

7 Ungodly “Christian” Rules

Instructor’s Guide

The purpose of this course is to gain an understanding 1) of why the visible Christian church is failing in America and in most of the “first world” countries and 2) of what individual Christians must do to prevent following the visible church into the recycle bin for failed religions. The instructor needs to invest sufficient time to comprehend the materials and present them in a way that people who do not have formal philosophical training can comprehend the important issues.

In teaching advanced topics, it is important for the instructor to realize the goal of his teaching. The saving truths are presented in the Scriptures, but they do not benefit a person’s soul unless they are transcribed from the Scriptures onto the wall of faith in the mind and heart of the believer. Ideally, a Christian’s faith will be a beautiful mural of all the teachings of the Bible appropriately linked with each other to give the Christian a perfect knowledge of God’s will. This mural will never be completed in this world, but it is important that the Christian and those that teach him or her work to make it more complete. While pastors have a well-developed mural based on long and systematic training, laypeople often have scattered facts from the Bible placed here and there on their wall of faith. Sometimes they are misconnected with each other, and sometimes wrong information learned from non-Scriptural sources will be intertwined with Scriptural truth. In his presentation of the Scriptural material, the teacher will always try to guide his hearers so that they will put it into the correct place in the mural and make the correct attachments to the other materials that are there. This is what makes teaching the Word of God challenging and rewarding.

For this course, you will first need to put aside your own biases about the church and look into the mirror of God’s Word with fear and trembling. The book is written in an unusual style to grab the readers and try to shake some sense into them. Doing more of what does not build strong Christian faith is worthless. It is wasting precious time as souls are lost forever and creating a false church. The book bites, and so must the teaching of it.

This course is set up to be taught in nine 90-minute sessions, but the material in the lessons can be regrouped for any number of class periods that are available. From educational research we know that reading the material before the class, answering the study questions, and considering the issues that are being raised by the readings are essential to maximizing learning. Students should be strongly encouraged to do so. It is good to close the lessons with hymns written by Lutheran lyricists. The texts of suitable hymns are included in the student notes.

Note that the study questions and answers are inserted in the teaching text where they might be used, but they can be moved in the actual presentation or ignored.

1. What’s the Problem?

It is important to be forthright with the students about the nature of the course. There is a lot of law in this course, but there is always the clear and repeated presentation of the gospel. The law will tell them what they do not want to hear about their own approach to Christianity and about things their congregations do

and probably shouldn't. It is hard to hear some of the favorite ideas of Lutherans exposed as being the devil's tools, which they certainly are, by a Lutheran pastor who has quite literally seen it all.

I. What is the purpose in this class? It is a wake up call. Satan is on the offensive and is hammering the church across America. Worse yet, the church is often playing into his hand. This course will make you question yourself. There is no doubt that American Christianity is failing. The law tells us why, if we will only listen, and the gospel gives us what we need to preach and believe to turn the tide.

A. People get lost. How does this happen? **We must learn.**

1. They do not trust God. a) Eve was placed in a paradise, but Satan convinced her that God was not trustworthy and was holding something back from her. She bit literally and figuratively. b) "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was appealing to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise (really), she took some of its fruit and ate. She gave some also to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it." Genesis 3:6 **Humans are extremely gullible. In fact, we must train the gullibility out of those who go into the sciences. In theology, we need to learn that there are no "eureka" moments when some new revelation tells us how to solve all the problems of the church.**
2. They do not obey God. a) God told the people after the flood to disperse and fill the earth. That did not seem to be the best strategy to them (typical human reasoning), so they tried to build a tower at Babel. b) "They said, 'Come, let's build a city for ourselves and a tower whose top reaches to the sky, and let's make a name for ourselves (We can do it!), so that we will not be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.'" Genesis 11:4 **Humans are slow learners. They had forgotten the lesson of the Flood. The next generation never believes their elders.**
3. They close their eyes to evil. a) Given his choice by Abraham of where to live in the land, Lot chose the rich plain of the Jordan but refused to avoid the evil inhabitants of the city of Sodom. **Ask yourself about this, isn't this playing with fire?** b) "Now the men of Sodom were extremely wicked (big problem) sinners against the LORD." Genesis 12:13...."Because he had been living in Sodom, they [enemy kings] took also Lot, the son of Abram's brother, and his possessions and went on their way." Genesis 14:12 **People are like May West, who said, "When faced with two evils, I always pick the one I haven't tried before."**
4. They look only at the present, to the "quick buck". **Luther railed against such stupidity.** a) Esau had the right of the firstborn, being a few minutes older than his brother Jacob. He was willing to trade this valuable possession to fill his empty stomach (sinful belly) just once. b) "Jacob said, 'First, sell me your right as the firstborn.' Esau said, 'Look, I am about to die. What good is the birthright to me?'" Genesis 25:31,32 **People fail to look to eternity.**
5. They defy God. a) The Egyptian king Pharaoh was interested in building his nation by any means that were available, including enslaving other people. He was not interested in hearing that God might be displeased with his preoccupation. b) "Pharaoh said, 'Who is the LORD that I should listen to his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and I certainly will not let Israel

go.” Exodus 5:2 S When advised to respect the institutions of the Roman Catholic Church, Stalin replied, “How many division does the pope have?” If people can shrink God, they can ignore Him.

B. Lost people become desperate. If it depends on us, we feel better, i.e., “in the driver’s seat.”

1. They take things into their own hands. a) Saul was king of Israel, and he was being attacked by the Philistines, his continual nemesis. His troops were scattering, Samuel had not yet come to advise him, and he felt he had to do something to force God to help him. He offered a sacrifice illegally. b) “So Saul said, ‘Bring me the burnt offering and the fellowship offering.’ He then presented the burnt offering.” 1 Samuel 13:9 He tried to force God or supplant Him. There must be a proper balance between “waiting for a roasted chicken to fly into our mouths” and “I’ve done it my way.”
2. They look for help in the wrong places. a) Faced with a superpower to the north, the kings of Judah looked for human help from another powerful country rather than help from the LORD. b) “Woe to those who go down to Egypt, without consulting me. They seek Pharaoh’s protection, and they take refuge in the shade of Egypt!” Isaiah 30:2
3. They rely on their own strength (or cleverness), “mit unser Macht”. a) Peter loved the Lord Jesus, and he was bold. When Jesus warned him that he would fall into temptation and deny Him, Peter firmly declared he was strong enough to resist such a temptation. b) “And Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken, ‘Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.’ And he went outside and wept bitterly.” Matthew 26:75 Vince Lombardi said, “Fatigue makes cowards of us all.”
4. They fall into despair. (We have so much pride that we would rather die than repent.) a) Judas had done the inconceivable and betrayed his Lord. Rather than repenting of his heinous sin and seeking forgiveness, he gave up and hung himself. b) “He [Judas] threw the pieces of silver into the temple and left. Then he went out and hanged himself.” Matthew 27:5

Q1. What are posers? A: People who are deceived about their own identity and deceive others.

C. Christian punks are posers. Poser = anyone with the wrong motive for being a Christian.

1. Why are they posers? a) Christian teachings are given by God and cannot change. Christians serve God by conforming their lives to these teachings. Christianity is God’s religion. b) At its heart, punk rock is rebellious. Punks want to tell their message of discontent to the world and get the world to see it their way. c) Christian punks use Christian words and ideas, but they adapt their meanings so as to fit with their feelings of rebellion. They deceive themselves by emphasizing emotion. They are living a lie. They have the wrong answer to “Why are you a Christian?”

In a party game in a dramatic performance Loretta Young's character was once asked to give three answers to the question "Who am I?" For her the question had originally had been no game, but an identity crisis. But now her answer was, "1) I am a child of God. 2) I am a wife and mother. 3) I am "Loretta Young." We often forget that we are first children of God.

Q2. What was Punk Rock John's problem? A: His faith was built on his feelings, which had to be continually stoked.

2. The need for something new. a) They believe that they can serve God better if they can just find a new innovation for their music, a new chord, that better expresses their feelings. (They want change under their control.) b) Because their approach is based on their feelings, i.e., emotions, they need to continually strive for better highs. (They are addicted to the highs.) c) They are always feeling limited in their efforts to praise God by the inherent nature of Christianity, and they need to push the limit to sustain "the feeling." (They are fighting the inherent limitation of Christianity.)

Every church-related activity is only a tool that can become evil if it pulls you away from the Word.

3. The end of reconciliation. a) Eventually, they will encounter the "dark side," the reality of trying to worship God without being grounded in the Word. (They are forced to make a choice.) b) When they are told the ugly truth that their self-chosen means is not compatible with the message that the church teaches, their world falls apart and their bubble bursts. (Confused by contradictions.) c) Because they are not grounded on the content of the Scriptures, they find that nothing they try will work because it never did. They had just pretended it did. (They become desperate for answers.)

II. How people are robbed blind.

A. Dirty crow tricks

Q3. What are the "dirty crow" tricks? A: Devices of Satan to steal the Word of God from our hearts.

1. Stealing the Word {Matthew 13:4-7}. a) When God's Word is spread, Satan tries to take it before it can take root. "Some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it." (Flashy temptations) b) Failing that, Satan tries to limit the amount of good the Word can do. "Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil. Immediately the seed sprang up, because the soil was not deep. But when the sun rose, the seed was scorched. Because it had no root, it withered away." (Easy join, easy leave □ not enough education) c) Failing that, Satan tries to raise up other things to overwhelm the Word. "Other seed fell among thorns. The thorns grew up and choked it." (Things of the world from baubles to plagues)

2. Creating “enthusiasts”. (e.g., pope, self-evidences, inner light, visions) a) Religious enthusiasts are people who believe that they can understand God’s will through means other than the Scriptures. Once they accept this idea, they are cut off from the source of spiritual power. b) Satan fosters enthusiasm by appealing to pride and innate ability.
3. Seeking the “deeper meaning” a) “It can’t be this easy!” “I must have to do something!” The gospel cannot be a free lunch. b) “It can’t be this hard!” “There must be a shortcut to pleasing God!” There must be quota of good works that meets God’s demands in the new life in Christ.

B. Famished

Q4. Why are “active churches” becoming famished? A: They are trying to build peoples’ faith on things other than the Word of God.

1. Looking for something relevant to believe. People want to cut and run, but to where? They end up building their own religion. a) When people abandon the Word or raise other materials to the same level, they lose their secure base. They must hunt for something else to sustain them. b) It is only a matter of time before they settle on some set of manmade rules which are idols that cannot help them in the long run. If one reads Luther, one finds that things have not changed.

Q5. What is Postmodernism? A: The philosophy that each individual has a right to define truth for him/herself.

2. Strung out on postmodernism. a) Postmodernism denies absolutes and encourages everyone to develop their own sense of truth. They are advised to become their own source of wisdom. (Control of truth) b) People are left with nothing that is sure and certain. They are dancing, but there is no place to sit down when they are tired and need something solid to relate to. (The excitement of going, but the frustration of never getting there.)
3. Minnows behind glass. a) Sturgeons eagerly eat minnows. Put minnows into a tank with a sturgeon, and they will quickly be swallowed. Separate the sturgeon from the minnows by a glass partition, and the sturgeon will crash into the glass partition until it learns that it cannot get the minnows. Remove the glass, and the sturgeon will starve to death, believing the minnows are still inaccessible. (Loss in the middle of abundance. Conditioned to be aimless.) b) Although the Bible is readily available, once people believe that it cannot help them, they will die of spiritual starvation with a ready source of spiritual nourishment at hand.

III. Seeking a new view

A. The golden cow’s new clothes

1. The emperor’s new clothes. (wanting to be “special”) a) In Hans Christian Andersen’s tale, a vain and gullible emperor paid tailors to make him a special set of clothes that only worthy people

could see. There were no clothes, but everyone had to play along for fear of being thought to be vulgar. b) In trying to show how “with it” they are, people are easily lured into doing things that are just as foolish as the vain emperor. This trap is damning when it involves developing a more elegant faith in our Savior than comes through the Scriptures. [Noting like being out front in a race to fall over a cliff.](#)

2. Aaron and the golden calf. [It is hard to overestimate the folly of the sinner.](#) a) It is hard to believe that with God’s pillar of cloud and fire with them and having just promised not to worship any other gods the Israelites could desire an idol to worship, but the willingness to substitute something for God is strong in all of us. [\(Changing God to worship \(serve\) Him better.\)](#) b) “All the people pulled off their gold earrings and brought them to Aaron. He took what they handed him and shaped it with an engraving tool and made it into a bull calf cast out of metal. Then they said, ‘This is your god, Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt.’” Exodus 32:3–4 [People’s memories are short, and they are fickle.](#)

Q6. What is meant by “the golden cow’s new clothes”? [A: Different ways of presenting idolatry to make it fashionable to Christians.](#)

3. A new view of the Scriptures. a) “The Scriptures are hard to understand. [“Let’s be stupid!”](#) We need a” People from the illiterate to the theologians will fill in this blank with “new translation,” “new approach to interpretation,” “more modern view,” and numerous other phrases. b) The real goal of these “new views” of Scripture is to make it less God-dominated and more appealing to human reason. Certainly, it is reasoned, “man has learned a lot since God first motivated men to write down their ideas about Him and His will. We should not be prisoners of our primitive past.” [What kind of god do you believe in? One that is hopelessly inept?](#)
4. Pray, work, and hope. [When the message becomes secondary.](#) a) For some, it is a better order of service, a better worship facility, better or different music, more programs, an abler pastor, or something else about the organization. b) For others, it is the emotional or ethical basis of the belief system. It needs to more clearly emphasize prayer, self-improvement, spirit-baptism, etc. [\(Props to hold onto.\)](#)

B. All that glitters....

1. Freedom, but from what? a) “Rights” and “freedoms” are the holy grail of American society. [They are meaningless words.](#) Perhaps it might better be put as the “right to do anything I please” and the “freedom from everything I do not like.” b) In effect, Americans desire to have their society be custom-made for each one of them individually and then what? It is an impossible dream which will leave those who pursue it grasping nothing tangible. [\(A melee with no reachable goal; a race to nowhere.\)](#) c) Jesus said, “After all, what will it benefit a man if he gains the whole world, but destroys himself or is lost?” Luke 9:25

Q7. Why did Paul imply that the Galatians were foolish? [A: They were looking to themselves after hearing the message that only Jesus saves.](#)

2. New does not necessarily mean better. a) In a world where the only constant is change, it is easy for people to get caught up in the obsession that change is always good and that old is always inadequate. Yet even in the secular world, there are things that are better not to change (e.g., the gauge on a railroad, [electric voltages](#), [labels on water faucets](#)). b) “For there will come a time when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, because they have itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in line with their own desires. They will also turn their ears away from the truth and will turn aside to myths.” 2 Timothy 4:3–4 [Finally, the urge to change always gets to changing biblical doctrine, Satan’s ultimate goal.](#)
3. One must study the Scriptures to understand their message. [Trust God!](#) a) God’s standard of truth is the Holy Scriptures which he gave through inspiration. It is only from this source that spiritual truth can be found. b) “So then, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message comes through the word of Christ.” Romans 10:17 [The Gospel comes only from the Scriptures.](#) c) “Now the Bereans were more noble-minded than the Thessalonians. They received the word very eagerly and examined the Scriptures ([the source of life](#)) every day to see if these things were so.” Acts 17:11 d) “How blessed is the man who does not walk in the advice of the wicked, who does not stand on the path with sinners, and who does not sit in a meeting with mockers. But his delight is in the teaching of the LORD, and on his teaching he meditates day and night.” Psalm 1:1-2 [We must be Psalm 1 Christians.](#)

Q8. Why is the second stanza of A Mighty Fortress relevant to this course? [A: It reminds us that we can do nothing on our own.](#)

2. Following Your Liver

Last time we identified that we are under Satan’s attack, and he does not play fair. It is a warning that we need to learn more about.

