



AMERICAN CAMPFIRE

REVIVAL

VIDEO TRAINING SERIES



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FORWARD

Growing up in Southern California, I've developed a healthy respect for wildfires. These aren't the kind of flames you can put out with a garden hose. They grow with increasing speed and intensity as the winds whip them into flame-throwing machines of gargantuan proportions. Wildfires don't die as long as they have fuel. The only way to protect yourself is to simply stay out of their way.

But almost magically, the same fires that scorch the mountains near our house also create, out of nothing, vibrant new life. Just as instantaneously as the fire destroys all plants and animals in its way, in the aftermath of the inferno, the charred landscape suddenly releases all of its nutrients, such as nitrogen, sulfur, phosphorus, and carbon into the soil, making room for tender new grasses, unlocking hidden seeds trapped in impenetrable shells, and produces an explosion of vibrant colors, intoxicating fragrances, and the cheerful sounds of new life.

My prayer is that as you meet around the campfire to learn, share, and grow in your love for God and for your neighbors, a sacred fire will be kindled in your heart. I pray that a strong wind of the Spirit will blow across your mind, clearing away dead religious works and the rotten remains of bad habits and complacency—that the stifling underbrush of fear and unbelief would be erased, so that the fresh seeds of Revival may take root in the soil of your soul. Revival is about dead things coming to life. It's a WILDFIRE of truth and freedom that cannot be contained. Its enemies cannot stop it; their only option is to get out of its way. Real revival grows with increasing intensity as it spreads across the land whose God is the Lord. Revival doesn't die as long as it has enough liberty-loving people to fuel it. This kind of sacred fire begins in the heart by God's grace, through faith, and then spreads to your home, your church, your schools, your county, your state, and to your whole nation—literally releasing heaven upon the earth. It's time for the next Great Awakening. Revival makes room for new light, nourishes the soil of politics, education, business, church and the family, unlocks essential truths formerly shut up by godless elites hiding in their impenetrable ivory towers, and produces an explosion of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness and self-control in society. Anyone in favor of more of those things in America?

I want you to meet Pastor Ed. He's my friend, he loves God and he's crazy about revival. Let his questions ignite thoughtful discussion, passionate prayers, and "take-no-prisoners" action. Use this guide to fan the flames of your faith and good works into a wildfire (started by an act of God and zero percent contained) that brings new and lasting life to our nation.

Kirk Cameron

WELCOME

I met Kirk Cameron in the early Spring of 2021 at Calvary Christian School in Columbus, GA. I was on the set of a movie having lunch with Stephen Kendrick. Kirk walked by and Stephen said, “Hey man, come here for a minute. I want you to meet someone.” Little did I know that every night for the next month or so Kirk and I would be sitting around a campfire in my backyard while he “went live” to tens of thousands of people talking about Jesus and talking about America.

Congratulations! By embarking on this 10-week *American Campfire Revival Training Series* training course, you’ve taken an important step in your journey as an American, as well as in your journey with the Lord. Regardless of where you are spiritually, walking through this series will deepen your relationship with the Creator. We’re going to travel together through 500 years of American history and explore the amazing role that God’s providential hand played throughout it; from the Pilgrims to the Bill of Rights, from Jamestown to Mt. Vernon, and from The Black Plague to the Pilgrims Pestilence to John Wesley, George Whitefield, and Jonathan Edwards.

We believe that God “fixes” broken things. In fact, the Bible is one long story of redemption—of Him tugging on the hearts and minds of people throughout history. Our prayer is that the fire of revival would begin in your living room and around a campfire in your back yard as you gather with friends and family. This curriculum is a beautiful combination of real American history and God’s Word. We know that the Holy Spirit uses God’s Word to change lives and He uses changed lives to change cultures, countries, and worlds.

A special shout out goes to Marshall Foster for the many principles from his incredible book *The American Covenant* that permeate this study. Although the videos and this workbook can stand alone, we encourage you to read *The American Covenant* along the way.

Ed Grifenhagen
Pastor
Church On The Trail
Columbus, GA

INTRODUCTION



“Finally, let us not forget the religious character of our origin. Our fathers were brought hither by their high veneration for the Christian religion. They journeyed by its light and labored in its hope. They sought to incorporate its principles with the elements of their society, and to diffuse its influence through all their institutions, civil, political, or literary. Let us cherish these sentiments and extend this influence still more widely; in the full conviction, that that is the happiest society which partakes in the highest degree of the mild and peaceful spirit of Christianity.”

Daniel Webster, 1822



1. We tend to believe that “secular” problems demand “secular” solutions, “scientific” problems demand “scientific” answers, and “political” problems” demand only “political” solutions, etc. Why is the solution to America’s ills much more than simply politics? What is it?

2. Our Founding Fathers relied on God’s Word (the Bible) to give them instruction. They “covenanted” with each other and with God. They had each other’s back and believed God had their back. Read the *Mayflower Compact* below. Why do we identify it as a “covenant document?” What is a covenant anyway?

Mayflower Compact

In the name of God, Amen. We whose names are under-written, the loyal subjects of our dread sovereign Lord, King James, by the grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland King, Defender of the Faith, etc. Having undertaken, for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian faith, and honor of our King and Country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia, do by these presents solemnly and mutually, **in the presence of God, and one of another, covenant and combine our selves together into a civil body politic, for our better ordering and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid;** and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute, and frame such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the Colony, unto which we promise all due submission and obedience. In witness whereof we have hereunder subscribed our names at Cape Cod, the eleventh of November, in the year of the reign of our sovereign lord, King James, of England, France, and Ireland, the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth. Anno Dom. 1620.

**BATTLE
OF IDEAS**

3. We find ourselves in a battle; not a flesh & blood battle, but primarily a battle of ideas. Why is this battle for cultural dominance most effectively waged at the idea level? Who are the three primary worldview “players” in this battle for dominion??



IGNITE THE FIRE

Psalm 2:10-12 is a stern warning to earthly officials (politicians, leaders, rulers). The beginning of this Psalm (2:1-3) depicts these rulers as acting arrogantly, meanly, and impulsively. Now, in Verse 10, they're told to take a breath and think very carefully about their coronation and its repercussions.

The Psalmist advises them to “serve” the Lord. In this Psalm, the word translated “serve” has shades of politics all over it. In order to submit to God, the leaders must submit to His Son, the One true King. Therefore, they are “strongly encouraged” to “pay homage” to the Son, to “submit” to the Son, or to “kiss” the Son.

Rebelliously failing to submit to God through His Son, the King, will ultimately result in catastrophe. But joy and blessing come to everyone who submits and takes refuge in Him (2:12).

4. Read Psalm 2:10-12 and discuss what our founders knew and understood, that we seem to have forgotten over the last hundred years.

*Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
be warned, O rulers of the earth.
Serve the LORD with fear,
and rejoice with trembling.
Kiss the Son,
lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,
for his wrath is quickly kindled.
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.*
Psalm 2:10–12

LESSON 1



IGNITE THE FIRE

The idea of “remember” permeates the Bible. We find it as a theme throughout the Psalms. It is a key word in the book of Deuteronomy, appearing 14 times. In 1877 C. H. Spurgeon said, “First, it is God’s design that His wonderful works should be remembered; and, secondly, it is our wisdom constantly to have those wonderful works in remembrance.”

*“But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. **Remember** therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.”*

Revelation 2:4-5

In Ephesians 1:15 Paul gave the church in Ephesus kudos for its fervent love for God and people. In Revelation 2:4-5 Jesus accuses them of abandoning it and He calls them to look back, to acknowledge the mighty works of God, remember where their love originated, repent, and enthusiastically love once again.

If they stubbornly refused to repent, Jesus says that He will remove their lampstand. In other words, He would turn their light off and they would no longer be a church. Just like the menorah (multi-branch candlestick) in the temple provided light for the priests to see, churches exist to provide light to their communities. Jesus warned them that their flame could go out. In fact, Jesus Himself would snuff out any light that did not fulfill its purpose. The church had to repent of its sins.

