new” (Rev. 21:5), then intimacy – like a symphony written by a brilliant composer – may be transposed to a higher key than we could ever imagine.

### *3. Will we grieve for loved ones who refused God's gift of immortality?*

Rev. 7:17b promises: “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” Peter Kreeft observes: “ In Heaven...we will not live in the past—we will have no regrets; nor will we live in the future—we will have no fears; but like God, we will live in the eternal present. Our heavenly emotions will be appropriate to present reality, not past reality” (Ibid.)

## **IV. Conclusion**

The Bible begins in one garden (Gen. 3) and ends in another (Rev. 22:1-2). Between its covers is the “story of God” – of a loving Creator who longs to be in joyful relationship with all creation, but particularly with human beings. Our sin estranged us from our heavenly Father, but in his Son, Jesus Christ, God has provided a “new and living way” (Hebrews 10:20) back to himself, the *via salutis*, the “way of salvation.” Saved by faith and by grace made new, we pursue holiness of heart and life as children of God and citizens of the kingdom Jesus inaugurated. Working through his Church and in the power of the Holy Spirit, we invite others to heavenly citizenship, stubbornly and bravely push back the boundaries of the kingdom of God, awaiting the soon return of the King. Together, we say: “*Maranatha!* Come, Lord Jesus.”

***SOLA DEI GLORIA***