IV. All about hearts – [Not the card game. Once again, we need some background.](#)

A. People and their hearts

1. The heart of the matter. ([the “center” or “core”](#)) a) When many ideas have been placed on the table and things are getting hairy, someone is likely to say, “Let’s get to the heart of the matter.” There must be something in the pile of information that will set the direction so that everything will make sense. [It is where we need to be, the solid footing, the common thread.](#) b) The heart of an issue is the center about which everything else organizes itself. If one cannot find something that fulfills that role, then one is almost certainly facing an unresolvable situation [Different assumptions are being made by those involved.](#)
2. A matter of the heart. a) The heart is regarded in Western civilization as the seat of the emotions, particularly the strong emotions. Love and hate are both matters of the heart. ([These can be controlling or blinding if the heart rules the head.](#)) b) Romantic love is especially regarded as a

matter of the heart. This means that emotions tend to control the situation, often making people intellectually blind to some of the attributes of the object of their attraction.

3. With all my heart I love.... (Total commitment) a) Our hearts are thrilled by the things we love, whether that be our favorite ice cream flavor, car model, vacation spot, or sports team. (absorbing, rationalizing, something we get stuck on) b) Our choices of what we like do not have to be rational or even be made consciously. Our subconscious minds are quite capable of synthesizing choices for us based on unrelated factors and allowing our conscious minds to rationalize why they should be our favorites. We find it hard to back down even when our actions were clearly inappropriate.
4. My heart isn't in it. When we fail, we often resort to the "sour grapes" defense. a) While sometimes our hearts drive us to new heights and cause us to follow trails of high adventure and daring accomplishments, this is not always the case. Sometimes we simply cannot rise to the occasion. We only go through the motions. b) While such lethargy might be caused by mental illness, it is often just a case of our emotional tank running dry. This can happen in our secular life, but it can also happen in our spiritual life. It can be a matter of concern. We become spent and no longer care □ depression.
5. Heartsick. (sick of life, desperate) a) Matters can get worse. We can develop an aching in our hearts that paralyzes our ability to handle daily life situations and may lead to an emotional breakdown. b) When our hearts become deeply troubled, we become especially gullible to things which promise a quick and definitive cure. This can be dangerous spiritually as we become willing to accept any solution.

B. The Bible and the heart

God wants His children to live in joy.

1. The happy heart. a) It is good for Christians to be happy of heart in the simple things of their daily lives. God desires his children to have such happiness. b) King Solomon wrote, "Go ahead, eat your food with joy, and drink your wine with a happy heart, for God is already pleased with what you do." Ecclesiastes 9:7 After all, we have been declared righteous.
2. The proud heart. a) God, however, does not want our hearts to become proud. He has given us everything and every ability that we have, so we have no right to be proud of ourselves or of our achievements. We should be abundantly thankful. b) The Virgin Mary sang, "He [God] has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their hearts." Luke 1:51 Pride desires to steal God's glory.
3. The troubled heart. (Weighed down. Exasperated.) a) When things do not go well in our lives, our hearts are tempted to become troubled and our minds to worry because we do not fully place our trust in the LORD. In particular, we can begin to doubt that we can rely on God for our salvation.

b) Jesus said, "Do not let your heart be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me." John 14:1
[There is reason for hope.](#)

4. The doubting heart. a) But things can become still worse; our hearts can fear that we have sinned so badly that God can never forgive us. At such times we must remember that God the Father has declared us to be righteous in his sight. [We must remember that God trumps the doubts of our hearts.](#) b) "If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything." 1 John 3:20 [We must turn to the Scriptures.](#)
5. The evil heart. [We cannot look to our hearts because they are thoroughly evil.](#) a) This revelation of God through the Apostle John is critical to us because, based on our own sinful nature, our hearts do nothing but set us up to commit sins in our thoughts, in our words, and in our actions. We must look to God to justify us because our hearts are prone to the evil of which Satan wants to convict us. [We must look to the Scriptures.](#) b) Jesus said, "To be sure, out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual sins, thefts, false testimonies, and blasphemies." Matthew 15:19 c) The LORD said, "The heart is more deceitful than anything. It is beyond cure. Who can understand it?" Jeremiah 17:9

V. Mysticism

A. The Great Lie

Q1. What is the devil's first rule? [A: Neutralize Jesus as the agent of salvation by removing His Word.](#)

[The devil knows the plan of salvation extremely well, and he wants to derail it.](#)

1. The devil's first rule [is to neutralize Jesus.](#) a) Satan knows that if people repent and rely completely on Jesus Christ to give them the forgiveness for their sins and the righteousness to stand before God, then they will go to heaven, and he will have lost them. Therefore, the devil must direct their faith away from Jesus. b) Since simply telling people that he does not want them to believe in Jesus is likely to have a low success rate, the devil needs to use "The Lie," often carefully concealed, that somehow Jesus is not enough for salvation and that they must add to the revelation of Jesus given in the Scriptures. [Satan likes to lie, to be sneaky, by claiming that Jesus is not enough. This is the lie of which we must beware.](#) c) Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, told the Sanhedrin, "There is salvation in no one else [besides Jesus], for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved" Acts 4:12. Satan does not want people to believe this statement.
2. How "The Lie" works. a) As Luther said, "Where God builds a church, the devil builds a temple next door." The devil is an expert at creating counterfeit Christianities. These are churches where Jesus is preached, but in such a way as to cause people to believe that they must feel a certain way or need to do something to contribute to their salvation. [This is the "Jesus and ..." strategy. "Choice" has become the devil's tool to confuse people.](#) b) "The Lie" tries to get Christians to

“feel” rather than to rely completely on the Word of God. This is incredibly easy for Satan to do because people want to have the freedom to choose how much to rely on Jesus and how much to rely on themselves. c) It is always about “feelings” because feeling good makes people believe all is well, and they are in God’s favor. [Feelings can deceive us.](#)

Q2. What was Emo Dan looking for? [A: A sign that he was in God’s favor.](#)

3. Letting the sunshine in. a) To feel good, people need symbols of that feeling, [means to capture “the feeling”](#). Those who love a sports team feel good when they are wearing the garb of that team. In the same way, people want something that they can believe shows they are on God’s team. [Fairy tale: Once there was a duckling so afraid he would drown that his mother could not get him into the water. So she took him to a wise old duck, who told the duckling that he understood his fear, and gave him a pole with a hook on it, which he called a “sky hook.” He told the duckling the sky hook would keep him safe. Sure enough, with the pole under his wing the duckling could swim and feel perfectly safe. Then one day while swimming he dropped the sky hook and it sank, but he kept swimming. The sky hook was an unnecessary prop.](#) b) They look for favorable signs that have nothing to do with Christianity, such as the sun shining on their faces, the wind at their backs, their religious discipline clearing obstacles from their path, or their general feeling of goodness. [Associating feelings with God’s grace creates a risk; it forces you to always seek the feeling.](#)

Q3. What is Mysticism? [A: The lie that you can find God by searching your heart.](#)

4. “Feel good” religion [is the theology of glory](#). a) The desire for that good feeling about one’s religion often starts with pride. Belonging to the right church or a successful church has to mean one is on the road to heaven. [Both the LCMS and the WELS have suffered from the “I’m right” problem.](#) b) But things could always be better. There could be better programs, a better liturgy, a better facility, or some other mechanical improvement. This can become an obsession. [\(We can make it better!\)](#) c) Then there is self-improvement. Certainly, God wants his people to be more faithful by personally growing in their Christian life. There are always new things to try. d) Finally, there needs to be a path to a higher spirituality that one can find to feel even more certain that God is really pleased with one’s life and one’s commitment. [The obsession of becoming a better Christian leads us away from the Scriptures and from Jesus.](#)

B. The path from God

Q4. Why is Mysticism the road to nowhere? [A: The heart is fickle and always looking for something new to satisfy it.](#)

1. The road to nowhere. [To go to God, one must have a “map” to get there; the right road and the right direction on it.](#) a) When one is going somewhere, the somewhere actually needs to exist, and one needs to know where the somewhere is. One needs some sort of map to get there. The map can be composed of drawings, of words, or of mental images, but it must reliably lead from here to there. b) The mystic pursuit of God has no such map because such a map can only come from God Himself. [Mysticism is looking for the “map” within us.](#) Jesus made that plain when He said,

“I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father, except through me.” John 14:6 The map of mystics comes from their feelings. c) Without such a map, a person must choose his or her own direction, and that direction will be wrong, no matter how right it feels at the time. God has not promised to sanctify what our emotions tell us. d) Furthermore, emotions don’t last; they change. The chemistry of the body undermines highs. There is an old Amish saying that “kissin’ don’t last, cookin’ do.” The stronger the feeling that a person develops about something, the harder it is to sustain. It is part of the reason that drug addicts need to take bigger and bigger doses or to switch drugs to keep getting the highs they crave. e) And then there is rebound. Bad choices lead to blaming a scapegoat. When one can no longer deny to oneself that one’s idol has failed to deliver, then strong love turns to strong hate. One has been deceived, and one needs a scapegoat other than oneself upon whom to place the blame.

Q5. Why does Mysticism discount the Bible? A: The Bible never has new insights. It is always the same message.

2. The worship of the emotions. a) You may be angry, even enraged, when something does not live up to what it promised when it talked sweetly to you to get you to rely on it. But once you become reliant on something, you are hooked. You must find another something to replace the thing that caused such disappointment. Emotion-driven faith requires emotional highs. If one thing fails, try another, i.e., emotional divorce. b) In fact, some people become emotional floozies. God often called his Old Testament people floozies. They feel a high, but they know it will not last forever. They need to hop to the next source of emotional excitement before the current flame can no longer keep them as high as they had hoped. Eventually the repeated highs and sinking feelings wear on them and lead them to despair.

Q6. To what does Mysticism invariably lead? A: Mysticism always leads to despair because there is no pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

3. Breaking alone. Mysticism is folly even when it is sincere. a) It is not that those seeking God through their emotions are insincere. They are just foolish. They want a relationship that is meaningful but one they can control. It is addiction and lying. It has to feel good, but they need to be able to tell themselves that they are not addicted to what they feel if they find it is not right. Too often they are lying to themselves. b) But if they are right, the devil still has not lost them. He has another lie ready for them that sounds even more plausible than the last. There is a pattern of gullibility. They are more experienced, they think, and they are. They are more experienced at being duped. They love the romance, but they find that they cannot live with the husband (e.g., Zsa Zsa Gabor, Liz Taylor). c) Eventually it all comes crashing down. Gullibility leads to despair. The despair becomes hip deep and rising. Years of pretending still lead to the grave with no certainty of what is on the other side. How does one feel when one dies? Are there signposts that you have been on the right road? If not, how can one retrace one’s steps and still pick another road? As the body grows cold, the way of mysticism leaves one holding the devil’s hand.

VI. The haven for the heart

Q7. What did Luther call Mysticism? Why? A: Enthusiasm – Enthusiasts, such as the pope and

radical reformers, were led by their feelings, groping for God, rather than by God's Word.

A. The Bible is a book.

1. Books don't change. ("How precious is the book divine by inspiration given.") a) When one pulls an old book off the shelf in a library, it says the same thing it did on the day that it was placed on that shelf. Moreover, after God wrote His Book, He never issued a second edition. b) Emotions are like the grass in the field. Isaiah wrote, "Grass withers, flowers fade, but the Word of our God endures forever." Isaiah 40:8

Q8. Why are our feelings an unreliable guide to spiritual truth? A: They are rooted in a heart that has a natural hatred and distrust of God.

2. Reading the Book. Studying the Bible is essential because the devil easily deceives us. a) The critical factor in reading the Bible is to read verses in their context, not to pick and choose those statements which appeal to our emotions. God's Word is truth, but the devil's picking and choosing from it is not. He is always trying to move the furniture. Everything in the Bible is valuable, but it must be used as it was intended. b) The Bible is the real thing and the complete thing. St. Paul wrote, "All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, and for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, well equipped for every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16,17

B. The heavenly message

1. The biblical message is certain. We will not need another message tomorrow. "Reliable boredom" is good. a) The message of God does not waffle or leave a person hanging. b) "As surely as God is faithful, our message to you is not 'Yes' and 'No.' For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us (by me, Silas, and Timothy), was not 'Yes' and 'No,' but in him the 'Yes' stands firm. In fact, as many promises as God has made, they have always been 'Yes' in him." 2 Corinthians 1:18–20. When a lady asked a British explorer a century ago about his adventures, he replied, "Madam, adventures are the result of poor planning."
2. The God behind the message is reliable. He is fully capable of doing what He says. a) The God of the Bible promises a lot to His followers, both in this world and in eternity. Moreover, He is fully capable of delivering everything that He has promised. b) The LORD said sarcastically, "Is my arm really too short to redeem? Do I not have enough power to rescue?" Isaiah 50:2
3. It is the only message that matters. ("Change and decay in all around I see") a) Everything we see around us is defective. Things wear out, ideas come but do not fulfill their promise, friends die, and things we clung to fervently must be abandoned. Only the message of the LORD in His Word remains unchanged and is still what it promises. b) Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." Matthew 24:35 Feeling high or feeling low, we know we are saved. "O Thou who changest not, abide with me."

3. Discipline for the Soul

Lesson 2 discussed the heart – feeling good about a relationship with God (“It feels right!”).

Lesson 3 discusses the hands – building a “merit position” against God.