1. Why is it important to remember our history? Why is understanding the past so critical to our future?

In tonight's video, Kirk explained that a "*smokescreen* is something that covers up the truth so that you don't see it." Smokescreens distract you into looking *over there* when the truth is *over here*.



"True religion offers the government its surest support."

George Washington



2. How has the "impenetrable wall of separation between Church and state" been used as a smokescreen?

Jesus said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. *By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*"

John 13:34-35 (ESV)

3. Why is the **practical outworking** of the Gospel, into every area of life—marriage, kids, school, business, government, etc., just as important as the message of the Gospel?



"Our Founding Fathers wanted a nation that would be *heaven* for anybody to come to, whether they were a member of the family of faith or not."

Kirk Cameron, 2021



4. What does the phrase, "America is a Christian nation" mean? Here's a little clue – it does not mean a nation where everyone must be a Christian.

5. The *Pluralist Smokescreen* declares, "Real freedom will increase if you do your thing and I do mine . . . all roads lead to heaven anyway. There is no objective truth, no absolutes, if it's good and true for me, then it's good and true . . ." Why does this philosophy ultimately lead to tyranny and failure?



" To the kindly influence of Christianity, we owe that degree of civil freedom and political and social happiness which mankind now enjoys. In proportion as the genuine effects of Christianity are diminished in any nation, either through unbelief, or the corruption of its doctrines, or the neglect of its institutions; in the same proportion will the people of that nation recede from the blessings of genuine freedom and approximate the miseries of complete despotism."

Dr. Jedediah Morse, 1799



LESSON 2

1. History is actually HIS-story. Why can we be confident that it is not just a collection of “random” events?



“It has been said that history is the biography of communities; in another and profounder sense it is the autobiography of Him “who works all things **according to the counsel of His will**” (Ephesians 1:11) and who is graciously **timing all events after the counsel of His Christ**, and the kingdom of God on earth.”

Rev. S.W. Foljambe, 1876



2. In tonight’s lesson, Kirk and Dr. Foster discussed different “lenses” that we filter history through—the cyclical, Marxist, and providential views of history (you will also find other views in Chapter 3 of *The American Covenant*). Why is it so important to view history through a biblical providential lens?

“When we see things through God’s perspective, it gives us so much hope because there’s order and there’s blessing and there’s liberty.”

Dr. Marshall Foster, 2021

3. Dr. Foster writes, “In God’s time, a small band of committed, exiled believers sailed [on the *Mayflower*] to North America in 1620 . . . Thousands of years of godly wisdom had paved the way for them.”¹
- a. The invention of the sea compass for ocean travel.
 - b. The translation of the Bible from Latin into English by John Wycliffe
 - c. The invention of the printing press.
 - d. The translation of the New Testament from the original Greek into English by William Tyndale.
 - e. Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and others lead the Reformation

All of this made it possible for every family on the *Mayflower* to have their own copy of the Scriptures. Why do you think God was so determined to get a Bible in every family’s hand **before** they landed at Plymouth Bay?

¹ Marshall Foster, *The American Covenant* (Ventura: Nordskog Publishing, 2021), 78.



IGNITE THE FIRE

*“Praise the LORD! Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in his commandments! His offspring will be **mighty** in the land; the generation of the upright **will be blessed**. Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endures forever.”*

Psalm 112:1-3

Psalm 112 begins with the word Hallelujah (praise the Lord) because it is through Him and because of Him that all blessings pour forth. And the Psalmist, here, tells us that the blessings pour out on those who fear the Lord and relish in His commandments. It’s clear, in context, that this fear is not terror, like, “I’m scared of that mean old God.” But it is reverential awe, based on a high view of God and His goodness. So those who fear God will not simply pay heed to His law, but will bathe themselves in it and delight in it.

Verse 2 begins to give us the particulars of the promise of blessings. His offspring would be mighty men of valor and would influence the culture for good and righteousness. God equips them to influence those around them by providing wealth and riches. However, this material blessing is obviously not intended for living the “high-life” of self-indulgence, but for influencing the world for the Lord. This is how the righteousness of godly men and women endures forever.

*“And I will make of you a **great nation**, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that **you will be a blessing**. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and **in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed**.”*

Genesis 12:2-3

4. The “mighty” language in Psalm 112 is similar to the “great” nation promised to Abraham in Genesis 12. Why do you think God promises to make Abraham’s descendants a “great” nation?

LESSON 3

1. Freedom is the state that emerges after God has acted to remove all hindrances—social, spiritual (sin and death), economic, and institutional—that block our creational purpose. This purpose is to know, love, worship, and enjoy God forever. In light of this:
 - a. Why does God want individuals to be free?
 - b. Why does God want nations to be free?

“Give me your tired,
your poor, your huddled
masses yearning to
breathe free, the
wretched refuse of your
teeming shore.
Send these, the
homeless, tempest-tost
to me, I lift my lamp
beside the golden door!”

From *The New Colossus* by
Emily Lazarus – engraved at
the bottom of Lady Liberty



“The Spirit of the Lord is
upon me, because he has
anointed me to proclaim
good news to the poor. He
has sent me to proclaim
liberty to the captives and
recovering of sight to the
blind, to set at liberty
those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the
Lord’s favor.”

Jesus’ words recorded in Luke
4:18-19 (ESV)

2. Think through and discuss the role the Bible played in the expansion of Christian liberty, culminating in America – the first nation established fully on Christian ideals. Include the “Chain of Christianity” below in your discussion.
 - ✓ 1500 B.C. – 400 B.C. The Old Testament is written in Hebrew & Aramaic.
 - ✓ 1400 B.C. – 1000 B.C. Moses reveals God’s Law and outlines God’s plan for a self-governing republic in the promised land. This biblical strategy for a republic with equal justice for all lasted for 400 years without a king. When properly administered it had free local elections and accountability of elected Judges until the people rebelled and asked Samuel for a king to be like all the other nations.
 - ✓ 250 B.C. – 200 B.C. The Old Testament is translated into Greek, which was the “language of the day.”
 - ✓ 33 A.D. The Great Commission – Matthew 28:18-20 is given by Jesus which commanded Christians to “disciple the nations, teaching them, the nations, to obey all that I have commanded.”
 - ✓ 33 A.D. – 100 A.D. The New Testament is written in Greek and spreads God’s truth throughout the Roman Empire.
 - ✓ Late 4th Century. The New Testament is formally canonized as Christianity flourished, while the pagan Roman Empire collapsed.
 - ✓ 5th Century. Patrick of Ireland brought massive revival to the hugely pagan island of Ireland. His only weapon was copies of the Torah (Genesis-Deuteronomy) and the teachings of Jesus. He brought the laws of Ireland in alignment with Scripture and ended human sacrifice, abuse and constant warfare.
 - ✓ 6th Century. Irish missionaries copied the Scriptures by hand and set out as missionaries all over Europe. Columba saw the conversion of Scotland from his missionary base on Iona island off the Scottish coast. Then his disciples translated the Scriptures at Lindisfarne in England and converted Anglo-Saxon England in the 7th century.
 - ✓ Middle Ages. Biblical thought and worldview overthrows paganism in Europe and England. However, the Bible was still hidden from the common man because it was only in Latin and the leaders did not allow the people to read it.
 - ✓ 1381. John Wycliffe completes his translation of the Bible from Latin to English. He trains preachers to go door to door all over England to give out the Scriptures and teach the people to read so they could deepen their faith. Though persecuted for over a hundred years, these biblical evangelists reached over half of England for Christ. Tracts and portions of his translation are finally in the hands of common people.
 - ✓ 1440. Printing press is invented by Johanne Guttenberg and the first book ever printed on the metal type press was the Bible.
 - ✓ 1525. William Tyndale completes his translation of the New Testament from the original Greek into English and works for the next 10 years translating the Old Testament. Just prior to publishing it, he’s burned at the stake in 1536 for the “crime” of translating it. But his Bible makes its way into England anyway and begins to change the hearts of millions of English-speaking people.