Q1. What is the inherent problem with even good rules? A: They cause us to rely on ourselves and can never be fully kept.

VII. The nature of man

A. Height of perfection God made man the jewel of His creation.

1. Planned from eternity. God did not need our help when he issued His decree of creation. a) The LORD said to Job, “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you understand anything about it. Who determined its dimensions? I am sure you know. Who stretched out the surveying line over it?” Job 38:4,5 b) Even before God created the first human, He knew how He would create mankind and how He would deal with it. God’s omniscience in action. Jesus said, “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’” Matthew 25:34
2. Created in time. Implementation of the decree. a) “God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the sky, and over the livestock, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that crawls on the earth.’ God created the man in his own image. In the image of God he created him. Male and female he created them.” Genesis 1:26,27 b) God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. As expected, God did everything right. There was evening and there was morning—the sixth day.” Genesis 1:31 At this point, man had it all.

B. The abyss of sin

1. The fall. In the fall the hand led the way. a) The fall of Adam and Eve changed their hearts. They could no longer please God or even each other. There was no way back, like when one jumps down but has no way to climb back up or like Humpty Dumpty. b) “The eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked. They sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for their waists.” Genesis 3:7 Naked □ no place to hide.
2. The corruption. Sin is a corrosive activity. It is like a leaky container of strong acid. a) The fall into sin caused mankind to become totally corrupt (depraved) in every way, and that corruption spilled over into the rest of God’s creation. b) It systematically destroys everything. “In the sight of God the earth was morally corrupt, and the earth was filled with violence. God looked at the earth and saw that it was corrupt, for all flesh was corrupt in all their ways on the earth.” Genesis 6:11,12

3. Original sin. It is like a genetic defect which people get without asking for it. a) Because of Adam's sin, all his descendants effectively have a "sin" gene. b) So then, just as sin entered the world through one man and death through sin, so also death spread to all people because all sinned." Romans 5:12

C. The thinking process

1. Our conscious mind. a) We are aware of ourselves. Self-awareness is a human characteristic. We reason. We learn. We make decisions. Due to all of this, we assume our conscious mind (what psychologists call our "System II") controls all our actions. We think of ourselves as our conscious mind. b) Unfortunately, this is far from true. Our conscious mind thinks serially. It is therefore slow, and it tires easily. It must sleep, and then it is out of the loop. Although it can train and override our subconscious, it takes continual vigilance and energy to do so. The conscious mind is in a battle for control with the subconscious mind, which is faster and more organized.
2. Our subconscious mind. a) Our subconscious (called "System I") controls our automatic actions such as breathing and heartbeat. It reacts to threats and is highly scripted so that it can react quickly. b) It evaluates information in parallel. This means it can make fast decisions before the conscious can think through a matter. It even activates the muscles to put its solutions into effect. This is great if a baseball is flying at you, but it can also be a problem. Gives automatic responses to various stimuli.
3. Our long-term memory. a) Long-term memory also relies on scripts. The subconscious likes to be prepared. It builds scripts preparing for events. It builds them in anticipation of their being needed, placing fillers into the blanks. When the real situation occurs, available details replace the fillers, but missing data will leave the fillers in place as if they were real. b) Every time our long-term memory is accessed, it is refined to be more favorable to us. The modified memories seem quite real, and we would swear to them. The subconscious thereby changes the "truth" as we remember it. It is necessary to write things down to prevent this change.

VIII. The internal struggle – Controlling the wild subconscious

A. Discipline

1. Controlling the subconscious. The subconscious mind is necessary, but it can be a bad player. a) The subconscious mind is selfishly biased—physically, mentally, and emotionally. It develops scripts that are in its best interest and learns to please the conscious mind as well. It is bigoted and always seeks its own advantage according to its rules. The devil uses this mechanism for his purposes. b) It is like an overeager executive secretary. Because our subconscious puts its decisions into action several tenths of a second before our conscious mind can countermand its action, the conscious is often forced to rationalize what we have already done if it was not alert enough to stop it. The conscious must be ever vigilant, but it tires easily and does not want to admit failure.

2. The role of personal resolve. a) Because the subconscious is always being drawn to what it regards as the most favorable path, it is self-centered, a glutton, a bully, lazy, and inconsiderate. This is a person we would not like to put up with, except that it is us. *We must continually look into the mirror of God's Law to maintain control.* b) The conscious may be determined to master the unruly behavior of the subconscious through personal resolve, that is, by stomping the subconscious down when it misbehaves. Such an intent requires a tremendous amount of emotional energy because of the speed difference in the decision processes, and few people can do it. *Even when the conscious tries hard, it is at a disadvantage. The conscious tries to win by training.* c) Our conscious can try to train our subconscious to behave better. We all do this to try to get our children to act civilized, at least in public. Training can improve the subconscious' behavior, but it is hard work and needs periodic reinforcement. There is a limit to the amount of training the subconscious can absorb. *It is like trying to train a devious child.* d) The conscious can try to bribe the subconscious, which can work in the short-term. Unfortunately, bribery often involves food or appealing to pride, which will create the long-term problem of how to sustain obedience without continual bribes. *This is like feeding the devil.*

3. The role of culture. *The conscious needs help and tries for strength in numbers.* a) Our conscious individually finds controlling our subconscious an impossible task, but our conscious mind can be aided if other people also want to generate a similar change in the behavior of their subconscious. We call this collective action a "culture." b) The rewards and punishments that are a part of a culture can strengthen the conscious and train the subconscious to create better behavior, but the subconscious will still try to cheat if it has an opportunity. *The subconscious values its image because it wants praise.* Peer pressure can be useful, but only to a point. *It should be clear why multi-culturalism will fail. If the subconscious is given a number of sets of rules, it will choose whichever rule will give it the advantage in each situation, thereby getting the gain and avoiding the pain.*

B. Moralism = Seeking God with our behavior (hands).

Q2. What is the essence of Morality? A: A set of rules for good behavior to which people can be held accountable.

Q3. When is Morality good and useful? A: When it helps people to be productive and peacefully live with each other.

1. The better person. *Anarchy is dangerous.* a) Some degree of discipline is necessary to live among others, so discipline has its place in the lives of people, organizations, and societies. b) Discipline becomes moralism when an inherent merit is attached to the discipline, that is, assigning a moral right to doing an action and a moral wrong to not doing it. *(Profitability ≠ required)* c) Satan is eager to tempt us to believe that we are better people if we are more disciplined and can do things others can't or refrain from doing things others can't resist. *(Better than thou attitude)* d) The more things we can do better than others, the higher the opinion we have of ourselves. We give ourselves higher "moralism marks." It is here that moralism shows its ugly side because it can be used to lord it over others or employ guilt motivation. *Developing a morality ladder where we can "be kind to people who are inferior to you." (from a Tom Lehrer song)*

Q6. What is the *opinio legis*? A: The belief that we become meritorious before God and/or man by keeping rules.

2. The better church. **Building the “right” kind of congregations.** a) Better people want to belong to better churches. Certainly, God should bless morally better people more than others, giving them more money to contribute to make their church and functions more beautiful. This kind of thinking can limit mission work. b) Moreover, while a congregation is necessarily made up of sinners, isn't it better for a church if they are “discreet” sinners rather than gross sinners? That way the rest of the people are not made uncomfortable. **We could live in a better church community.**
3. The better society. **The mission to improve the world.** a) Certainly, a community is a better place to live if the people in it are highly moral. **(Social Gospel)** If they are law-abiding and if the most law-abiding are continually being honored, then everyone will want to be law-abiding. b) One can enact laws against morally offensive behavior, such as swearing in public or political incorrectness to attain such ends. **(Social Law)** One can demonstrate one's own moralism by exposing others doing suspicious things and shun people who insist on acting outside the moralistic norm. Wouldn't this produce a godlier society? **Forcing people to be moral by the law helps society but does not save souls.**

C. The unclimbable hill

1. Spiritual improvement. a) It is possible to improve one's body and mind through training and education, but the ability to improve is limited by the time available and by how much can be retained through continual training. **Training definitely has only a limited effect.** Moreover, the gains will eventually be lost due to aging and non-use. **The effort versus the gain must be considered.** b) Spiritual improvement suffers from the same problem **and is far more dangerous because it can become based on the wrong motivation (e.g., the monk).** Even the best program can only accomplish so much. One will be left far from perfect.

Q7. What does the phrase “Moralism gives us a false mirror” mean? A: The rules of Morality are our rules, not the rules by which God will judge us.

2. But are you a better person? a) To be a better person one must be able to not only reach one's moral goals, but one must maintain them and keep improving. One cannot negotiate with God on how good one needs to be. God does not grade on a curve; His standard is perfection. b) Jesus said, “So then, be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Matthew 5:48 **There can be a drive to improve, but God's standard of perfect cannot be met.**

Q4. Why does Morality often introduce a “sliding scale”? A: When people find that they cannot keep all the rules, they make exceptions to feel good about themselves.

3. Rationalizing. a) Working to become the best person possible is bound to generate pride or frustration—pride if we think we are getting close and frustration if we are not doing as well as

we hoped. *There are always excuses for failure.* We can always switch approaches, but that just postpones frustration. b) With either pride or frustration, we will eventually begin to rationalize our performance. We will tell ourselves we are closer to perfection than we are or that our failures are not our fault, *e.g., sports teams that have bad seasons, companies with bad quarters, etc.*

Q5. What is the “placebo defect”? A: Guilt caused by our failure to meet our own standards.

4. Bribing the subconscious. a) When our conscious minds realize we are falling short, the devil has a ready answer—bribe the subconscious. *“Better living through chemistry.”* The subconscious is hardwired into the body’s neural network. Neurons get pleasure from chemicals, either by the taking of drugs or through exhilarating experiences. Drugs, legal or illegal, can make one feel more successful, but it is only an illusion. *Lying, cheating, redefining “success.”* The same is true of our experiences. b) The easiest bribe of the subconscious is to decrease the requirements of our regimen without admitting it. Our conscious tells our subconscious that we will keep at it, just not as hard for a little while. *We lose track of what our real goals were.*
5. Deceiving others. a) Our standing as superior moralists will suffer if people discover that we have cut back or fallen into some sort of misdeed. The appearance of dedication to the moral program must be maintained at all costs. *Failure will make us look smaller in the eyes of others.* b) In the end, people are forced to accept the immorality of being a hypocrite to their moral pretense or they must abandon it altogether and despair of becoming perfect before God and their fellowmen. *“The agony of defeat.” We cannot deceive God!*

IX. The way of salvation

Q8. Why does Moralism lead Christians down the wrong path? A: It focuses our attention on us rather than on Jesus. It emphasizes self-justification.

A. Complete reliance on Christ

1. He has paid the price. *We do not have to work for grace.* a) By taking on Himself and expiating the guilt of all our sins, Jesus has gained for us a complete remission of our sins. We no longer need to fear God’s judgment. b) “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9
2. He has won the victory. a) Neither do we have to fear death because Jesus arose from the grave gloried; therefore, we who believe in Him will also rise from death with glorious bodies. *We are on His team, His “Geselle.” It doesn’t matter how well we played, even if we were 3rd string!* b) “Death, where is your sting? Grave, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!” 1 Corinthians 15:55–57
3. Only He can give us what we need. *We must rely on Him who did not weary or take it easy.* a) We need perfect righteousness to stand before God. Only Jesus could earn that righteousness

through a perfect life and bestow it on us. b) “This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all and over all who believe.” Romans 3:22

B. Staying on the path [with God’s help](#)

1. Being in the Word. [Only “spiritually” good works can improve our faith because the Holy Spirit works only through the means of grace.](#) a) We cannot stay in the faith without the work of the Holy Spirit, and He works through the Word. We need to continually read and study the Scriptures so that the Holy Spirit will have the building materials He needs to work on our hearts. b) “Your words are a lamp for my feet and a light for my path.” Psalm 119:105
2. Forgiving ourselves. [Don’t give Satan an opportunity to leverage you.](#) a) Because we hate to fail, we find it hard to put failures behind us, but try to rationalize them, thereby giving Satan a way to attack our faithfulness to God. Repentance and forgiveness eliminate the need for us to perfect ourselves. [Don’t let people “guilt” you.](#) b) “If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.” 1 John 3:20
3. Rising again after a fall. [Keep your eyes on the prize, not on your pride.](#) a) The work of the church must continue, and we must do it. If we fail in our personal lives or in the work of the church, then we must repent and rejoin the fray. We must rise, not out of pride, but because we have been called to serve. b) “We must go through many troubles on our way to the kingdom of God.” Acts 14:22 [We have a call to serve, not to praise ourselves or despair.](#)

4. Reasoning Oneself to Hell

[Lesson 2 – emotion \(feeling\), guided by the “spirit”, Pentecostals, see the Bible class on “The Four False God’s of Christmas”](#)

[Lesson 3 – hands, “good people”, doing “things” to improve themselves. Good works that are our own ideas. “God will be pleased with me if...” Roman Catholics](#)

[Lesson 4 – mind, finding God by thinking about how He must be. Mainline Protestantism.](#)

[We all reason, so this lesson is a “biggy.”](#)

X. The types of reasoning

A. Deductive reasoning

1. What is it? a) A domain is completely defined which contains objects, operators, and rules. b) The positive integers constitute a domain, and addition is an operator in that domain. [We use this with the Scriptures in a system called “hermeneutics.” Scripture establishes the domain.](#)
2. How does it work? a) A domain is “closed” to the actions of the operators. If two positive integers are added, a positive integer will be the result. [Truth is unchanging.](#) b) Operators always work the same way, no matter who uses them. c) One cannot establish new truths with deductive reasoning

because everything that can be concluded by applying the operators is inherent from the definitions of the domain. *Goes from the general to the specific. Used in mathematics and formal logic.*

B. Inductive reasoning

1. What is it? a) A domain is selected and circumscribed by a definition, but all the objects, operators, and rules within the domain are not inherent in the definition. *The domain is underdefined compared to deductive reasoning, i.e., it contains unknowns.* b) The island of Hawaii can be selected as a domain, but not everything is known about it. Investigation and experimentation are therefore necessary to draw conclusions.
2. How does it work? a) A domain is not “closed” to the actions of the operators because things can be learned about Hawaii that were not imagined when it was selected as a domain. *Domain is too big to measure and count everything.* b) Operators, such as doing core-sampling of rock layers, may be invented after the domain is selected and yet can be applied within the domain. *New ways of investigation (operators) may be discovered.* c) These operators allow new truths to be learned, such as perhaps a large cavern existing under part of the island. *Therefore, truth is unstable.* “Truth” can even change if new evidence is found. d) Limiting assumptions, e.g., where one collects one’s evidence on the island, frequently need to be made to prevent being overwhelmed with information, and these may affect the “truth” one discovers. *Goes from the specific to the general. Used in science.*

C. Philosophical reasoning

1. What is it? a) A proposition is created by *a priori* assertion, that is, by claiming something is a self-evident truth, e.g., “All men are created equal.” b) A domain is then defined in which it is “reasonable” for the proposition to be true. *The domain sits on a slippery slope.*
2. How does it work? a) Often an effort is made to match the domain to some aspect of the real world. *(Always iffy)* b) Based on the proposition and the domain in which the proposition is claimed to be true, additional propositions may be developed that appear to logically follow. *(Like building on a soggy bottom.)*

XII. The use of reason

Q1. What is Rationalism? *A: Systematic thought and investigation. One can find God in one’s mind.*

A. Rationalism

1. The superior mind. a) Rationalism is based on the belief that everything in nature has a reasonable explanation. *Nature is not always rational, which led to a long-standing argument between Albert Einstein and Niels Bohr.* If one merely gathers the evidence, one can determine how the physical world works. b) It further claims that the human mind is capable of understanding the evidence

gathered and analyzing it to develop the correct explanation of why things happen as they do. Few people are actually trained well enough to do this.