- ✓ Early 1500s. In Europe, Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Ulrich Zwingli begin to explain God's purpose for man and the battle cry of the reformation, "salvation by faith alone" is born. The Bible, with its inherent freedom-loving worldview, empowered believers from many countries to resist tyranny and to begin to assert the sovereignty of God over their former tyrannical kings.
- ✓ 1560. Geneva Bible is published bringing liberty to Scotland and inspiring the English puritans to call for liberty under God.
- ✓ 1611. King James Bible published
- ✓ 1620. Mayflower lands in America. The people came with very little, but each family had their own copy of the Geneva Bible that ultimately provided the foundation for all of the future institutions.
- ✓ From 1607 and the founding of Jamestown throughout our founding era until at least 1850 or so, the Bible was the major textbook for all education, morals, and was the model for our Christian constitutional republic.
- ✓ In 1776, for the first time since the ancient Hebrew Republic founded by Moses, a nation, the United States of America, was founded specifically on God's principles as laid out in the Bible. Obedience to these principles was, and still is, the only hope for our lasting freedom.

All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Matthew 28:18-20 (KJV)



IGNITE THE FIRE

Lasting Words

Last words are lasting words. Jesus' words in "The Great Commission" are His last recorded words in The Gospel According to Matthew. Fundamental to the marching orders Jesus gives us, are the words "all power" in Verse 18. The Son has been given all power and authority by the Father, not a little, not half, not some, but ALL. The two-fold charge is simple: (1) teach all nations, and (2) baptize and teach them to obey everything I (Jesus) taught you.

And then the Lord lays one of the greatest promises ever on them, "If you'll do these two things, I will always be with you. I will always have your back. I will never leave nor forsake you."

The 102 men and women that landed in Plymouth in 1620 saw themselves playing an integral role in fulfilling Jesus' words here. Regarding their passion for the great commission, William Bradford wrote: "A great hope and inward zeal they had of laying some good foundation, or at least to make some way thereunto, for the propagating and advancing the Gospel of the Kingdom of Christ in those remote parts of the world; yea, though they should be but even as stepping-stones unto others for the performing of so great a work."

These men and women knew, beyond all doubt, that Jesus' promise to always be with them, was real. They believed that what they believed was really real. They courageously acted upon that belief . . . and a nation was born out of the liberty that resulted.

3. Discuss how and why The Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) provides the motivation for the building of Christian civilization around the world. In addition, discuss how you can be a *stepping-stone* in your "neck of the woods" and beyond.

4. Dr. Foster and Kirk mentioned the terms *Covenant-keepers* and *Covenant-breakers* several times in tonight's video. Why do *Covenant-keepers* ultimately win and *Covenant-breakers* ultimately lose?



“May the same wonder-working Deity, who long since delivering the Hebrews from their Egyptian Oppressors and planted them in the promised land—whose Providential Agency has lately been conspicuous in establishing these United States as an independent Nation—still continue to water them with the dews of Heaven and to make the inhabitants of every denomination participate in the temporal and spiritual blessings of that people whose God is Jehovah.”

Prayer of George Washington, 1778

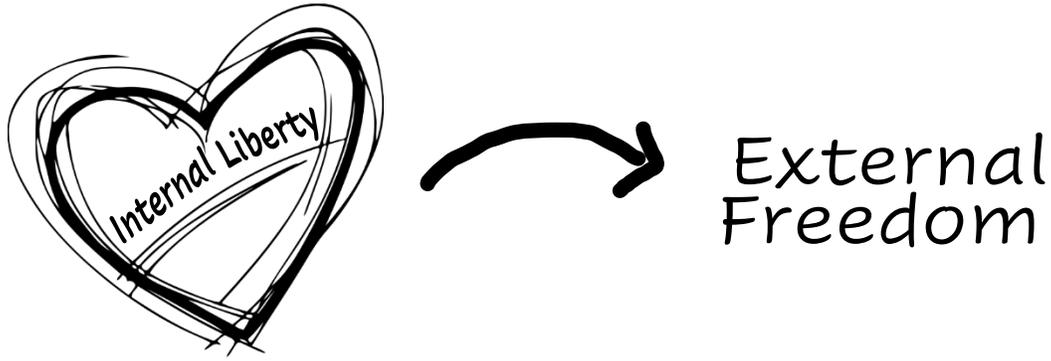


LESSON 4

1. Jesus loving, liberty loving people have sent missionaries out from America for the last several hundred years. Mission work is not free. It must be funded somehow. Christian businessmen, doctors, lawyers, farmers, etc. have funded missionaries for years and years. Why would they do it? Why would they invest their hard-earned dollars to send people to dangerous places where pagan gods are worshipped?

God used the “heroes of the faith” (Abel, Abraham, Isaac, Moses, Noah, Rahab, Joseph, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and on and on and on) – as agents of change. And yes, of course, it began with each one’s individual story. But HIS-story is much bigger, more intricate, and more beautiful because He’s rolling out His plan to change the world by using “regular” men and women. We see it in the Old Testament and then we see it in the New Testament, as Jesus takes a dozen ordinary men, commissions them, and sends them out to transform the world with the Gospel.

2. Is God still “doing business” like this? If you are a Christian, consider and discuss the thought that your story doesn’t end with your salvation. It begins. How are you now part of HIS-story and called to play a unique role in transforming the world around you?



3. Jesus said He did not “come to abolish the Law or the Prophets . . . but to fulfill them” (Matthew 5:17). Eight hundred years earlier God said, through Jeremiah, that the day is coming when He will put His law in us; that He will write it on our hearts (Jeremiah

“The power of the Holy Spirit is an internal transforming power that changed me into a new creature. And then as a man with a transformed heart, I begin to transform my world. Everywhere I go, everything I touch – I want to begin to heavenize those things.”

Kirk Cameron, 2021

31:31-34). This is a beautiful image of internal liberty (being freed from the bondage of sin by Christ) resulting in true external freedom (freedom that all the rules and regulations in the world could never provide). Discuss how this Spirit-infused internal change can empower you to facilitate real influence for Him in all areas of your life. Ask yourself, “Lord, what would you have for me to do?”

26 Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

***27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.***

28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Genesis 1:26-28 (ESV)



IGNITE THE FIRE

It is mind-blowing that God entrusted man with dominion over His creation. Clearly, there is no way to know the “why’s” of God. However, this passage is God’s first charge to man – exercise “dominion” over all of creation. Wow! That’s a tall order . . . an order that could easily get twisted. It is not an order of tyrannical domination. It is an order to responsibly steward all that God entrusted to him with the same love and concern as God would. It is an image of God extending His dominion from heaven to earth through man.

This divine command covers all mankind, all arenas of life, and all honorable occupations. Every person is given this task because every person is made in the image of God. Regardless of what you “do for a living,” your vocation is to represent God to the world.

The tragedy is that leadership in nearly all spheres of work-engineering, politics, law, medicine, agriculture, etc., has been usurped by secular and humanist thinking (because Christians seem to have “left the building”). The results are catastrophic, as God’s creational commission is completely wrecked.

We not only have a creational commission to steward all things in the physical domain, but we are also charged with a form of dominion over the spiritual domain when we “Go [as God’s representative] and make disciples” by sharing the Gospel message (see Matt 28 in Lesson 3).

4. Discuss how and why this dominion mandate charges you with responsibility for influencing both the physical and spiritual realms. How did the *Fall* (Genesis 3) in the Garden affect this?

LESSON 5



1. During tonight's video, Kirk said, "The most powerful and liberating force on the planet is the self-governing Christian." What is a self-governing Christian?



"We have staked the whole future of our new nation, not upon the power of government; far from it. We have staked the future of all our political constitutions upon the capacity of each of ourselves to govern ourselves according to the moral principles of the Ten Commandments of God."

James Madison, 1778



2. Discuss the difference between *individuality* and *individualism*?

***“What the Messiah has freed us for is freedom!
Therefore, stand firm, and don’t let yourselves be tied up
again to a yoke of slavery.”***

Galatians 5:1 (CJB)



IGNITE THE FIRE

We have been liberated from the bondage of sin, man-made rules, fear, guilt, and shame. While that freedom is free to you and me, a price was paid.

Somehow, something, or someone had to make it available to us so that we could experience ultimate freedom. In Galatians 5, Paul encourages the folks there to stand firm in their divinely ordained, blood-bought liberty, rejecting even the thought of returning to the suffocating noose of the law.

Jesus liberated us from that yoke – not so we can serve ourselves, act foolishly, and do anything we want . . . no, no, no, because that would slip the noose back around our necks. We have been unleashed and given the ability to do what was monumentally out of reach before – to live selflessly and serve.

Americans have been conditioned that it is the Government’s role to “take care of all our needs,” but Dr. Foster said, in tonight’s video, “The good deeds are to be done by us, not the government. The Government is not to be the one feeding the poor and caring for the needy. That’s our responsibility.”

3. Kirk said, “The government should be the last-ditch effort to stop wickedness and evil.” Why?
4. Have you ever felt powerless? Insignificant? Ineffective? Read Galatians 5:1 again and imagine what just one self-governing Christian or family can accomplish as a result of their freedom in Christ and in covenant with each other and in covenant with God.

LESSON 6

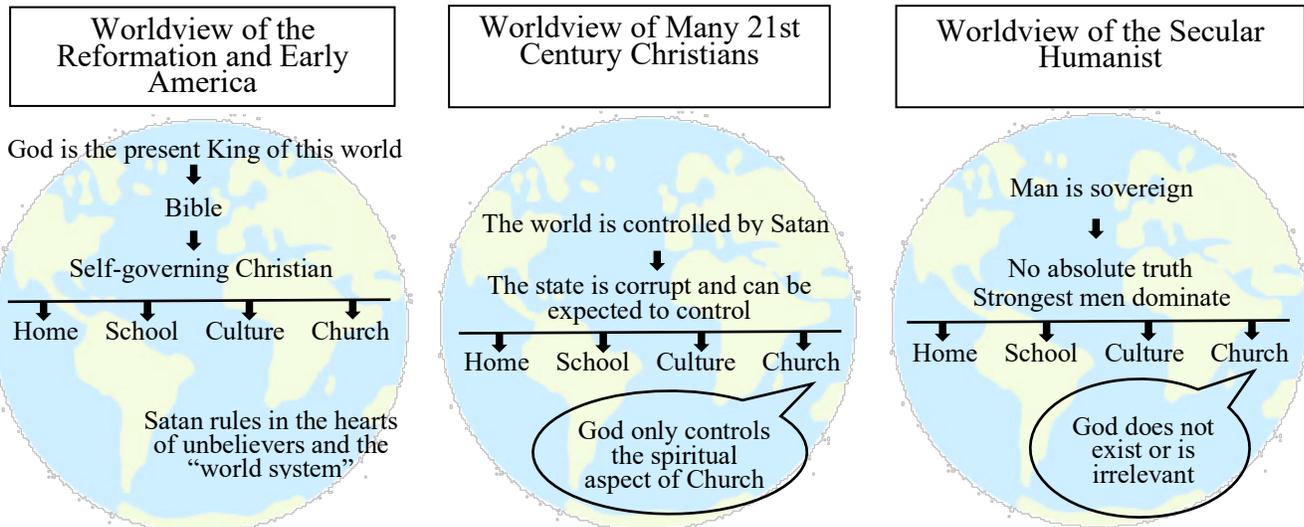
Who do you believe is the Ruler of this world – God or Satan? Or is Man the ruler of the world? Who you believe is sovereign over the earth will determine how you see the battle between good and evil playing out on the world’s stage. Early American Christians saw Jesus as the present ruler of the earth and Satan as a defeated foe. Sadly, many modern Christians today have been wrongly taught to view Jesus as an absentee King who is focused exclusively on building and maintaining His Church until he returns to Earth. They see Jesus as having authority to rule, but that He has given over powers to allow the world to be temporarily controlled by Satan.



“The way that you view who rules this world – whether it’s God is the ruler of this world or Satan is the ruler of this world or man is the ruler of this world – it puts into motion a domino effect of how you see who you are in the world and what your purpose is.”

Kirk Cameron, 2021

1. Make copies and compare, contrast, and discuss the three competing views below.



| <i>If you see God ruling the earth:</i> | <i>If you see Satan ruling the earth:</i> | <i>If you see man as ruling the earth:</i> |
|--|--|---|
| <p>1. Your commission is to subdue the earth and build godly nations through evangelizing and discipleship.</p> | <p>1. Your commission is just to concentrate on saving souls from this evil world.</p> | <p>1. Your commission is whatever you choose to do with your life, since man is autonomous.</p> |
| <p>2. You see Christian culture as leavening all areas of life, replenishing the earth, and blessing all mankind.</p> | <p>2. You see Christian culture as a counterculture, an isolated, persecuted minority in an evil world.</p> | <p>2. You see Christian culture as old fashioned, irrelevant, and restrictive.</p> |
| <p>3. All of God's world is His and every activity in life is a religious activity, to be seen as a spiritual work of God.</p> | <p>3. Church activity is primary and spiritual, while worldly pursuits are secular and to be dealt with only as a necessity.</p> | <p>3. All human activity is guided by human reason and evolution. Man is just a higher animal in a mysterious universe.</p> |
| <p>4. Reformation is expected if a nation is obedient to God's Word.</p> | <p>4. Reformation is impossible, since things must get worse because Satan is in control.</p> | <p>4. Reformation is unnecessary and impossible, since there are no absolute principles to which man should reform.²</p> |

² Marshall Foster, *The American Covenant* (Ventura: Nordskog Publishing, 2021), 137-138.

2. Who we believe is the ultimate "ruler of this world" shapes our mission, the purpose of the Church on the earth, our view of who is responsible to govern our nation, the value of our daily work, and strengthens or weakens our resolve to "subdue the earth and have dominion over it" (Genesis 1:28). Discuss why the Church, over the last 150 years, has forfeited its responsibility and given up its positions of leadership in the world. According to the Bible, who is responsible for providing for those in need? The government, the family or some secular civic group? Who is responsible for educating our children? The state, the Church or the family? Who is responsible for governing our nation? Smart secular politicians or wise, godly and brave believers? Discuss the best way to get it done and why.

WHO?

***“The earth is the LORD’S, and all it contains,
The world, and those who dwell in it.”***

Psalm 24:1 (NASB)



IGNITE THE FIRE

Who owns what?

Any discussion of private property or capitalism must be built on the foundation that God owns everything. With that said, we learned in Lesson 4 that God entrusted stewardship of His creation to man as His representative (Genesis 1:26-28).

There is a strong biblical case to be made for individual property ownership versus government/community ownership. “You shall not steal” (Exodus 20:15) assumes your neighbor owns something that you better not take from him without his permission. Exodus 20:17 tells us not to covet our neighbor’s house or “anything that is your neighbor’s.” Again, it is obviously his *stuff* and not the government’s.

Exodus 21:28-36 speaks of the “owner” of an ox and the “owner” of a “pit” or hole, indicating he owns the ox and it is his land. Deuteronomy 19:14 speaks of the boundary lines of a man’s land. God’s Word tells us, over and over, that economic creation and the welfare of a nation is inextricably linked to property rights and the ability of individuals to reap the reward of their own labor.

3. Discuss whether “property” is limited to material goods or also includes your opinions (spiritual and secular) and free communication of them, your thoughts, your intellect, and your conscience. If it includes everything, which one is most sacred and why?
4. America’s Founding Fathers believed that the government’s role was to protect “property” of every sort. Is it too simple to declare that the role of government, in its best and most efficient state, is to reward those who do good and to punish those who do evil?

LESSON 7

1. In tonight's video, Kirk and Dr. Foster spoke about the "blessed" nature of America and how distinctive America is in the history of the world. Why? Why would Dr. Foster say, "America is unique in all the world?"



"The fundamental basis of this Nation's law was given to Moses on the Mount. The fundamental basis of our Bill of Rights comes from the teachings which we get from Exodus and St. Matthew, from Isaiah and St. Paul. I don't think we emphasize that enough these days.

If we don't have the proper fundamental moral background, we will finally wind up with a totalitarian government which does not believe in rights for anybody except the state."