2. The problem with the evidence. a) Before gathering evidence, one needs to define what constitutes evidence, the rules governing its collection, and the population for which it will be collected. One cannot change methods or practices in the middle of a study. This is the logic fallacy of “moving the goal posts.” b) The evidence must be representative of the population being studied, i.e., no cherry-picking. c) There must be methods to validate the quality of the technique by which evidence is gathered and the thoroughness of this collection. d) The quality of the evidence is dependent on the capability of the measuring devices and methods. Newer instruments and methods may render old evidence obsolete. Evidence can “age” and become unhelpful when better methods are developed.
3. The problem with the mind. a) The human mind has an inherent belief that nature is deterministic (e.g., B must follow A), and we can predict the future based on our knowledge of the past and the present. This is not always true. b) The conscious mind is prone to try to explain away inconsistencies in evidence because it believes consistency must exist. The conscious mind tries to rationalize to gain consistency. c) The conscious mind judges more favorably evidence that confirms its propositions than that which undermines them (called “confirmation bias”). This can even affect how and where evidence is gathered. d) The human mind can feel confined (i.e., trapped) by the evidence and seek a way to avoid being forced to a different conclusion than it hopes for. Prejudice and bigotry cause people to *a priori* reject unfavorable evidence.

Q2. What was the Enlightenment? A: The period of history when Rationalism became the dominant form of thought.

Q3. What is Modernism? Explain the role of education. A: The belief that new economic, social, and political conditions would logically determine the future. Education indoctrinated everyone with this view.

Q4. How did Romanticism and Postmodernism challenge Modernism? A: The aesthetic could not be denied, and social constructs are subject to change to meet the human condition.

Q5. What is Pragmatism? A: The willingness to adopt whatever approach works.

B. Pragmatism

1. The compromise with mysticism. a) The conclusions of Rationalism can be harsh (problems with no solutions like being 10 games out with 3 games left to play), and many people want to find a way to soften them, i.e., fudge the data. The way is called Pragmatism. b) Pragmatism is willing to accept emotional factors in making its decisions to get the greatest possible buy-in, including non-physical forces at work in nature e.g., “Mother Nature,” “the universe,” or “the force”. It is dangerous to interpret the Bible using pragmatism.

Q6. Why is Pragmatism dangerous to the Christian faith? A: It causes people to think that they can reengineer God to fit their needs and purposes.

2. The compromise with reality. a) In the real world, the answers of laboratory science do not always work. [Complexity trumps rationalism](#). The real equations are too complex to solve in closed form, and all the factors may not be known. This has led to chaos theory ([sometimes called the “butterfly effect”](#)) to provide explanations of natural phenomena. b) Though a particular policy ignores scientific evidence, pragmatism often supports it as the appropriate solution to a problem for political reasons, even when it cannot work. ([This is the “curse” of democracy](#).)
3. The compromise with morality. a) Pragmatism is often forced to overstate its case (i.e., tell a “white lie”) concerning some issue to get the support it needs. [This is sometimes called “the virtue of winning” or “the end justifies the means.”](#) b) When a reasonable solution directly contradicts one of God’s commandments, people often resort to claiming that “God will understand.” [This is a big lie of the devil because one cannot finesse God.](#) c) People will even pretend that something is “scientifically valid” when that claim is completely ludicrous, if they can rationalize that the claim is in their best interest. [This is true across the political spectrum.](#)

C. Seeking God by reason ([see chapter 2 of Clearing a Path for the Gospel](#))

1. Proofs for the existence of God. [These proofs are based on the assumption that we need a God, therefore one must exist. Since we are rational,, we can prove His existence.](#) a) There has been a long history of seeking ways to prove the existence of a god through logical arguments. Pragmatically, the existence of a god gives people a sense of security in the face of the enormous power and uncertainty of the forces of nature. b) The cosmological argument for the existence of a god has several forms, but basically all state that because the universe exists, it must have had a beginning, and that beginning must have been the result of the actions of a divine being. c) The teleological argument claims that the universe is too complex to have evolved, so there must be a creator god who designed and fashioned it. d) The moralistic argument declares that man is driven by an internal force to behave morally but that the animals are not. Morality therefore is not an inherent property of life and must have been instilled by a divine being. e) These and other “proofs” for God fail because they attempt to use evidence from the physical universe to establish a truth that is supernatural, that is, not subject to the laws of nature. However, because the existence of a supernatural realm is an assumption that cannot be proven from evidence in the natural realm, the efforts to prove the existence of God are not based on first principles, only on assumptions.
2. Denial of the existence of God. [If God existed, He would certainly do something about ...! The underlying assumption is that humans are special; therefore, God would act.](#) a) Denying the existence of a divine being is usually based on some sort of claim concerning the large amount of injustice in the world which, it is asserted, a rational ([by human standards](#)) God would certainly use his power to prevent. b) On the other hand, it is sometimes argued that the universe is too big and complex to have been created and managed by any being, even one with supernatural powers. c) The arguments against the existence of a divine being fail for the same reason the arguments supporting the existence of a god fail. One cannot constrain something in an assumed supernatural environment by evidence from the physical world.

Q7. How does Rationalism attack the Scriptures? A: It tries to make biblical teachings rational by changing the form to match the logical substance, e.g., by demythologizing.

3. Defining a rational God. a) The conscious mind desires a god with the same degree of reasonability that it possesses. It believes that human rationality is the height of wisdom, and therefore “God” must have the same type of rationality as we do. *This is an effort to remake God in our image.* b) Moreover, God must think like we think. He/she/it must be logical when we are logical, pragmatic when we are pragmatic, and understanding when we are driven by emotions. *We want God to follow our lead.* c) Finally, because people can learn and become better at doing things, God must be able to learn and become better at doing things. He therefore cannot be confined to what people wrote about him long ago in a book. *Are we supposed to free God? These people think that God needs a path to improvement.*

Q8. What is “Gospel reductionism”? A: Removing the Law from God’s Word, i.e., preaching only God’s love without the use of God’s Law as a guide to the new obedience.

XII. The way of faith

A. The LORD is not “reasonable.”

1. The thoughts of God are beyond us. a) It is arrogant for humanity to assume that people can think on the same level as God. *We think we understand so much more than we actually do.* Imagine a typical five-year-old child giving advice to a grandmaster in chess about which move to make next. Even if the child knew the types of moves possible, it does not mean she could grasp the gestalt of the chess position in her mind. b) David wrote, “Many are the wonders you have done, O LORD my God. No one can explain to you all your thoughts for us. If I try to speak and tell about them, they are too many to count.” Psalm 40:5
2. We cannot corner God by reason. a) Generals often try to turn the flank of their enemy and force it to retreat. We are not able to outflank God on some issue by outthinking Him and gaining a strategic advantage. His thoughts are too numerous to bound, *that is, confined within a boundary by our reason.* b) David wrote, “Your thoughts to me are so precious, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I would count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand.” Psalm 139:17,18 *God’s thoughts are limitless.*
3. He does not ask our advice. a) The LORD is never in doubt as to what to do. There is no way for us to anticipate Him and force Him to stop and ask if we have a better idea. Our rational arguments are without effect on Him. *God is always way ahead of us.* b) “For the LORD of Armies has made plans, and who can stop him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?” Isaiah 14:27

B. The Word they still must let remain.

1. The Scriptures have an enduring purpose which we cannot reason away. **We are lost. God is handing out maps.** a) God has already given us the clear path to form a relationship with Him, i.e., **a map.** b) “Whatever was written in the past was written for our instruction, so that, through patient endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures, we would have hope.” Romans 15:4 **People will believe anything, provided its not in the Bible.**
2. Human efforts cannot find God. **We are rats in a maze with no exit.** a) A person’s own path, whether it follows fair means or foul, will not lead him or her to a blessed end. All those who seek God in another way than through His Word are “wicked,” “sinners,” and “mockers.” **Only believers are saved. Arguments against this will fail.** b) A psalmist wrote, “How blessed is the man who does not walk in the advice of the wicked, who does not stand on the path with sinners, and who does not sit in a meeting with mockers. But his delight is in the teaching of the LORD, and on his teaching he meditates day and night.” Psalm 1:1–2
3. The pit of ignorance. **We cannot sense the goal or see it.** a) Without the Holy Spirit everyone is blind. It is therefore foolish to believe that some thinker can reason his way to spiritual truth. b) Paul wrote, “The god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from clearly seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is God’s image.” 2 Corinthians 4:4 c) Jesus said, “If the blind are guiding the blind, both will fall into a pit.” Matthew 15:14

C. A very unequal contest

1. Can man judge God’s works? a) It is common in a debate for one party to try to undermine an opponent’s credibility to gain an advantage in the eyes of the audience. It is folly to try that tactic on the almighty God. **There is no “hold” that can constrain the Almighty God.** b) “Woe to anyone who argues against the potter who formed him. He is just a potsherd among the broken pieces of pottery on the ground. Does clay say to its potter, “What are you making? Your work looks like something made by a potter with no hands?”” Isaiah 45:9
2. Who will dare to teach the LORD? **Stop! Stop! Stop! Don’t even try to figure out how we might grapple with God.** a) How wise does a person have to be in his own eyes to be a complete fool? What will the clever thinker discover that the LORD has somehow overlooked? Can man really reason his way to God? b) “Where is the wise man? Where is the expert in the Jewish law? Where is the probing thinker of the present age? Has God not shown that the wisdom of this world is foolish? Indeed, since the world through its wisdom did not know God, God in his wisdom decided to save those who believe, through the foolishness of the preached message.” 1 Corinthians 1:20,21
2. Recognizing the all-powerful and unboundable LORD. **What we need from the LORD, He has already given to us.** a) Without our reasoning the LORD gives us the comfort and security we seek. b) The LORD said, “Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted on the earth.” Psalm 46:10

5. Get it Now in Abundance

Lesson 2 – emotion, the heart, led by the “spirit”: Pentecostals, Arminians, feel close to God.

Lesson 3 – good works, hands: Roman Catholics, Arminians, sanctification in this life.

Lesson 4 – restructuring God, mind: Mainline Protestantism, freeing and fixing God.

Lesson 5 – God will bless the faithful on earth: Calvinism, prosperity here and now.

Everyone will need to examine their hearts in this lesson. Have we bought this too?

XIII. Prosperity

A. The American dream looking at the history of the dream.

1. Survival. *The immigrant philosophy, focus on the present.* a) Historically, the average person did not live long. Diseases, accidents, and hostile acts caused the deaths of many people in childhood and early adulthood. b) People therefore regarded the struggle to survive as the most important thing in their lives. Being prepared to face eternity was a close second because death could occur with little notice.
2. Opportunity. *“A better life for our children”, focus on the future.* a) As the political environments improved and their health care became better, people’s primary concern changed to seeking ways to make their lives more comfortable. b) People began to move to find places where there were more opportunities for making more money and for giving their children a chance at a better life than they had.
3. Success. *Focus on the good life.* a) As time passed, better was not good enough. The goal became not just a little more each year, but major steps up the economic ladder. *Where are we today? Our inventories of “stuff” runneth over. What will we do with it all? We hoard so we will never have to borrow anything and keep things when we no longer need them.* b) Showy success became necessary for people to face their friends and relatives, with everyone interested in where so-and-so was going to college and with what corporation she had obtained a position. c) People no longer rejoiced when someone succeeded; they envied those who had and plotted how they could do even better. Success has become competitive and all-consuming. It has become a god, and worshipping it has become the national religion.

B. The charm of success is deceptive and fades.

Q1. What lesson can modern humans learn from Ozymandias? *A: Fame and prosperity do not last.*

1. Statues in the desert. *The short life of glory.* a) If one travels the Middle East, one can find many artifacts from centuries and millennia ago. These were made by people to improve their lives and show their social status. b) No matter how beautiful and useful the objects of the past were, few of them have any value today. *The things and their quality do not last.* The top-of-the-line telephone from 100 years ago is nothing but junk today. Statues of heroes of the past are now torn

down as standards of heroism change. How many times have we replaced some pieces of furniture?

Q2. What does the phrase “you only go around once” mean? A: Since you only have one opportunity to live, you should make the most of it.

2. Success in life. The effort to climb the twisting stairway upward. a) In every profession and craft, people strive to do the best work possible. They seek to establish new standards of quality that will set the mark for many years. Often their accomplishments are discarded before they get their next promotion or retire. Success in life can be necessary, but it can also become a god. What are we really trying to accomplish in our lives? b) Athletes who establish world records often see their records eclipsed within a few years. Newer, faster, stronger, or better prepared competitors are making the “old-timers” (which we all become) a distant memory. “Change and decay in all around I see.” c) The houses of the rich and famous, often built at tremendous expense, seldom serve their original owners more than a few years before they are sold, remodeled, or repurposed, as their grandness loses its appeal and as their features become common. The dreams of yesterday are the refuse of today.
3. The decay of success. a) Even the standards of success fade. The ability to perform complex tasks with great speed and accuracy becomes of little value as automation takes over many tasks. Our pride in our skills as well as in our possessions fades away. b) Isaiah wrote, “All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like a wildflower in the countryside. Grass withers, flowers fade, when the breath of the LORD blows on them.... Grass withers, flowers fade, but the Word of our God endures forever.” Isaiah 40:6–8

C. Mammon

Q3. What does *Sitz im Leben* mean? A: The obsessions of the era in which we live that control us.