Harry Truman, February 15, 1950



2. In short, what President Truman said is that America was founded on a Christian (biblical) view of man and government. Discuss why an accurate understanding of the sinful nature of man informed our Founding Fathers to develop a form of government that did not blindly depend on the will of the majority, nor give absolute power to one man.

"I was guilty of sin from birth, a sinner the moment my mother conceived me."

Psalm 51:5 (NET)

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick."

Jeremiah 17:9 (ESV)

3. Why is it correct to say, “America is a representative republic and not a pure democracy?” What is the difference/?

“Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men, even when they exercise influence and not authority: still more when you superadd the tendency or the certainty of corruption by authority. There is no worse heresy than that the office sanctifies the holder of it.”

Lord John Dalberg-Acton, 1887

4. Why would Kirk compare the Government to a fire burning like the one behind him in tonight’s video?



Gotcha on a Technicality??

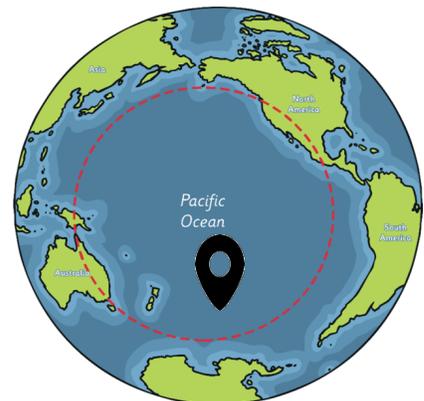
In Matthew 12, the religious leaders of the day (called Pharisees) did their best to “get” Jesus on a technicality, or so they thought. While walking through the grain fields on the Sabbath, Jesus and His disciples picked some grain to eat because they were hungry. The Pharisees accused them of breaking the letter of the law by “plucking” on the Sabbath (which technically broke one of the thirty-nine categories of actions that, defined by them, were forbidden on the Sabbath). Jesus appealed to the Spirit of the law and responded, “if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless” (Matthew 12:7).

Then Jesus had the nerve to heal a man with a “withered hand” in a synagogue on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:9-14). The Pharisees argued that healing was practicing medicine, and according to their interpretation of Scripture, a person could not practice medicine on the Sabbath unless a life was in danger. Jesus explained, “Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath” (Matthew 12:11-12).

The point is this, we must always appeal to the Spirit of the law when investigating and applying the letter of the law. The spirit of our republic – America – is Christianity and its biblically grounded principles, particularly the spirit of individual liberty. The “letter” is our Constitution and all the processes it specifies. The spirit our Founding Fathers understood as intrinsic seems to be absent today.

Tonight’s Assignment

- Imagine the discovery of an island in the South Pacific Ocean half-way between South America and Australia. Amazingly enough, this island is inhabited by nearly 150,000 people. However, they appear to be stuck in the Bronze Age of 4,500 years ago, to include the pagan worship of multiple gods. Your group has the opportunity to travel there and help them set up their political and economic systems. You decide to set up a Constitutional Republic modeled after the United States. Discuss whether it can be done successfully without addressing their pagan religious system.³ If you think it can . . . why? If it cannot . . . why not?



³ See Appendix 1 for what can potentially happen.

LESSON 8

1. Who is to blame for the decline in America? Marxists? Atheists? Hollywood? The Media? Who is to blame – and why?



“The propitious smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right, which Heaven itself has ordained.”

George Washington





The *Shema* Template

You've watched Kirk and Dr. Foster speak about, and you've discussed around the campfire, a clash of worldviews. This clash is not a new phenomenon. 3,500+ years ago, as the Hebrew nation is preparing to enter the Promised Land, Moses gives them the second of three addresses. It begins in Deuteronomy 5 with his recounting to the nation the covenant nature of their relationship with God and the Lord's giving of the Ten Commandments. He tells them again that God said, "You stay obedient, and I'll always have your back. You walk in My ways, and it will go well for you."

1 In Deuteronomy 6 we find the battle cry of this fledgling nation and it is called the *Shema*. *Shema* is the first word in Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear [*Shema*], O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one." Moses is saying to them, "Contrary to all of the folks around us - the Amalekites, the Canaanites, and any of the other "ites" out there who all worship multiple pagan gods and idols and trees and rocks – our God, the LORD, is the One and Only unique God, sovereign over all and Supreme and there is no other one." This is clearly the first major clash of worldviews!

2 Verse 5 goes on, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." You may know this as "The Greatest Commandment." The *Shema* commands them to love the LORD completely – with their whole being. This love for the LORD is the foundation of all other law.

3 Verses 6–7 "And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise." Moses tells them, "Pour the love of the Lord into your kids. Teach them – it's your responsibility. Talk about Him and His Word all the time."

4 Verses 8-9 "You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." These are outward signs of an internal change – of a heart fully devoted to the LORD, having His law in your heart (See Jeremiah 31:31-34), and marking your life with obedience to Him.

5 Verses 10-12 "And when the LORD your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—with great and good cities that you did not build, and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant—and when you eat and are full, then take care lest you forget the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery." Here, Moses is reminding them that the blessing of being freed from bondage – the miracle of liberty – and of possessing the land is not of their doing. It is because the LORD is a gracious promise-keeping God . . . and BTW, don't forget it.

2. Based on what you read in “*The Shema Template*” above and heard tonight as Kirk and Dr. Foster walked you around the monument, discuss why this anthem for ancient Israel, in Deuteronomy 6, creates an incredible five-ingredient recipe for what we are to pour into our children: faith, morality, law, education, and liberty.



3. How can we see our country get back to the values represented in The National Monument To The Forefathers? What can you personally do to play a role in this transformation?

LESSON 9

And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.”

Isaiah 6:8

1. Considering Isaiah’s words above, complete the table below.

| How has God gifted me? What skills, talents, abilities, and passions do I have? | How can I use these gifts, skills, talents, abilities, and passions to play a role in transforming my home, community, state, country, and world? Be specific. |
|---|--|
| | |

2. Revival always comes on the heal of catastrophic events, catastrophic times, pandemics, economic disasters, etc. Why do you think this is the case?

3. Considering all that you have learned through this training series, discuss how Jesus-centered revival can spur on the reformation needed in America.



“I want to see a fire of revival, started by an act of God in your heart, that spreads 0% contained, out of your backyard, across your county, and across every state. And we’ve got tens of thousands of little 'brushfires of freedom' ignited and burning and blazing in the hearts of men and women across this country. That’s revival. God’s done it before, and He can do it again!”

Kirk Cameron, 2021



APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Dr. Marshall Foster writes in the *American Covenant*, “Because our form of government is derived in all its parts from Biblical principles, it cannot be understood without comprehending those principles, nor can it be made to work as our Founding Fathers intended.

| FOUNDING FATHERS ESTABLISHED: | TODAY WE HAVE: |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Republican government representing <i>each individual’s</i> rights 2. Separation of powers – legislative, executive, and judicial – in order to protect the individual against the tyranny resulting from concentration of power. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. A legislative power to respect the individual’s rights to his own life, liberty, and property and to his Christian self-government. B. Specifically limited powers for the presidency. C. The Supreme Court as the interpreter of law in accord with the Constitution, which is undergirded by Biblical Law. 3. A dual system of government: a) the states retaining most powers, b) the federal government having only those powers necessary for its sphere of authority. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A majoritarian democracy representing the will of the majority – even when it tramples on the rights of the individual 2. Balance of powers upset by a) increasing predominance of the presidency, b) the Supreme Court usurping the rights of the legislative branch, c) the most important branch, the representative, greatly weakened. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. A legislative branch that passes laws encroaching upon the individual’s right of self-government and his rights to his own life, liberty, and property. B. Presidential powers frequently bypassing Congress through executive orders. C. The Supreme Court flouting Biblical Law in many of its rulings and often usurping the rights of the legislative branch. 3. A strong unitary government with powers being absorbed by Washington, the states steadily losing their local self-government and sources of revenue to the federal government.”⁴ |

⁴ Foster, *The American Covenant*, 168-169.

Appendix 2

The Gospel According to the Shelby GT350

No one disputes that church attendance has been in decline in America for the last several years. According to Thom Rainer, “The number one reason for the decline in church attendance is that members attend with less frequency than they did just a few years ago.”⁵ Twenty years ago, a church member was considered active in the church if he or she attended three times a week. Today, a church member is considered very active in the church if he or she attends three times a month. So, a big part of the change isn’t fewer believers as much as it is less-consistent worship.

I believe there are a number of reasons this trend continues on. Moms and dads are putting a higher focus on kids’ activities. When I was growing up, schools didn’t hold events on Sundays and travel baseball didn’t exist. These commitments, by nature, cut into church. Blended and single-parent families are forced to split their time up. In the days of COVID-19, streaming worship services – and thank God for the technology to stream them – but many people have become complacent and just figure they can stay in bed and watch church and live their Christian life isolated from the body of Christ.

The truth is, people sometimes just don’t feel guilty about missing church anymore . . . and that’s a good thing, for sure. Conviction is from God, but guilt and shame isn’t. So, while the Holy Spirit may lay a little conviction on you and nudge you to get to church for your own good and growth, guilt is a terrible reason to go. But there are some really good reasons!

Many pastors get freaked out about these trends and they get disgusted and frustrated with these changes in our society. Honestly, I’m not afraid. I’m not worried. I’m certainly not disgusted. These are the times that we have been given. God could have made me a pastor at any time in history, but He chose the 21st Century for me. He could have placed you in His Church at any time in history, as well. But He put us here, today.

1 Chronicles 12 lists the mighty men and warriors who came to fight with and help King David. In verse 32, it mentions,

*Of Issachar, men who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do,
200 chiefs, and all their kinsmen under their command.*

Maybe this verse simply means these men understood the times in such a way that they knew David was a better choice than Saul. Perhaps it means that these men had a deep understanding of fighting, human nature, or even politics.

Either way, I believe this verse gives us two options, 1) we can ignore the times around us and watch them pass by, or 2) we can understand the times in which God has placed us and respond to them with His wisdom and discernment.

Just as the men from Issachar put their lot in with David’s success, you and I are called to lock arms with a local church wherever we live. I don’t know if there’s ever been a time in history when God’s Church could be so relevant and is so desperately needed.

⁵ <https://churchleaders.com/pastors/pastor-articles/176686-thom-rainer-1-reason-for-decline-in-church-attendance.html>

One of the reasons I have such great hope for the Church is that Jesus established it and promised that it would prevail no matter the times or circumstances it faces. When Peter rightly identified Jesus as the Messiah – The Christ, Jesus responded by saying,

. . . *“Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

Matthew 16:17–18 (ESV)

In this passage, where Jesus established the Christian Church, the Greek word translated “church” is *ekklesia*, which is a local assembly or gathering. It’s interesting to note that the word *church* in the Bible never refers to a building—it’s always a gathering of people. So the building that you visit on Sunday mornings is not the church. You and I are the *ekklesia*—WE are the local gathering in the name of Jesus. WE are the Church.

The Greek word for “Peter” is *Petros*. The Greek word for “rock” is *petra*. Jesus was using Peter’s name as a play on words. Jesus is the foundation of everything the Church does. The Church is built on the platform and foundation of Christ. And Peter is the first stone Jesus lays. Peter declared, *“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”* (Matthew 16:16). If you are a believer, you have declared the same thing. You are part of the Body.

We, as the Body of Christ, have a tremendous responsibility. In verse 19, Jesus said,

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Matthew 16:19 (ESV)

Now we know that only God can forgive sins and only God can save people. Therefore, this verse is not the power to walk down a line of people and point and declare, “You’re saved. You’re Saved. You’re not saved. Nope. Yep. Definitely not.” So, what does it mean that you, as a member of the Body of Christ, have the power to bind and loose things on earth and in heaven?

The Parable of the Shelby

Let’s say that the Gospel is a loaded 2021 Mustang Shelby GT350, 5.2-litre V8 engine with 526 horsepower. It has all the power it needs to do the work it’s going to do. You cannot make this Shelby go faster or perform better by opening up the door and pushing along the street with your foot. It has the all the power it needs. Now imagine Jesus comes up to you and says, “Here’s the keys, My child. Where are you *gonna* take it?”

That is what I believe this passage is saying. The power to bring freedom and to break chains is found in the Gospel. The Gospel does not need us. Jesus does not need us. But Jesus places immeasurable value on you. He wants to be in a relationship with you so deeply, and He wants you to be a part of His work, so He says, “Here’s the Gospel. Here’s the keys. Where are you *gonna* take it?” The church has the authority to bring the full power and truth of heaven with it to a wounded, broken, hurting and sinful world . . . or we can park it in the garage and talk about how cool it is.

As for me (and my prayer is that you are with me on this), I will not pull the Gospel out of the garage to give it a buff and shine, listen to the engine purr, and put it back in the garage so it doesn’t get dirty. As brothers and sisters in Christ, as self-governing Christians, we are going to

grab those keys, come screaming out of the driveway, put the pedal down, and see what this Gospel of Jesus Christ has under the hood. Together, we are going to see what the freeing power of Jesus can really do in our “neck of the woods” and out into the world.

And you can take it to the bank – it will get messy . . . no doubt. A little mud is going to splash up on the back quarter panels. It might get a chip or two in the windshield. It might get a ding in the side, but a Shelby GT350 is meant to be driven. We’ve been given the keys to the kingdom, so we will move forward by His power, under the protection of His grace, and through the leading of His Spirit so that what is loosed here on earth by His power, will be loosed in heaven for all of eternity. And you know what? The gates of hell don’t have a chance! The gates of hell, the devil and all his little minions don’t have a chance because when we lock arms . . . Oh my goodness, when we lock arms, we begin to understand that we are better together.

I’ve heard a lot of people say they hate organized religion. I understand why. Throughout history, we’ve forgotten our mission and purpose. Sometimes we think church is about structure and hierarchy and rules and regulations, when actually it is about the people and institutions we are called to reach.

I’m not crazy about the “religion” word either, but the “organized” word is not a bad word because when we organize, we can get things done. God has called us to gather together to find ways to live, share, and spread the truth and power and liberty of the Gospel. We have a common mission and call. We absolutely cannot complete it without each other. In Romans 12, Paul writes,

For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them . . .

Romans 12:4–6 (ESV)

Of course, you can get *some* things done by yourself, but it’s like a thumb without a hand or the other fingers. In the end, a thumb is basically useless other than sticking it in one of your ears as a plug. But in conjunction with fingers, there’s no end to the things your thumb can grab, open, move, pull, or shape! It’s the same way with the body of Christ. Our different gifts, working in combination with each other, open up ministry and Gospel opportunities we could never imagine on our own! You can’t be all you are created to be without the rest of us. And we can’t be all we’re created to be without you. Together, we can affect change in our world in the name of Jesus.

The trends may say church attendance is down, but you and I do not have to be subject to the trends of our culture. In fact, we are called to change and shape our world together with the power of the Gospel. It is the power that God gave us when we come together. That’s why He tells us in Hebrews 10:25, not to give up “*meeting together, as is the habit of some.*” I am not asking you to add another thing to your already busy life; I am suggesting that we make the work of the kingdom of God a priority in our lives because it is the only work that really matters.

That need to gather together goes beyond what we can DO; it actually affects who we are and what we become. We find in the Bible that Jesus-followers are meant to be fueled by, equipped by, and connected to a local church. You need to be connected to a local body in your town that is committed to the truths in God’s Word. Paul states in Colossians,

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Colossians 3:16 (ESV)

The Word of Christ dwells among us. That ought not be a surprise to anyone. We are called to dig deeper in our relationship with Jesus, to experience greater freedom in Him, and experience radical and purposeful transformation. But did you see how that happens? The next line shows us: *“teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom,”* Admonish means to caution, correct, and urge.

This is a little scary and, at the same time, the powerful thing about coming together regularly. All of us can be blind at times. . . a bit off and maybe even a little wrong. All of us have blind spots, different experiences, different strengths, different weaknesses. We are used to doing things and seeing things one way – our way.