1. Creature comforts. a) Our desires start with the simple things—food, water, shelter, clothing, and safety. Simple goes to ever fancier. b) These things have morphed into an outlandish variety of food ingredients, beverages of numerous sorts, central heating and air conditioning with comfort zones, seasonal wardrobes overflowing our closets, and in-depth home security systems.
2. Status. a) It is not enough to have things to satisfy our needs, but we crave things with a higher level of quality and fanciness so that we can boast of our possessions. (OUR house, OUR car, OUR TV, OUR grill, OUR team) b) Moreover, our status items must not only be immediately recognizable as superior, but they must have extensive features that can be described *ad nauseum* to those we seek to impress.
3. The more the merrier. a) Need leads to comfort, comfort leads to greed. Ah, luxury! If having one home is nice, having a summer home in addition is even better, and having two extra homes in different parts of the country can come to feel like a necessity. b) As time passes, having only one or a small set of anything seems to imply that one is impoverished, unable to enjoy the diversity

that life has to offer. Looking at “sufficient” as “not enough.” It is time to think through your possessions.

3. The cost of success. a) Time is a zero-sum entity. Even for the wealthy person, there are the same number of minutes in an hour and hours in a day. The time spent at the office needs to come from the time available for God, family, recreation, and sleep. *If only we could be better organized! But at what cost?* The stronger the push for success in one area, the more compromises one must make with one’s responsibilities in other areas. One can fool one’s fellowmen, but one cannot fool the clock. b) Jesus said, “But God said to him, ‘You fool, this night your soul will be demanded from you. Now who will get what you have prepared?’ That is how it will be for anyone who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.” Luke 12:20,21 *Full barns, but*

XIV. Prosperity in the church (the theology of glory)

A. Dancing with the devil

Q4. Why is Prosperity dancing with the devil? *A: Prosperity is an idol created by Satan.*

1. The message of “America”. a) The idea has been cultivated that the American free enterprise system can work for the church. By use of advertising and shaping its message, a church can become much more appealing to its intended market. b) To be successful, a church’s leaders must learn the secrets of the system well. They must anticipate trends and set the pace. *How to achieve “American success” in the church? “By cleverness of ours can much be done?”*
2. Abusing God’s promises. a) While the LORD promises us that His message will be successful, he does not promise that it will be successful through our cleverness or by our standards. We need to preach His message, not prance about using our own methodologies. *The Holy Spirit only works through the Word, not church programs.* b) While it may appear that following the crowd will lead to “prosperity,” one must ask whether it will be the church or Satan that prospers. *Satan wants to own the church.*

B. The onset of heresy

1. Acclimating to the surrounding culture. *We must preach in the language and in the culture of the hearers.* a) When we enter a mission field, we need to become familiar with the culture in which we are working. We need to state God’s message in a way that will be understood, but we must make certain what is being understood is really the gospel message. b) Paul wrote, “Accordingly, if I do not understand the language, I will be a foreigner to the speaker, and he will be a foreigner to me.” 1 Corinthians 14:11
2. Accommodating the surrounding culture. *We must not make adiaphora matters of faith.* a) There are things in every culture that are not possible for the church to change. Perhaps it is fashion in clothing or the scheduling of sports events. The church needs to tailor its approach to avoid needless confrontations while proclaiming the whole message. b) Paul wrote, “Preach the word.

Be ready whether it is convenient or not. Correct, rebuke, and encourage, with all patience and teaching.” 2 Timothy 4:2

3. Assimilating the surrounding culture. a) Heresy develops when the characteristics of the culture begin shaping the activities of the church and gradually shaping the message that it is proclaiming. The yeast of culture can over time change both the tone and content of the church’s message. *The critical tipping point is using the methods of the culture to be like the culture rather than just in the culture.* b) Paul wrote, “Do not continue to conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.” Romans 12:2

C. Church growth

Q5. What is the church growth movement? A: The effort to grow the church through means external to the Word of God.

1. Becoming attractive. a) People come to where they think the action is. If a church seems to have the “right stuff” to make it happen, then people will come to get what they can. *Church growth emphasizes glitter.* b) Form is more important than substance in being attractive. In fact, substance can be a deterrent to attractiveness. Substance requires deeper thinking than many people want. *Church growth attracts “pew potatoes.”*
2. Barometers of congregational health. a) People have come to measure the health of a church by the number and age of the people who attend and the energy one feels from the worship service. *The real health is the % of members attending worship and the % of members having daily devotions.* b) A sharp-looking and well-maintained facility and an entertaining preacher also indicate that a church has the community presence to bring in money. *Church growth emphasizes the “look of success.”*

Q6. Why do “new measures” in the church always fail? A: They do not rely on the means of grace.

3. The need for “new measures”. a) The new measures in religion invariably mean a message with less formal doctrine and with more upbeat characteristics that enhance the positive feelings of the worshippers. *It produces happy worship, like in the book *How to Become a Bishop Without Being Religious*.* b) Paul wrote, “For there will come a time when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, because they have itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in line with their own desires. They will also turn their ears away from the truth and will turn aside to myths.” 2 Timothy 4:3,4

D. Praise, liturgy & worship

1. The game of words. a) A major goal in society is to win the war of spin. People seek to monopolize all the positive words and hang all the negative words on their opponents. The “words” do not even need substance, they merely need to sound appealing or unpleasant. *(Consider the political phrases “inflation reduction,” “pro-choice,” “anti-abortion.”)* b) Doesn’t

“praise” sound upbeat? Doesn’t “liturgy” sound boring? Doesn’t “worship” mean anything someone wants it to mean and that feels good?

2. Music without meaning. a) Medieval Catholics wrote music to gain merit by making worship intricate. b) Luther and old Lutherans wrote music to teach people biblical doctrines. c) Mainline Protestants wrote music to make worship pious and dignified. d) Arminians have written hymns to glorify God’s work and decision theology. e) Praise musicians write music to sound religious and create energy in worship. [Sample hymns of each type might be mentioned.](#)
4. The changing now. a) Unfortunately, things that energize people can quickly become “so last year.” This is good for the music writers and some of the more famous performers. They make more money from changing worship styles. It is also good for those who treat religious music like drugs, always seeking what will give them a new high. [Punk Rock John was always seeking something new.](#) b) For the people in the pew, however, whether the change is in praise or in liturgy, it can become so much jumping through hoops. Eventually people grow tired and drop out, either by stopping attending, by switching churches, or by becoming pew potatoes who hope to earn their salvation through endurance. c) Jesus said, “So if they tell you, ‘Look! There he is in the wilderness,’ do not go out there, or ‘Look! Here he is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it.” Matthew 24:26 [Don’t look for a new type of prosperity.](#)

XV. Overcoming prosperity

A. The law of prosperity

1. Avoid failure. [Failure is a stigma.](#) a) In America, failures are either quickly buried or put on government subsidy so they never go away. Therefore, the choices are success or shame. b) For the local congregations the pressure has become more and more to grow or be denied resources by their national church bodies. Declining churches are headed for closure.
2. Acquire things. a) Success is seen as contagious. If one can appear successful, one will be successful. Appearing successful means acquiring things and building projects. People want to be at places that have more and better. [Bigger, better, show off facilities, furnishings, electronics.](#) b) Success is also a mindset. In a successful church organization people are upbeat and talk about a rosy future. One can sense it in the atmosphere, through the way people exhibit a can-do attitude. [Go on forever, pyramid thinking.](#)
3. Think and talk externals. a) The stranglehold that prosperity has on the church is clear from the way people talk about their congregation in terms of what it has and does and not about what it teaches. b) Casual discussions of doctrine are rare even in confessional churches. [The lack of doctrine in our side-discussions is troubling.](#)

Q8. What are the theology of glory and the theology of the cross? [A: The theology of glory is that Christians will receive good things in this world. The theology of the cross is that Christians will receive suffering and hardship in this world, but the blessings in heaven.](#)

B. God's measures (the theology of the cross) – Deutschlander's book

1. The sureness of forgiveness. a) Words like "total depravity," "sin," "Satan," "death," and "hell" must be inculcated so that the meaning of Christ's work can be fully grasped. Sin runs deep, and we must be specific. ("Bandage my people too lightly") b) The LORD said, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they will be as white as snow." Isaiah 1:18

Q7. What is the true worship of God? A: Hearing God's Word and responding to it with a changed heart.

2. The simplicity of faith. a) The secret of salvation is that it is simple. It is not about prosperity but humble acceptance by our hearts of what Jesus has done for us. There is no "better" way. We can always learn more, but we cannot learn what is better than the Word. b) Paul and Silas said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household." Acts 16:31
3. The long road home. a) The path to our heavenly home is not smooth, it is not easy to travel, and it is not short. It is, however, the road that we must follow, counting on the LORD to sustain us by His Holy Spirit. We must study and pray and speak, and we must also trust that our God is always with us and will aid us in all our needs. Things will not be easy, so we must not seek prosperity but to persevere. b) Paul said, "We must go through many troubles on our way to the kingdom of God." Acts 14:22

6. Repeat, Iterate, Do Over

Lesson 2 – emotion – Mysticism

Lesson 3 – rules – Moralism

Lesson 4 – remaking God – Rationalism

Lesson 5 – prosperity – Materialism

Lesson 6 – finding God in doing church – Ecclesiology

XVI. The church

Q1. What was Tiger's real problem? A: He was looking for a human answer to solve a spiritual problem.

A. God's institution

1. God's people. (Closer encounters with the real God.) a) God took a man (namely Jacob) named "heel-grabber" and changed his name to "one who wrestles with God" (namely Israel). As members of the "New Testament Israel," we too should wrestle with God through the study of His Word. b) Then he said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have fought with God and with men, and you have won." Genesis 32:28
2. Built on "the Rock". God's church on God's foundation. a) Jesus said, "On this rock (Peter's confession of Christ) I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not overpower it." Matthew

16:18 b) Paul wrote, “You have been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the Cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord.” Ephesians 2:20,21

3. The church’s commission. **God’s commission.** a) Jesus said, “Therefore go and gather disciples from all nations by baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and by teaching them to keep all the instructions I have given you.” Matthew 28:19,20 b) **God’s power.** Jesus said, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:8 **It is all about God.**
4. Propagated by the Holy Spirit. **God’s work.** a) Paul wrote, “No one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.” 1 Corinthians 12:3 b) Paul wrote, “He [God] saved us—not by righteous works that we did ourselves, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and the renewal by the Holy Spirit.” Titus 3:5

Q2. What is churchology? **A:** The methods and practice of running the church.

B. Man’s role

1. Preach, proclaim, tell about. a) **God’s reasoning about how it is to be done.** Paul wrote, “God in his wisdom decided to save those who believe, through the foolishness of the preached message.” 1 Corinthians 1:21 b) Paul wrote, “Preach the word. Be ready whether it is convenient or not. Correct, rebuke, and encourage, with all patience and teaching.” 2 Timothy 4:2 **It does not say, “Do church.”**
2. Work together with other faithful Christians. a) The church is one body, and it must function as one body. Members must meet together and work together to carry out the Great Commission. **In the church we work together to carry out God’s mission.** b) “Let us not neglect meeting together, as some have the habit of doing.” Hebrews 10:25 c) Paul wrote, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.” 1 Corinthians 3:6
3. Don’t change the message. a) Moses wrote, “Do not add to the word that I am commanding you, and do not subtract from it, so that you keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I am commanding you.” Deuteronomy 4:2 **We cannot tailor God’s Word by adding, subtracting, or reinterpreting.** b) “Son of man, I have appointed you as a watchman for the house of Israel. When you hear a word from my mouth, you must give them a warning from me.” Ezekiel 3:17 **We must warn of the consequences of sin.**
4. Don’t confuse the message and the methods. a) When Martin Luther reformed the liturgy of the church, he made the minimum changes that he could so as not to confuse the people. He removed false teachings and added a sermon and hymns which told of the works of God. b) The Lutheran Reformation concentrated on making clear the teachings of the Scriptures rather than refining the rituals of man. **Concentrate on the message.**

XVII. If we can just....

Q3. What is the problem with IfWeCanJust? A: All human efforts will eventually fail.

A. False views of the church

1. The church is aged. **The worldly view of the church.** In a fast-paced world, the church is slow to change. a) The church has been around as long as today's populace can remember, so like anything that has existed since before their era, many people think of the church as part of the establishment and therefore not good. b) The church is old in its ways, like a restaurant that has not been updated since the 1950's. In a new-model-every-year society, the church seems out-of-step. **It does not meet the people's perceived needs.**
2. The church is sick. **It does not work the way people think it should. It cannot run with the pack.** a) The church cannot react quickly and effectively to changes in the world. It is frozen in its liturgical practices and in its organizational processes and politics. b) The church's message does not resonate. It seems repetitive and dull because its leaders do not even use non-controversial techniques that are well-known to generate interest. **It does not have a "grabbing" message.**
3. The church is dying. **People are abandoning the church.** a) Churches across the Christian spectrum are losing members. Even when there is some growth, it is usually only short term. b) The church is splintering into so many small components that it has lost its effectiveness in American national life and politics. **It has lost its cohesiveness.** It lacks emotional presence and doesn't seem to care. **The human view of the church is that it has become groups of people running all over without purpose.**

B. Human efforts to save the church – IT'S A Mess – Save the Church

Q4. Why have the many efforts to restore the church failed so badly? A: They rely on sinful human beings doing the "perfect" rational thing in every situation.

1. The need to remodel. **If it is broken, fix it! But how?** a) The American reaction to something that appears to be old and deteriorating is to tear it down or do a major remodeling of it. America is a can-do society, and there is a belief that, with enough human ingenuity and effort, anything can be fixed. b) **Remodelers do not understand the church.** As is also common in America, there is no consensus about how to fix the church. There are a lot of dreamers who feel that they have the solution, but the vast majority do not understand the nature of the church. They think of it as a human institution (**We are trained to fall into this trap.**) rather than a divine institution with a message that is fundamentally irrational.

Q5. What is the history of the idolatry of structure? A: Popes, archbishops, bishops, and a ton of committees trying to build their image of God's kingdom.

2. The idol of order. a) Despite the apparent disorderliness of American society, people have the gut feeling that those things which do work well are the result of good organization. Successful businesses and successful products do not rely on haphazardness; they are well-planned and managed by people who know how to make things happen. (“Can do” people, bright ideas, removal of discordant elements) b) The Christian church has been an organization since the second century. The church has developed various forms of hierarchy to make sure everything is done right. However, a hierarchy invariably becomes more interested in its own perpetuation and growth than the message of the church. Hierarchies have a long history of using coercion rather than biblical means to build their organizations. (The reorganizers change the purpose of the organization.) c) In addition to suggested organizational improvements, there are the new programs that are introduced to appeal to the interest of some target group. Even though the group members may have little interest in religion, it is assumed that drawing them in to do their thing and adding a little religion to their activities will make them desire to become new church members or, if old members, keep from dropping out. (Bring them in by any means and hope that they stay for some religion. Impose a “religious overhead” to participate.