If you want to grow to the next level in the way you follow Jesus, you must get beyond your own voice and your own interpretation of God’s Word. This is definitely not the easiest thing to do, but who guaranteed easy? When has being sold out and being all in for anything ever been comfortable?

When you gather at *First Community Church of Wherever You Live*, I bet it is a rarity if you hear something you don’t already know on some level. In fact, if you ever hear a pastor proclaim a new interpretation of some passage that no one has ever thought of before, it’s probably questionable. Most of the time, your pastor is just reminding you of things you have already heard.

This reminds me of the couple that is having problems remembering things. During a checkup, the doctor tells them they are physically healthy, but they might want to start writing things down to help them remember. Later that night, they are watching television. The man gets up from his chair.

“Want anything while I’m in the kitchen?” he asks.

His wife says, “Yes, please get me a bowl of ice cream?”

“Sure” He responds.

“Don’t you think you should write it down so you can remember it?” she asks.

“No dear, I can remember a simple bowl of ice cream.”

“Well, I’d like some strawberries on top, too. Maybe you should write it down” says the wife.

“I can remember that. You want a bowl of ice cream with strawberries.”

“I’d also like whipped cream. I know you’ll forget that. Write it down,” she demands.

Irritated, the husband snaps, “I don’t need to write it down. I can remember it! Ice cream with strawberries and whipped cream, for goodness’ sake!”

After about twenty minutes, the man returns from the kitchen and hands his wife a plate of bacon and eggs. She stares at the plate for a minute and asks, “Where’s my toast?”

Like this couple, one of our big problems is that we all need constant reminders of the truth. In this world, there's a continuous, all-out assault on truth. Gather in a church that continually reminds you of the truth of God's Word, the truth of who God is, and the truth of who you are in Christ.

I am not concerned about people attending church less often. I am concerned that if we forsake meeting together, the truth will quietly slip from the forefront of our minds, and we will, without even realizing it, buy into and live according to the lies of this world. It amazes me how quickly I can forget or question God's goodness, His power, love, and involvement in my life. Gathering together with other believers keeps me on track with what I believe.

Gathering together also brings real help and support for life's difficulties. Life is hard. The truth is – all of us are going to get “hammered” at some time, in some way. When the tough times come, I want your church family to be there for you. When the tough times come for me, I want my church family to be there for me.

Paul wrote some beautiful words in 2 Corinthians:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

2 Corinthians 1:3–4

What a wonderful thing it is when Christ-followers gather together and extend the grace and care of the Lord to each another!

At the end of the day, it is not about you, and it is not about me. Christians gather to worship God because He is worthy of our praise. 1 Chronicles 16:29:

Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering and come before him! Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.

We need to worship God. To worship is to declare who He is and what place He has in our lives. As we make that declaration, our hearts and minds line up with the truth of our worship. Worship actually transforms us. C. S. Lewis said, “In the process of being worshipped . . . God communicates His presence to men.”⁶ As Christians worship together, they draw nearer to God. Jesus told us in Matthew 18:20,

For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.

We gather together to draw near to God. This gathering is an essential part of our personal relationship with Him.

But even if worship did absolutely nothing for us, we still should gather to worship God for no other reason than He deserves it. A. W. Tozer writes,

Sometimes I go to God and say, ‘God, if you never answer another prayer while I live on this earth, I’ll still worship you as long as I live and in the ages to come for what you’ve

⁶ C.S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1958), 92-93.

done already.’ God’s already put me so far in debt that if I were to live one million millenniums I couldn’t pay Him for what He’s done for me.⁷

Understand this, God does not have self-esteem issues. He does not *need* our worship. He does not *need* our praise. He *needs* nothing. But He deserves everything.

There is nothing like God’s church when it is working right. We are a group of self-governing Christians unleashed on the planet for Christ. Therefore, there is nearly nothing as sickening, pathetic, and tragic as the church when it’s not working right. Is there anything more disappointing than a gathering of believers who’ve decided to park the Gospel in the garage to keep it clean and safe and pure? What an amazing honor and privilege God has given us. Are you beginning to see how highly He thinks of you as part of this *ekklesia*?

It is our job to do our very best to make sure it is working right . . . that our Shelby is firing on all eight cylinders. But it only works right when we understand that the local church isn’t a building. It certainly isn’t a preaching pastor. It is not a worship pastor or a men’s pastor. It’s not staff or elders or deacons or . . .

It is a gathering—an assembly of Jesus-freaks who are united by love for Him and the liberty He provides. A church that is working right is a church where every individual in the gathering takes his or her place in the *ekklesia* sold out to take the keys of the kingdom and “bust” walls down with the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the glory of His name and for the freedom of His people.

⁷ A.W. Tozer, *Church: Living Faithfully as the People of God-Collected Insights from A. W. Tozer* (Wingspread, 2019), ebook.

Appendix 3

2 Chronicles 7:11-22 describes the scene right after the dedication of King Solomon's Temple and the Royal buildings, which took about twenty years to complete. The Temple was seen as the very dwelling place of the Lord.

Thus Solomon finished the house of the LORD and the king's house. All that Solomon had planned to do in the house of the LORD and in his own house he successfully accomplished. Then the LORD appeared to Solomon in the night and said to him: "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice. When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place. For now I have chosen and consecrated this house that my name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there for all time. And as for you, if you will walk before me as David your father walked, doing according to all that I have commanded you and keeping my statutes and my rules, then I will establish your royal throne, as I covenanted with David your father, saying, 'You shall not lack a man to rule Israel.' "But if you turn aside and forsake my statutes and my commandments that I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will pluck you up from my land that I have given you, and this house that I have consecrated for my name, I will cast out of my sight, and I will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples. And at this house, which was exalted, everyone passing by will be astonished and say, 'Why has the LORD done thus to this land and to this house?' Then they will say, 'Because they abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and laid hold on other gods and worshiped them and served them. Therefore he has brought all this disaster on them.' "

Now reimagine, if you will, God's Word above applied to our great nation.

Thus our Founding Fathers finished the creation of the constitutional republic of the United States of America. All that they had planned to do in America, God successfully accomplished. Then the LORD appeared to our Founding Fathers in the night and said to them: "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for Myself as a land for freedom loving people from every corner of the earth. When I send hardship, trials, turmoil, division, adversity, or even poverty that seems to devour the land among My people, if My people who are called by My name humble themselves, and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to the prayer that reverberates from the mountains to the prairies to the oceans white with foam. For now I have chosen and consecrated this great nation that My name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there for all time.

And as for you, if you will walk before me as William Bradford and John Alden and Isaac Allerton and the other godly men and women that landed in Plymouth Bay in 1620 walked, doing according to all that I have commanded you and keeping my statutes and My rules, then I will establish your nation, as I covenanted with you and the Christians that came before you, saying, 'You shall be a city on a hill.'

"But if you turn aside and forsake My statutes and My commandments that I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will pluck you up from My land that I have given you, and this nation that I have consecrated for My name, I will cast you out of My sight, and I will make your nation a proverb and a byword among all peoples. And of America, which was exalted, everyone passing by will be astonished and say, 'Why has the LORD done this to America?' Then they will say, 'Because they abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers who brought them here for the advancement of His kingdom, they abandoned liberty, and laid hold on other gods and worshiped them and served them. Therefore He has brought all this disaster on them.'"

About the Author



Ed Grifenhagen

I really needed to talk to my parents, but I didn't know what to say. I just needed to tell them what happened that morning and the events that led up to that morning. My dad and I had worked together every day for ten years and we were *thick as thieves*. In addition to that, I knew they absolutely would not want to hear what I had to say. No parent wants to feel like their kid is betraying them and their heritage. In fact, the last thing I would ever want to do is disappoint my folks.

"I need to talk to ya'll. Are you gonna be home tonight?" I asked my father. That was the afternoon of January 17, 2001. The Lord saved me in the dark, wee hours of that very morning and I needed to tell my mom and dad. You see, I grew up in a "religious" Jewish home. I was born on September 8, 1965 and had a *brit milah*, a ritual circumcision, eight days later on September 16. This event signified my entrance into the Jewish covenant community of *Adonai* (the LORD).