Q6. How does the idolatry of worship trouble us today? A: There are so many contributors trying to get their own new ideas into the church that form becomes more important than substance.

3. The idol of worship. a) The Christian church has long believed that the procedures and props used in worship were essential to pleasing God and therefore necessary for getting his blessing on the church and its members. Worship was the way to bind people to the church. (The church was necessary for salvation.) The Middle Ages developed numerous liturgies that were refined over the years and mindlessly repeated by people who often did not even understand the language in which they were spoken. b) New efforts at liturgy, music, and instrumentation can replace old efforts, but they are only “modern” when they are introduced. Within a few years they are “old” and therefore unlikely to be what is needed to reach the latest “hot” target audience. Continual changes irritate the long-time members who see little gain from the changes. (“Itching ears” always need to be “hip.”)
4. The idol of leadership. a) Charismatic leaders may fill churches, but they don’t remove many people from the road to hell. They replace the message by building a personality cult. When a person becomes the center of attention instead of the message, then the message that is being proclaimed will not really matter. People will follow the leader but only so long as he or she leads to where they want to go. They will hear only what they want to hear. b) The ability to enthrall people will make a leader popular to other organizations as well, which can start a bidding war and the frequent need to seek replacements when one’s leader heads for greener pastures. (Competing for the “right” leader becomes like hiring the “right” football coach.) Whole churches and movements have been built on individuals and declined when they were no longer present.

Q7. Why is the search for the “perfect” church dangerous? A: It seeks a human image rather than the communion of saints that Jesus founded.

5. The “perfect” church. a) Everyone has their own image of the perfect church. It may be big or small, be fancy or plain, be liturgical or freewheeling. (The urge to build “our” church to make it

perfect, a la Martha Steward.) When the perfection of the church becomes the goal of the members, there will be constant squabbling and factions periodically leaving the church for another church that seems more perfect. b) Most people see the “perfect church” in terms of externals. It is what they see. Moreover, if what they see does not change noticeably, they can fail to realize when the doctrine of the church is slowly and systematically eroded. *When a church is running well, what it teaches will slide.* c) In the same way that a man marries his image of a woman and not the actual woman, people join their image of a church rather than the church itself. *We need to face the real world.* Many marriages fail when people realize that their image of their spouse is nothing like their real spouse. Because of this, churches must be very honest in communicating what they are if they do not want their members “divorcing” them based on irreconcilable differences. *We need to teach our children about this so they will be realistic in choosing their spouses.*

XVIII. Exorcising human effort

A. *The belief that we (The)* need to do something

1. Forming committees. a) People always love to form committees. If they don’t have any idea of what to do, they hope the “wisdom of the crowd” will devise a brilliant solution. If they have their own solution to a problem, they want the committee to adopt their ideas to give them more leverage to push them forward. *(Serving on committees beats serious work and lifts the burden of responsibility off the individuals.)* b) Most committees are a waste of time and of donuts because their members do not have a sufficient understanding of the problem or sufficient ambition to make things happen. *(They are often ill-formed and ill-led.)* The larger the committee, the less likely it will produce anything of lasting value.
2. Big, new, special. a) The old, dull, and ordinary does not have much appeal. *(There is a need for something new NOW! It should be spectacular!)* It seems to most people that they have been put on earth to accomplish something, and they expect it to be some-thing with pizzazz. Therefore, they are willing to weight the evidence in favor of some new idea more heavily than the evidence against it. While the slow, steady action of water eventually wears away a rock, most people would rather dynamite it. b) When churches rely heavily on advertising to attract attention in a community, they need to be able to proclaim some event or program as “new” or “special” to get people’s attention. *(People want to build excitement, use the right words to get followers.)* If something is “bigger” and “better” than ever, or if there is the opportunity to be part of a “new beginning,” then “joiners” are falsely expected to show up in large numbers. *In the early era of computing, all the administrators at UW-Hospital thought the hospital needed a computer, because other departments, not theirs, could benefit from one.*
3. Christian fellowship without Christ. a) “It’s a great opportunity for Christian fellowship” is a phrase that most often is applied to events which have nothing to do with “Christianity” except for being held with other church members or in a church facility. The religious component is often nominal. *“Mission outreach” and “fellowship” do not necessarily mean anything about the Great Commission.* b) The concepts of “Christian” and “pleasant” become even more confused

when members are encouraged to invite non-members. The hope that non-members will find gathering with church members so pleasant that they will return to the church again does not mean that they have picked up any of the church's message. This is an effort to convert people without preaching the Law.

Q8. How has the "church" become the enemy of the "Church"? A: The human institution, the visible church, so occupies people's time, effort, and resources that it crowds out personal spiritual growth in many people.

B. Legitimate church-building activities

1. Personal and family Bible study ("the family altar"). To be Lutheran is to be addicted to God's Word. a) Because only the Holy Spirit can cause faith to grow, continual contact with the Word of God is critical, which means it must be a formal and informal part of the Christian home. Other good deeds cannot compare to studying God's Word. b) Moses said, "These words that I am commanding you today are to be on your heart. Teach them diligently to your children, and speak about them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as a sign on your wrists, and they will serve as symbols on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates." Deuteronomy 6:6–9 Daily family devotions reduces the divorce rate by as much as 99%. Devotional materials can be found at NPH, CPH, Kremer, or by using the In Terra Pax website (www.interrapaxlp.com).
2. Content of preaching and teaching. a) Worship and Bible classes are not something to be done *pro forma*. "Going to church" doesn't solve problems automatically. These must pull things new and old out of the Scriptures and be presented so that they can be used by the hearers to place the tiles of biblical teachings onto the mural on their wall of faith. b) Jesus said, "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth." John 4:24 The pastor must preach about the sins of the congregation and call for personal repentance. Preaching "about the law" and "about the gospel" is not enough.
3. Living our faith. a) Following the Golden Rule needs to be automatic for a Christian and, when possible, the Platinum Rule (Do unto others as they would like done unto them.). As often as he or she can, a Christian should try to leave a person happier than when he or she encountered the person. Our behavior is Christ's best or worst advertisement. Making people's day better opens the door for future evangelism. b) Jesus said, "In the same way let your light shine in people's presence, so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Matthew 5:16
4. Talking about our faith, rather than our church. a) Give God the glory. Deflect praise from yourself. Speak of the LORD giving us a good day, our children, etc. Accept compliments but acknowledge that God has given us the ability to act. b) Speak of your faith rather than of your church. It's not your church, but your God. If unchurched people are troubled or searching for spiritual stability, encourage them to meet with your pastor. Express confidence that the LORD has things under His control, rather than griping.

7. Unruly Rules

Let's compare two approaches to nature. The explorer has incredible freedom to pick his activities. He has little certainty that something will not harm him. The colonist (homesteader) is willing to give up some of this freedom for more security. What applies in the physical world, also applies in the financial and spiritual worlds.

Q5. What is Tradition? A: Doing things as they have been done in the past.

XIX. Tradition

Tradition gives the feeling of security. Thinking back to childhood, there were no “undetected gorillas” in our yards, parks, or neighborhoods. The possibility of such “undetected gorillas” was the reason for a gorilla detector developed by Muppet Laboratories, that was an utter flop as a gorilla completely destroyed it while Bunsen Honeydew described its properties.

Q6. How are traditions bad? How are they good? A: 1) Bad when they involve sinful things. 2) When they strengthen our resolve to do good.

A. Secular traditions

1. National. a) National holidays are a unifying tool for a country. Most people are given time off from work, and getting to celebrate is expected of young and old. (be together) b) People of a country have rituals which everyone learns to follow. For example, we stand when the national anthem is played, and veterans salute the flag. (be one in spirit) c) The LORD said, “You must rise in the presence of gray hair and show respect in the presence of an elder, so that you fear your God.” Leviticus 19:32 (respect those who sired or bore us)
2. Family. a) Traditions build family unity and expectations. These can involve vacation spots and events that happen at a specific time each year or where children go to college. (It is possible to give many specific examples.) b) Joint activities, such as participating in specific sports or eating at specific restaurants, create bonds between family members and help establish their calendars. (once again, examples can be useful.)
3. Personal. a) Personal traditions allow a person to establish his or her identity within a general framework of acceptable activities. Examples are an exercise routine and knitting. b) The type of food a person eats and how it should be properly prepared are examples of personal traditions that might continue throughout life. (I would die for)

B. Religious traditions

1. Worship. a) People learn to worship God in a particular language, and even if it is not their native tongue, it may still hold particular meaning for them. How the words soothe and move the heart. b) A liturgy that endures generation after generation binds the generations together and gives

them confidence that God does not change. [The common service](#). c) Traditional hymns allow people to feel that they are singing in unity with their fellow Christians of past ages. [“Of the Father’s love begotten” written in the 4th century](#). d) “Praise the LORD, all you nations. Worship him, every race of people.” Psalm 117:1 [We seek things that unite us with other Christians, such as creeds](#).

2. Family. a) It is said the family that “prays together, stays together.” Research has shown that a tradition of daily family devotions helps to preserve marriages and keep children in the faith. [It involves commitment to God from the top](#). b) Singing Lutheran hymns together on trips and during certain times of day teaches children the doctrines of the Scriptures and a love of music, [not just partying](#). c) Religious holidays are an excellent time for a family to have traditions that not only bind it together, but also to remind the family members of their Savior. d) Solomon said, “Dedicate a child to the way he should go, and even when he becomes old, he will not turn away from it.” Proverbs 22:6 [Children imitate their parents and do what their parents consider important](#).
3. Personal. a) Because the Holy Spirit works solely through the means of grace, a tradition of reading the Bible daily provides the materials for the Holy Spirit to work with and sets a strong example for one’s children. [God calls on us to meditate on His Word](#). b) Personal religious study needs to extend beyond the Bible, however, to take advantage of the work of faithful scholars of the past to understand the message of the Scriptures more thoroughly and to prevent misreading what was first written in another language. [We must stand on the shoulders of our spiritual fathers](#). c) Paul wrote, “That is why there is nothing aimless about the way I run. There is no pummeling of the air in the way I box. Instead I hit my body hard and make it my slave so that, after preaching to others, I myself will not be rejected.” 1 Corinthians 9:26–27 [We are all endangered by the devil’s snares](#). d) We can do nothing by ourselves. Therefore, taking our problems to our heavenly Father in prayer shows our understanding of what our relationship to God is. We praise Him for His Salvation, pray to Him for our needs, and thank Him for His blessings. [Putting God first](#).

C. Traditions as traps

1. Bad habits. a) People suffer from undesirable personal traditions [e.g., smoking](#)) that they find hard to break, such as eating too much, spending too much, or being irascible. [Both the body and the will become trapped](#). b) Secular organizations also can have bad traditions, such as false advertising, making risky investments, or failing to follow safe manufacturing practices. [Companies have a culture of “group think.”](#)
2. “My dear, we have always done it this way.” a) People sometimes make their lives more difficult by clinging to what once were good practices, but which now only hinder them. [They stop maturing at a certain age](#). b) Companies also continue to use practices and make business decisions in ways that do not let them compete with other organizations and serve their customers. [Many big companies go broke](#).

Q1. What is the biblical definition of sin? A: Disobeying God's laws. In Hebrew, missing the mark.

XX. Freedom from

Q2. Why are we addicted to sin? A: Our nature is evil □ original sin still corrupts us. It takes over our subconscious mind.

NOTE WELL: Apparently good Christians regularly fall into the "freedom trap," often in their teenage years or during career growth.

A. The worship of self – "I only take what I like from God's Word."

1. Foot-loose and fancy-free. a) It is characteristic of the human mind to not want to be restricted in any manner. We all desire the physically and economically impossible. Consider the trans-gender folk. With-out curbs to its actions, it will fantasize many scenarios that contain hidden dangers amid their supposed pleasures. "Buck fever" is not always about deer. b) Given effectively unlimited wealth, people are prone to waste that wealth without gaining long-term tangible benefits. Lottery winners and overpaid sports and entertainment figures have very poor track records of using their riches productively. ("Having food and clothing, let us be content.")

Q3. How do people turn "God" and "Jesus" into idols? A: They keep the names, but they change the nature of the beings they refer to.

2. Idol addiction. a) Freedom is like pain medicine—a little makes life more bearable, but a lot of it causes addiction and the inability to function without increasing doses. "Limit choices but preserve options" b) Like an indecisive squirrel in the middle of the road, freedom often paralyzes people. It gives them too many ill-structured choices. Unable to judge the long-term consequences of particular actions, they opt for the greatest short-term enjoyment. For fear of losing opportunities, time is not taken to evaluate the long-term effects. Think before you act. Cost vs. benefit.

Q4. Why is "Freedom" regarded as the right to believe what one pleases? A: Beliefs that are forced on one are like shackles.

3. Denial of who we are. a) With freedom comes the difficulty of establishing personal identity. It is hard to be unique because one needs to make decisions on everything and hold one's ground on all sides. Cultures exist to reduce the stress of choice. The more choices the harder it is to choose. b) To have maximum freedom, it is necessary not to become an integral part of any group. This forces people to flee whenever their culture tries to confine them, which leaves them without reference points and permanent kindred spirits. People become drifters, always looking, never satisfied.

B. Dealing with the world outside

Q8. Why is rebellion against tradition addictive? A: Once one thinks one can beat the system, one is drawn to find more ways to do it.

1. Creature comforts. a) For most people freedom means a certain (often growing) amount of material possessions. Having your own “whatever” means that you never have to borrow it from someone else or do without. **Controlling one’s own destiny.** This hedging-against-whatever fills storage units. b) Possessions are a barrier against the world interfering with our freedom. So long as we have our own whatever, we can do things without having to get the consent of others. **Independence is never having to ask for anything.** It also bestows the apparent ability to ignore God.
2. Wage slavery. a) To be able to obtain creature comforts requires wealth. **One needs the resources to do whatever.** If we do not inherit it, then we must exchange some portion of our time and effort with someone who will provide us with the money we need. We must toil for them to get what we want. b) It is, of course, natural for us to want to give as little as possible for what we get. This leads to ongoing labor-management strife and job-hopping. **WHY PAY MORE?**
3. Chicanery. a) Because people desire big gains with little effort, they become gullible to the tactics of those who are willing to ignore the law and honest dealings to part people from their money. **There is a penalty for greed.** This ranges from false advertising to outright swindling. b) Consumers also engage in shady practices from predatory shopping to shoplifting, soothing their consciences with the argument that big business can afford the loss. **People fail to consider the cost to others.**
4. Coercion. a) This can involve some form of blackmail (**coercing others**), where someone is threatened with harm in one area if a concession is not given in another. b) The use of the public treasury by politicians to offer cash subsidies to voters for their votes (**i.e., bribing them**) is a practice which undermines good government on behalf of special interest groups.
5. Medication. a) When the pressures of the world begin to hem in their freedom, some people seek another realm of freedom by taking drugs illegally or against medical advice. **Medication only fools part of the brain. Its complex interactions with the body are hard to predict.** These chemical agents give people the false feeling of a freedom they do not have. b) Like all efforts to enhance freedom, drugs are addictive (**take away freedom**) because the better freedom that they appear to offer disappears when their use ceases. They are therefore a trap, not a gateway to an improved life.
6. Mayhem. a) Some people’s idea of freedom is so befuddled that they feel their freedom is continually under attack. **Persecution complex.** They become highly excitable and willing to riot to force others to grant them what they want. b) Most people can tolerate only a limited amount of freedom. When freedom in the world exceeds what they can tolerate, they feel they must curtail it by destroying people they believe responsible for the situation. **In a society where there is a lot of pressure, many people are riding the ragged edge.**

C. Valley of the Shadow – Get freedom, then seek God!

1. Seeking God. a) People seek God where they would like to find Him. **God must be somewhere in this ill-structured world!** That may be in pleasure or in hard work or in the inner sanctum of the mind. They may be driven to alter their behavior or what they claim to believe to further their search. b) People seek God when they realize they need Him. Until then, they are willing to avoid Him and keep Him out of their lives because He would limit their “freedom.” **People want a God who respects their freedom, but who anticipates their needs.**
2. Finding emptiness. a) We cannot find God in the myriad choices that we attempt to accumulate to enhance our freedom. **The “freedom bin” contains no god.** We can start trying one thing after another in the hope that God will appear and bless us because He knows we need Him, but God is not just a bell cord tug away. b) When someone’s life has been emptied of God, amazingly there is no God for them to find. One cannot create the certainty of God’s presence like one can create a feeling of exhilaration, and if one can, it is not really the one true God. **God is beyond conjuring; He cannot be faked out.**
3. Despair. a) When one cannot find something that one desperately needs, one panics. It may be a shoe or a car key, but if one needs it to get to a critical meeting, it seems like a matter of life or death. **Despair is learning it ultimately depends on fallible us.** b) When it is God who is needed and cannot be found, it may truly be a matter of eternal life and death. When a person does not know enough about Jesus to recognize what He has done for our salvation, then there can be no comfort that matters available for that person. **We need a continuing belief in the real God; there is no recipe book for an “instant God.”**

Q7. Why can’t people find the true God in Freedom? A: Freedom is merely the selfish human nature without restraint. God is a Being of order.

XXI. Freedom to

True freedom does not lead us away from the traditions of God.

A. Serve the LORD

1. Recognize His almighty power. a) God said, “I am the LORD; that is my name. I will not give my glory to another, nor my praise to idols.” Isaiah 42:8 **We cannot make ourselves bigger by downsizing God.** b) A Psalmist write, “By the word of the LORD the heavens were made. By the breath of his mouth he made the whole army of stars.” Psalm 33:6 **We look at ourselves in the mirror, but then....**
2. Do His will. a) Jesus said, “So then, be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Matthew 5:48 **We need a change of heart, not just an agreement in principle as in the song “With a little bit of luck.”** b) James wrote, “Be people who do what the word says, not people who only hear it.” James 1:22

3. Rejoice in His salvation. a) David wrote, “Bless the LORD, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits—who pardons all your guilt, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with mercy and compassion, who satisfies your life with goodness, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle.” Psalm 103:2–5 b) Paul wrote, “Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!” 1 Corinthians 15:57 [Look at what all the Gospel gives! What a tradition!](#)

B. Serve our fellowmen

1. Bear the burdens of others. a) Paul wrote, “So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who belong to the household of faith.” Galatians 6:10 b) Peter wrote, “Serve one another, each according to the gift he has received, as good stewards of the many forms of God’s grace.” 1 Peter 4:10 [We are not here to please ourselves, but to serve others.](#)
2. Don’t judge others by our standards. a) Jesus said, “Stop judging, so that you will not be judged. For with whatever standard you judge, you will be judged, and with whatever measure you measure, it will be measured to you.” Matthew 7:1,2 [Truth is always relative to a standard.](#) b) Paul wrote, “Who are you to pass judgment on someone else’s servant? It is up to his master to decide whether that servant stands or falls.” Romans 14:4 [Keep your nose out of other people’s business.](#)
3. Proclaim the Gospel. a) Jesus said, “What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim from the housetops.” Matthew 10:27 [We cannot perfect the world, but we can work to rescue people from it.](#) b) Paul wrote, “Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message comes through the word of Christ.” Romans 10:17

8. Self-Justification

[Thus far we have covered six ways which Satan uses to place soul-destroying “rules” into our lives.](#)

XXII. The first commandment

[Q3. What is the “ever-lie”? A: We can justify ourselves.](#)

A. The LORD

1. Who is the LORD? a) The LORD is! He never was or will be. He exists in an “eternal now” that is independent of our notion of time and space. [He is scarily big. We cannot put God into any sort of box.](#) “So God replied to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’” Exodus 3:14 b) He claims to be omnipotent. [We cannot control Him.](#) The LORD said, “Indeed, from the first day, I am he. There is no one who can deliver anyone from my hand. I act, and who can reverse it?” Isaiah 43:13 c) He

demands to be recognized as the Almighty. **He is in our face saying “I.”** God said, “I am the LORD; that is my name. I will not give my glory to another, nor my praise to idols.” Isaiah 42:8

2. What has He done? a) Everything that we can see, hear, taste, feel, or measure was brought into existence by God. **Everything is His.** No one else can say “Mine!” Moses wrote, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” Genesis 1:1 b) He has done everything that is according to His will. **He has done it perfectly.** A psalmist wrote, “In fact, our God is in the heavens. He does everything that pleases him.” Psalm 115:3 c) He claims omniscience. **He sees it all before it happens.** “I am the one who announces the final outcome already in the beginning. I announce ahead of time things that have not yet been done. I am the one who says, ‘My plan will stand, and I will do everything I want to do.’” Isaiah 46:10
3. Why is He to be feared? a) The LORD claims the power over all the living. **He has the power of life or death.** “Now see that I, only I, am he, and there is not a god comparable to me. I put to death and I make alive. I wound and I heal. There is no one who can deliver out of my hand.” Deuteronomy 32:39 b) Isaiah wrote, “For the LORD of Armies has made plans, and who can stop him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?” Isaiah 14:23 **His plans cannot be altered.** c) Jesus said, “Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, fear the one who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” Matthew 10:28 He can send us to hell. **Opposing Him traps us in a hopeless situation.**

B. The will of the LORD

1. How has He expressed His will? a) He created it in human hearts. Moses wrote, “God created the man in his own image. In the image of God he created him. Male and female he created them.” Genesis 1:27 b) He gave it in spoken and written form at Mount Sinai. Nehemiah wrote, “You came down on Mount Sinai and spoke with them from heaven. You gave them upright judgments and true laws, good statutes and commandments.” Nehemiah 9:13
2. What is the nature of His will? a) “The law of the LORD is perfect. It revives the soul. The testimony of the LORD is trustworthy. It gives wisdom to the inexperienced.” Psalm 19:7 **His will is as ideal as a will can be.** b) “The precepts of the LORD are right. They give joy to the heart. The commandment of the LORD is bright. It gives light to the eyes.” Psalm 19:8 **There is no chink in his armor that we can exploit.** c) “The fear of the LORD is pure. It stands forever. The just decrees of the LORD are truth. They are altogether righteous.” Psalm 19:9
3. What does the LORD demand of mankind? **1) Learn perfectly, 2) be perfect, 3) teach perfectly.** a) Concerning God’s Word, Moses wrote, “These words that I am commanding you today are to be on your heart. Teach them diligently to your children.... Deuteronomy 6:6-9 b) Moses further wrote, “Man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.” Deuteronomy 8:3 c) Jesus said, “So then, be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Matthew 5:48

C. How do the rest of the commandments relate to the first?

1. The first table **Focus on God**. a) To obey these three commandments, one must have complete respect for the LORD. Solomon wrote, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” Proverbs 9:10 **First and only master**. b) Jesus wrapped the first three commandments into the sentence, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” Matthew 22:37 **Complete commitment**.
2. The second table. a) David recognized that his sins against his fellowmen were really sins that denied his God. “Against you, you only, have I sinned, and I have done this evil in your eyes. So you are justified when you sentence me. You are blameless when you judge.” Psalm 51:4 **Our sins are all against God**. b) Luther started the explanation of all the commandments after the first with the phrase “We should fear and love God...,” the essence of the first commandment. **God must dominate our thinking**.

Q1. Why does Satan in *Paradise Lost* appear to be heroic by modern standards? A: He refuses to accept defeat.

XXIII. Equality with God – People still desire to “be like God,” to justify their existence and establish their freedom.

A. Gaining a standing before God

Q4. What is “I-theology”? A: Using the word “I” or “me” to indicate that what one is doing for one’s salvation matters before God.

Q6. Why does counterfeit Christianity always teach the worship of self? A: Self is the great alternative to God. It is an easy sell.

1. Showing initiative. a) It is a common practice for people to try to impress their bosses by showing initiative. If someone can invent a new product or improve a process, that person often rises in the eyes of the corporate management. **Get ahead by being clever**. b) It is natural, but false, to think that God behaves the same way. God, however, already knows all the best ways to do things, namely His way, and He does not need our help. In fact, such “help” is merely another form of work righteousness. **God knows, and we need to keep out of His way (see Deutschlander’s *On Giving Advice to God*)**. c) The serpent’s temptation to Eve (Genesis 3:4,5) was to “take the initiative.” **Get something for yourself!!!**
2. Showing commitment. a) Bosses like their employees to show up on time and work diligently at the tasks assigned to them. **Do as told and get rewards**. It does not matter whether the employees like the work or approve of the job procedures in use so long as they do what is expected. b) In the work of the LORD, however, attitude matters more than actions. A person must do the LORD’s work out of a love for the LORD and not for a reward in the form of status for performing what the LORD expects of us. c) Jesus showed that this does not gain merit before God when He said, “So also you, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, ‘We are

unworthy servants. We have only done what we were supposed to do.’ ” Luke 17:10 [We cannot be better than perfect.](#)

3. Overcoming obstacles. a) The person who becomes a “champion” by beating a bunch of patsies is not regarded as much of a hero. To gain status a person must tackle tasks that are difficult or for which there is a significant chance of failure. [Glory comes from accomplishing hard tasks.](#) b) People likewise try to impress God by looking for difficult tasks in His service to accomplish. People even hope to gain extra standing before God by making common tasks more difficult, as the monks in the Middle Ages did. [It is God’s business how hard He makes our tasks. We should not be like the monks who invented their own challenges they hoped God would accept.](#) c) The Pharisees rejoiced in making the service of the LORD as hard as possible [\(for others\)](#). Jesus said, “They tie up heavy loads, burdens that are hard to carry, and place them on people’s shoulders.” Matthew 23:4 [They regarded this as “showing dedication.”](#)

B. Negotiating with God

1. I will do “X” if you will do “Y.” a) The purpose of gaining status before someone is to have the access to propose deals. [People want a seat at the table for running the universe.](#) If people can stand before God on their own merit, then they assume that they can propose doing something for Him to get something for themselves. b) The LORD made clear through Asaph that he does not make deals. “I do not need to take a bull from your barn or goats from your pens, because every animal in the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand mountains.” Psalm 50:9,10 [People try to offer God what He already owns.](#)
2. Substitution for demands. a) Many people feel that God is too demanding in His law in their particular case. [They want to cut a deal for lower hurdles.](#) They therefore offer God a substitute for the obedience that He asks. This is the basis of the indulgence system of the Roman Catholic Church. It is a “pay to sin” system. b) Samuel said to Saul, “To obey is better than sacrifice, and to pay attention is better than the fat of rams.” 1 Samuel 15:22 [We cannot pacify God with our own ideas and actions.](#)
3. Conditional repentance. a) Some people are less direct in challenging God, but they still want something for their “willingness” to amend their sinful lives. They condition their trying harder to be obedient on God making their lives better within a timeframe. [They are willing to do more to get more \(e.g., “I will repent of X if I get....”\).](#) b) This approach is very similar to the seed that fell among the thorns in Jesus’ parable. There was joy in Christ so long as God did not allow trouble to come. When such challenges to faith arise, some people quickly abandon their faith. Matthew 13:18-23 [In other words, “I am with you as long as you give me.” The Pomeranian nobility used to say, “The Kaiser is our absolute lord as long as he tells us to do what we want to do.”](#)
4. Ultimatums. a) Some people are even blunter in their approach to God. They want what they want, and they want it now, [and they threaten God with unbelief if they don’t get it.](#) They claim God knows that they are entitled to it based on what they have done. Therefore, they let God

know if He expects them to believe in Him, then He had better perform. b) God cannot be intimidated. He said, “Woe to anyone who argues against the potter who formed him. He is just a potsherd among the broken pieces of pottery on the ground.” Isaiah 45:9 **God will laugh, and then He will get angry.**

C. Moving beyond God

Q5. What is concupiscence? **A:** The inherent desire associated with our willingness to sin.