As a Jewish kid, I attended Sunday School every Sunday beginning at age four. Jewish Sunday School tends to be a bit different than Sunday School in a church. It's two to three hours long and very academic in nature. I went to Hebrew School on Tuesdays and Thursdays after school from 4:00-6:00 PM. We didn't read and study the Bible in Sunday School or Hebrew School. We learned basic Hebrew, learned about the Jewish culture, about Israel, and learned about the many Jewish holidays. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, I remember having to change into my football clothes at the 5:00 break so that I would not be any later to football practice than was absolutely necessary. Occasionally I would take some heat from other guys on my football teams about it, but my parents said, "Hebrew School trumps football!"

My family also attended services on Friday nights and Saturday mornings at Shearith Israel Synagogue on Wynnton Rd. in the heart of Columbus, GA. The Jewish Sabbath begins at sundown Friday and ends at sundown on Saturday. Most of the services were in Hebrew, which made it pretty difficult to have any idea of what was being said. We kept "kosher" at home, which means we followed the dietary laws in the Old Testament . . . no pork, no shellfish, no mixing of meat products and milk products, etc.

As a Jew, the New Testament and Jesus, in particular, were not an issue. If you are a Christian, the previous sentence is probably shocking to you, but I had zero knowledge about who Jesus was and I didn't believe the New Testament was part of the Bible. I was not taught that Jesus wasn't the Messiah or that the New Testament was wrong. It just was not an issue. It wasn't discussed, period. As an aside, no one EVER shared the Gospel with me . . . ever. And, "yes," I grew up in the Bible belt and "no" I never heard the Gospel from anybody. Wow, what an indictment on the professing Christian community!

I vividly remember the first football game of the 1978 Pioneer Colts Junior Midget division season at Bobby Ray Field right behind the Columbus, Georgia airport. It was a Thursday night-the day before my Bar Mitzvah. I was a fast little Jewish kid and played quarterback. On the second play of the game I ran a sweep around the left end and was streaking

down the sideline only to be hammered by an onslaught of Edgewood Red Devils. I ended up in a heap out of bounds with a severely broken left arm. My dad came down to the sideline with a cigarette dangling out of his mouth, looked down at the tangled mess that was my left arm and said, “&8%\$@#.” “&8%\$@#!” is all that I remember him saying.

I had a Bar Mitzvah to tend to Friday night and Saturday morning and I just messed it up by breaking my arm. Mom and dad had just bought me a new suit for the celebration and now I couldn't even wear it because of the cast that ran all the way from my hand up to my shoulder. As it turned out, my sister's boyfriend (an Orthodox Jew from New York) handled the Friday night service in my stead. I performed Saturday morning with the sleeve of my new suit cut off and my arm packed in ice. I led the worship service, read from the Torah and Haftorah, and gave my Bar Mitzvah speech—all while on pain meds and with my casted arm in a bucket of ice. My parents said, “The show must go on!”

I met Susan when I was 16 and she was 14. She was saved when she was 11 years old at Edgewood Baptist Church. When I was a senior at the University of Georgia I asked for her hand in marriage, but with one stipulation. She must convert to Judaism, so that our future children could grow up in a Jewish home. My parents told me, for years, how important this was. She agreed, went through a year-long conversion, and we were married in 1988. She was not asked to renounce Jesus or anything of the like. She simply learned the Jewish culture and holidays and was declared Jewish at the end of that year.

For the first few years of our marriage, we were members of a conservative Synagogue and later joined a reform congregation. We attended services every now and then, but always on the Jewish holidays. Looking back on it I think we were members mostly for my parent's benefit. During this time, the importance of Judaism in our life together waned. I didn't really know why, but it just kind of fell to the side. I never doubted God's existence or the role that he plays in our lives. As time passed there was just something about Judaism that didn't feel quite right. Something was missing. I didn't know what it was, but there was a strange void in my life.

Zachary, our first child, was born in 1992 and then Will, our second son, in 1995. Time passed and we started raising our little family the best way we knew how. We were trying to live and raise our children with a strict sense of right and wrong. They went to Sunday school every Sunday, just like I had and just like all their Jewish peers. I put my lack of spiritual fulfillment on the back burner and just went about my day-to-day life.

In January of 2000, I decided that I wanted to figure out what I believed in, both, in my head and in my heart. I wanted to believe because I believed, not because somebody told me to believe. I wanted to know the truth. Somebody is right in this whole deal and somebody is wrong. I told Susan that I might end up a Rabbi, or a monk, or an atheist, or a whatever. In a sense, I wanted to prove to myself that Jesus could not possibly be the Messiah and that Christianity is really one big deception involving just another one of many Old Testament prophets. Surely there was no way that I would end up believing in this Jesus stuff.

The logical place to start was the Bible. You know, that book that I'd never read, even though I was in the synagogue every time the doors were open. So, off on the quest I went. Every

night I opened up this huge Bible my parents gave Susan and I for our wedding (obviously Old Testament only), as well as a *New International Version* that I purchased independently. I was reading both of these Bibles at the same time. I tried to be as objective as humanly possible. I would read the *NIV*, because it was easier to understand and then I would refer back to my big Old Testament Bible whenever I ran into a controversial issue.

I spent the next 11 months reading these bibles cover to cover. I had never read the Old Testament, much less the New Testament. While I was reading these, I also read parts of the following books, *Biblical Literacy* by Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, *Christianity in Jewish Terms* by Kenski et al. and *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* by Josh McDowell. When I finished the Bible I read these books in their entirety. I was trying to investigate the historicity of both The Old and New Testaments. I think I needed a factual basis for belief. I read *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus* by Michael Brown, *The Nine Questions People Ask About Judaism* by Dennis Prager and Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, *The Case for Faith and The Case for Christ* by Lee Strobel. My dad also gave me a paper that he received, as a teenager in the early 1950's, from his Rabbi addressing the Jewish perspective of Jesus as the Christ. I could not get my hands on enough reading material. It was an obsession. I would stay up until 2:00-3:00 in the morning reading.

When I finished the book of Malachi (the last book in the Old Testament), it just seemed like the *story* couldn't possibly end there. It took about a week of wrestling with myself, but I

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

Jeremiah 31:31-34

decided to continue on and read the New Testament. What? I could not believe that I was actually going to read the New Testament. But, what's the harm? If it's fake, it's fake and I'll figure it out, right? Sounds crazy, but one passage kept sticking in my mind.

During this thirteen-month investigation I developed thoughts and feelings I never imagined I could have. The only way I can even begin to understand what happened was that I experienced a gradual build-up of belief in my head that culminated in a passionate conviction in my heart. I was blown away. I mean flabbergasted. Could I possibly believe in this? I guess I

could because I was totally convinced of the historical accuracy of the Bible, both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Knowing the truth is much more than just knowing a set of facts. A person can't be convinced of the truth by persuasive reasoning or shrewdly designed arguments. The truth about life can only be known by those who want to know it, by those who love the truth because it is the truth, not because it is what they hoped or expected it would be. Anyone who wants to know the truth and is willing to see and hear it will know it; no one will ever know the truth that does not want to know it. Dan Cardea, in *A Matter of the Heart* says, "Knowing the truth is not a matter of intellectual enlightenment, mental capacity, or reasoning power. . .it is 'a matter of the heart.'"

On a dark rainy morning in the middle of January 2001, at about 6:00 AM, I was driving to work by myself thinking about my faith, my parents, my wife and my kids. I just started to cry because I realized that I had accepted the fact that Jesus died on the cross a few thousand years ago to pay a penalty that was mine to pay and then He ran out of the tomb a hundred percent alive three days later. All of the soul searching that I had gone through in that year culminated in a monumental change of heart that rainy morning. A nearly inexplicable newness overwhelmed me.

It was such an amazing, scary, exhilarating, and thrilling journey. God, in His sovereignty, allowed me to experience radical life change, using a trek through His inerrant Word as the tool. Unbelievable! The Word of God can lead a lost sinner into a saving relationship with Himself. That 13-month journey resulted in a passionate love for His Word. Frankly, I wake up almost every day just blown away that He saved me.