1. Denying original sin. **(Cognitive psychology tells us that we can't.)** a) The human heart is prone to adopting the Humanistic view of life, which says that there is nothing inherently in mankind that prevents it from reaching its highest goals. **Man can if man tries!** This is like a modern Tower of Babel, built with ingenuity rather than mud bricks. b) Without original sin, humanity can hope to move beyond actual sins to a world where everyone can reach their goals in complete harmony. **Fantasy because of the way the subconscious mind works.** c) David stated the LORD's position on this when he said, “Certainly, I was guilty **(at birth)** when I was born. I was sinful when my mother conceived me **(at conception)**.” Psalm 51:5
2. A new morality. **(The problem is that the subconscious mind always cheats to gain an advantage.)** a) Some people see God's morality as presented in the Ten Commandments as an inherent trap that forces people back to the LORD seeking reconciliation. They believe that if a Humanistic morality could be established, then human society could flourish independent of the threats of a deity. **Some other rules which people would naturally obey – good luck!** b) The LORD has no tolerance for such human-defined morality. He said, “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil, who substitute darkness for light, and light for darkness, who substitute bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight!” Isaiah 5:20,21 **God is not fooled.**
3. God doesn't really care. **He probably retired.** a) Already philosophers long ago concluded that even if God created the universe at some point in the distant past, He has since lost interest in it, and it is going its own way. Because He has no interest in the physical universe, He certainly has no interest in the souls of the people who live in it. There is therefore no need to fear Him. **These are efforts to reason God away.** b) Others believe that it really doesn't matter. If there is an afterlife, God will treat everyone one the same because He is loving, or at least He will only punish the really bad people. **The “Loving God” fallacy.** c) God certainly does care. Jesus said, “Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground without the knowledge and consent of your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all numbered.” Matthew 10:29,30 **God has everything under control because He does care.**

XXIV. Only God can justify

- A. Righteousnesses that cannot help us.

1. Civil righteousness, i.e., an upright culture. a) God requires it, but it does not save us. Being “good” makes society work. Moses wrote, “You shall not use dishonest measurements of weight or volume. Instead you must use an honest scale, honest weights, an honest dry measure, and an honest liquid measure.” Leviticus 19:35,36 b) Jesus said, “Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be poured into your lap.” Luke 6:38 Tolerance of evil destroys society.
2. Human perfection before God. a) None of us can meet God’s standard of perfection. Isaiah wrote, “All of us have become like something unclean, and all our righteous acts are like a filthy cloth. All of us have withered like a leaf, and our guilt carries us away like the wind.” Isaiah 64:6 Making people behave better requires bribery. b) Paul wrote, “For this reason, no one will be declared righteous in his sight by works of the law.” Romans 3:20
3. God’s own righteousness. a) God is always and completely righteous. But God being righteous does not help us to become righteous. David wrote, “The LORD is righteous in all his ways and merciful toward all that he has made.” Psalm 145:17 b) His righteousness is beyond our comprehension. Moses wrote, “He is a faithful God. He does no wrong. Righteous and upright is he.” Deuteronomy 32:4 (However, knowing a great musician does not make us great musicians.)

B. The righteousness God bestows

Q2. Why are Christians not self-made men and women? A: There is nothing we can do to gain salvation.

1. Earned by Christ. It is a foreign righteousness which has to come from outside us. a) Paul wrote, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Romans 3:23,24 b) “For just as through the disobedience of one man the many became sinners, so also through the obedience of one man the many will become righteous.” Romans 5:19

Q7. Why is it said that we are saved by a “foreign righteousness”? A: Saving righteousness comes completely from outside of us.

Q8. Why is justification said to be “judicial”? A: It is a firm and certain decree by God that cannot change.

2. The great exchange. God gives us His precious “new” for our worthless “old.” a) Paul wrote, “God made him, who did not know sin, to become sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.” 2 Corinthians 5:21 b) “This record stood against us, but he took it away by nailing it to the cross.” Colossians 2:14
3. Justified by God through faith. The cornerstone of the Lutheran Reformation. a) Paul wrote, “For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed by faith, for faith, just as it is written, ‘The righteous will live by faith.’” Romans 1:17 b) “It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can

boast.” Ephesians 2:8,9 Salvation can be found nowhere else; we must guard ourselves against relying on our own efforts.

9. And So

This course is about the church looking into a mirror. The Christian church in America is sick, and its not only other denominations and other synods.

XXV. The scales of divine justice

A. God’s perfect law

1. Without blemish. a) The law of God has no imperfections that require human correction. It does not need editing to make it more suitable for modern society. *God does not seek our ideas.* b) David wrote, “The law of the LORD is perfect. It revives the soul. The testimony of the LORD is trustworthy. It gives wisdom to the inexperienced. The precepts of the LORD are right. They give joy to the heart. The commandment of the LORD is bright. It gives light to the eyes.” Psalm 19:7,8 *He wants no tinkering.*
2. Unchanging. a) In fact, God’s law never changes. *Like God’s laws of the natural world, God’s spiritual laws are immutable.* Why is this surprising? Does the strength of gravity vary on a daily basis, or the sun sometimes rise in the west? If God made His laws for the physical world unchanging, is it surprising He made His moral law unchanging? b) Isaiah wrote, “Grass withers, flowers fade, but the Word of our God endures forever.” Isaiah 40:8
3. Absolute. a) The law of God is as enduring as God Himself. This is because the law is an attribute of God, an essential element of His being. It is part of His image that He implanted into man in Genesis 1. *We cannot edit God or get Him on the “right track.”* b) Jesus said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.” Matthew 24:35

B. Man’s depravity

1. From conception. a) We have been sinful for our whole existence. We do not know how not to be sinful even if we could desire to stop sinning. We can strive to be less bad, but it still earns us only death. *We cannot know how to do things right.* b) David wrote, “Certainly, I was guilty when I was born. I was sinful when my mother conceived me.” Psalm 51:5 c) Paul wrote, “Indeed, I know that good does not live in me, that is, in my sinful flesh. The desire to do good is present with me, but I am not able to carry it out.” Romans 7:18
2. Total. *God has absolute power; we have absolute depravity.* a) The total depravity of man means there is nothing good in man. This implies that even the idea of making any improvement in the nature of man is a delusion of sin. *Sadly, our preachers fear using the phrase “total depravity” because they feel it’s too Calvinistic.* b) Moses wrote, “The LORD saw that the wickedness of

mankind was great on the earth, and that all the thoughts and plans they formed in their hearts were only evil every day.” Genesis 6:5 **The people were so bad that God sent the Flood.**

3. Irreversible. a) A dog is a dog is a dog. Calling it by any other name will not cause it to cease being a dog. There is no way out for man from his sinful maze even if we say there is. b) Jesus said, “Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh.” John 3:6 **Jesus had to redeem our flesh because we were so contaminated.** c) Paul wrote, “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, and what is perishable is not going to inherit what is imperishable.” 1 Corinthians 15:50

C. The inevitable verdict

1. Guilty as charged. a) We cannot hide our sins from the LORD. He knows everything that we have ever done or thought of doing. **We are naked before God, caught red-handed, with no place to hide.** Our sins are all in front of Him, and we cannot deny our guilt. b) Isaiah wrote, “All of us have become like something unclean, and all our righteous acts are like a filthy cloth.” Isaiah 64:6 c) David wrote, “LORD, you have investigated me, and you know. You know when I sit down and when I get up. You understand my thoughts from far off. You keep track of when I travel and when I stay, and you are familiar with all my ways. Before there is a word on my tongue, you, LORD, already know it completely.” Psalm 139:1-4
2. Eternal death. a) Death was the punishment promised to our first parents if they disobeyed. The LORD said, “You may freely eat from every tree in the garden, but you shall not eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, for on the day that you eat from it, you will certainly die.” Genesis 2:16,17 **The death sentence is never far from us. Luther said, “Fear God’s wrath.”** b) Paul reminded us that God’s judgment has not changed over the years. He wrote, “The wages of sin is death.” Romans 6:23 **We are ever walking along a cliff above the abyss of hell.**

Q4. Why can we use the words “doctrine” and “teachings” synonymously? A: **The doctrines of the Scripture are the teachings of the church.**

XXVI. Only by God’s grace

Q6. What is the truth about our salvation? A: **It is a gift of God.**

A. The eternal plan – **Like quantum physics, we must believe even though we cannot understand it in full. Consider how both diamonds and graphite can be pure carbon.**

1. Creation. a) From eternity God planned the creation of the universe. **Creation is tied together with redemption.** In His foreknowledge He saw every detail of the work before He did any of it. b) Moses wrote, “Before the mountains were born, before you gave birth to the earth and the world, from eternity to eternity you are God.” Psalm 90:2
2. Redemption. a) God also foresaw man’s fall into sin and devised a **detailed** plan to redeem man before He had created him and before man had committed any sins. **God used His foreknowledge**

to re-perfect man through Christ. b) God told us these things. Isaiah wrote beforehand, “You, the LORD, are our Father. Our Redeemer from everlasting is your name.” Isaiah 63:16

3. Election. Note that point 2 must exist for point 3 to occur. a) God even chose (elected in Christ) who would be saved from the billions of people who would at some point live on the earth. He did this strictly out of love and without consideration of the merits of those he chose. It is a great mystery that God wants all people to be saved but only predestined a relative few. b) Paul wrote, “He did this (i.e., bless us) when he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, so that we would be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ.” Ephesians 1:4–5 Election requires redemption which requires creation.

B. Its execution in time

1. The promise. a) After Adam and Eve had sinned and were terrified about their future, the LORD immediately calmed their worst fear by the promise of a Savior who would rescue them from eternal death even if they received the punishment of temporal death. God’s response to sin was to bind Himself with a promise. b) Moses quoted God as saying to Satan, “I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He will crush your head, and you will crush his heel.” Genesis 3:15
2. The Savior. a) The LORD did not send the Savior immediately but waited until the time He had chosen to bring about His deliverance of mankind. God acts in His way at His time. b) Paul wrote, “When the set time had fully come, God sent his Son to be born of a woman, so that he would be born under the law, in order to redeem those under the law, so that we would be adopted as sons.” Galatians 4:4,5
3. The church. a) To spread His saving message, the LORD chose to use those people who already believed the message. He commanded them not to do their own thing, but to proclaim what he had taught them and what was written about him in the Scriptures. The role of the church is to PROCLAIM. b) The Savior then launched His church by telling His disciples, “Go and gather disciples from all nations by baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and by teaching them to keep all the instructions I have given you.” Matthew 28:19,20 The church is the totality of the saints.

C. The fulfillment in eternity – “From eternity to eternity, the plan is God’s”

1. The day of judgment. a) God is just, and therefore He must eventually punish those who have not accepted His offer of free salvation. To do this, He will send Jesus to judge all the people who have ever lived on the earth. Jesus’ role will change. b) Jesus said, “For the Son of Man will come in the glory of his Father together with his angels, and then he will repay everyone according to his actions.” Matthew 16:27
2. The new heavens and earth. a) Because man’s sin has contaminated the whole world, the LORD will destroy this world and replace it with another in which there will be no sin. This world will

end. It has been a place of pain and suffering. b) Paul wrote, “For we know that all of creation is groaning with birth pains right up to the present time. And not only creation, but also we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we eagerly await our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.” Romans 8:22,23 c) Peter wrote, “But according to his promise we look forward to new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.” 2 Peter 3:13

3. The joys of eternity. a) The full restoration of our fellowship with God and our fellow Christians will be our great joy in eternity. [We long for the absolute joy.](#) b) John wrote, “There was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing in front of the throne and of the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and with palm branches in their hands. They called out with a loud voice and said: Salvation comes from our God, who sits on the throne, and from the Lamb.” Revelation 7:9,10

XXVII. An honest assessment

A. Paths to failure

Q1. What will be the fate of Punk Rock John? [A: He will be damned if God does not reach him in some way.](#)

Q3. Why do human efforts to build the church often kill it instead? [A: They lead people away from the Word.](#)

1. The roads most taken. a) Mysticism – Trying to find God in your heart – Emotion ([our feelings](#)) b) Moralism – Trying to find God in your hands – Vocation ([our works](#)) c) Rationalism – Trying to find God in your mind – Reason ([our reasoning](#)) d) Prosperity – Trying to find God in the world – Material things ([our success](#)) e) Spirituality – Trying to find God in the church ([our church institutions](#)) – Religion f) Lawlessness – Trying to find God in His absence – Freedom ([our equality with God](#))

Q2. What is wrong with the “60-day free trial of Christ”? [A: It is about this world, not eternity.](#)

Q5. How do we get on the wrong side of God’s justice? [A: By trying to do things to justify ourselves.](#)

2. The folly of man. a) Everyone is hard-wired to want control of his or her environment and to be independent of others. Consequently, we are constantly tempted to seek our own pathway to God or at least share the glory with Him for the one He gave us. [We want to be in control and not have to trust anyone or anything.](#) b) Paul warned us not to seek Christ where we think he ought to be found when he wrote, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ (that is, to bring Christ down) or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).” Romans 10:6,7 [Others long before us also tried to seek for God.](#)

B. The pathway to God

Q8. Do you understand the only solution? A: Becoming ever more familiar with the Word of God.

1. The Word of truth. a) The book of Psalms begins, “How blessed is the man who does not walk in the advice of the wicked, who does not stand on the path with sinners, and who does not sit in a meeting with mockers. But his delight is in the teaching of the LORD, and on his teaching he meditates day and night.” Psalm 1:1,2 **We can succeed only through the Word.** b) Paul wrote, “Indeed, since the world through its wisdom did not know God, God in his wisdom decided to save those who believe, through the foolishness of the preached message.” 1 Corinthians 1:21 **Indeed, we cannot help it except to proclaim it.**
2. The life of service to the LORD. a) Good works contribute nothing to our salvation, but they are the Christian’s way of life. Paul wrote, “So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who belong to the household of faith.” Galatians 6:10 **A changed heart will produce a changed life, not just Marthaism.** b) He also wrote, “We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared in advance so that we would walk in them.” Ephesians 2:10
3. The hope of salvation. a) The LORD’s narrow road that leads to salvation is paved with troubles, but we must persevere because we trust in Him. He reassures us through His Word, and we need nothing else to sustain us until we reach our heavenly home. **In the church we pick each other up and urge each other on to the goal.** b) The Sons of Korah wrote, “Why are you so depressed, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I will again praise him for salvation from his presence.” Psalm 42:5 c) Paul wrote, “We also rejoice confidently in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces patient endurance, and patient endurance produces tested character, and tested character produces hope. And hope will not put us to shame.” Romans 5:3–5

Q7. Do you understand the nature of the problem presented in this course? A: I hope so.

Where do we go from here? – Do not just walk away from this mirror.

- 1) Encourage pastors to be specific in preaching the Law, not just a generic list of “big” sins.
- 2) Encourage pastors to recommend books to laypeople based on their spiritual needs. The In Terra Pax website www.interrapxlp.com has recommendations.
- 3) Recommend books yourself. Buy them as presents.
- 4) Have daily personal and family devotions.
- 5) Become fishers of men. Look for opportunities to tell people about your faith and direct them to your pastor.
- 6) Teach others in whatever forum you can find.
- 7) De-emphasize programs in your congregations that are not religious in nature (i.e., basically social gatherings) and promote evangelism instead of just publicity of your church.
- 8) Pray without ceasing for the spread of the Word.

ONLY THE HOLY SPIRIT WORKING THROUGH GOD’S WORD BUILDS FAITH.

