

Understanding Authority

Intro:

A. We must come to a conclusion on authority (how we determine right from wrong). If we do not, then no other topic matters, for we will all come to different conclusions. When there is no authority, there is only chaos. The book of Judges gives us a frightening view of what life is like without it. Judges 21:25 says, “In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.”

B. When we realize what authority we are under, we have no choice but to respect and obey it even when we don't like what it says.

I. Is it right or Wrong?

- A. A little white lie, or implying something that is not true.
- B. My happiness should be my main goal in life.
- C. Love your neighbor but hate your enemy.
- D. All good people will go to Heaven.
- E. Abortion is an okay form of birth control.
- F. Capitol punishment is one correct form of punishment.
- G. Living together outside of the legal bonds marriage is okay.
- H. Babies inherit Adam's sin, so they need to be baptized.

II. Who Decides?

- A. Me – if it feels good it is all right.
- B. Society – this is a democracy so follow the majority.
- C. Family values – whatever mom & dad said is so.
- D. Preachers (Pastors, Priests, the Pope, Rabbi's). Don't they represent God?
- E. Churches – by rules and regulations.

III. Authority from Above

- A. Do you believe in a being greater than mankind? (higher power)
- B. Do you believe that being created the world and mankind? (Gen. 1:1-3)
- C. If you accept that there is a God and that God created everything, then would it not stand to reason that this God has ALL authority over mankind?
- D. How did/does this God speak to mankind? (Heb. 1:1-4)
- E. God spoke through the “Fathers” and then the “Prophets,” and it is recorded for us in what we call “the Old Testament.”
- F. Then God spoke through His Son. (John 1:1-4; Matt. 17:1-8; Matt. 28:18)
- G. Jesus gave authority to his apostles to speak/teach what God led them to say. (John 14:25-26; 16:12-13; 17:8,14,18)
- H. These apostles, wrote down for us what God, through the Holy Spirit, said to them. This is called the New Testament. (Acts 2:41; 2 Pet. 1:16-21; 2 Tim. 3:16-17)

Conclusion:

- A. For us today, the FINAL authority is the Bible. It is ALL we need.

Understanding The Bible

Intro:

To many, the origin of the Bible can be summed-up as follows: "A mere translation of a translation of an interpretation of an oral tradition" - and therefore, a book with no credibility or connection to the original texts. Actually, the foregoing statement is a common misunderstanding of both Christians and non-Christians alike. Translations such as the King James Version are derived from existing copies of ancient manuscripts such as the Hebrew Masoretic Text (Old Testament) and the Greek Textus Receptus (New Testament), and are not translations of texts translated from other interpretations.

I. Origin of the Bible - The Reliability of Ancient Manuscripts

Another challenge against the origin of the Bible is the reliability of the manuscripts from which today's Bibles are translated. Remarkably, there is widespread evidence for absolute reliability. There are more than 14,000 existing Old Testament manuscripts and fragments copied throughout the Middle East, Mediterranean and European regions that agree dramatically with each other. In addition, these texts agree with the Septuagint version of the Old Testament, which was translated from Hebrew to Greek some time during the 3rd century BC. The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in Israel in the 1940's and 50's, also provide phenomenal evidence for the reliability of the ancient transmission of the Jewish Scriptures (Old Testament) before the arrival of Jesus Christ. The Hebrew scribes who copied the Jewish Scriptures dedicated their lives to preserving the accuracy of the holy books. These scribes went to phenomenal lengths to insure manuscript reliability. They were highly trained and meticulously observed, counting every letter, word and paragraph against master scrolls. A single error would require the immediate destruction of the entire text.

The manuscript evidence for the New Testament is also dramatic, with over 5,300 known copies and fragments in the original Greek, nearly 800 of which were copied before 1000 AD. Some manuscript texts date to the early second and third centuries, with the time between the original autographs and our earliest existing copies being a remarkably short 60 years. Interestingly, this manuscript evidence far surpasses the manuscript reliability of other ancient writings that we trust as authentic every day. Look at these comparisons: Julius Caesar's "The Gallic Wars" (10 manuscripts remain, with the earliest one dating to 1,000 years after the original autograph).

Homer's "Iliad", the most renowned book of ancient Greece, has 643 copies of manuscript support. In those copies, there are 764 disputed lines of text, as compared to 40 lines in all the New Testament manuscripts (Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, Moody, Chicago, Revised and Expanded 1986, p. 367). In fact, many people are unaware that each of William Shakespeare's 37 plays (written in the 1600's) has gaps in the surviving manuscripts, forcing scholars to "fill in the blanks." This pales in textual comparison with the over 5,300 copies and fragments of the New Testament that, together, assure us that nothing's been lost. In fact, all of the New Testament except eleven verses can be reconstructed from the writings of the early church fathers in the second and third centuries. (*A General Introduction to the Bible*, Ch. 24.)

II. The Old Testament or Covenant or Law or Scripture

The Old Testament, sometimes called “the Law” or “the old covenant” was given to the Jews (also called the Hebrews or Israelites). The language of the Jews was Hebrew and therefore most of their Law was written in Hebrew. There were times when they were in bondage and sections were written in Aramaic, but that is less common. The Old Testament ends with the book of Malachi. A Jewish historian in the first century named Josephus said that no book was added to the Hebrew scriptures after the time of Malachi. The Old Testament came into an accepted collection about the time of Ezra (c. 400 B.C.). Some of the oldest manuscripts of the Old Testament are the Cairo Codex (A.D. 895), the Leningrad Codex (A.D. 916, full codex A.D. 1008)

One reason why so few old copies exist is because the Jewish scribes looked upon their copies with almost superstitious respect. They would often bury any copy which was old or worn. Their motive was to prevent the improper use of the material on which the sacred name of God had been inscribed.

What we must realize is that printing is relatively new. Copies of any manuscript were done by hand. This process made it inevitable for scribal variations to appear. The greatest find was the Dead Sea Scrolls. In the findings was a copy of the book of Isaiah that is dated about 100 B.C. What we found in 1948 in this scroll is that there were scarcely any changes to what we had that only dated around A.D. 900-1000. These variants were things like “holy, holy” instead of “holy, holy, holy.”

The common use of the Old Testament in the days of Jesus and the Apostles is called the Septuagint (c. 285 B.C.). The Septuagint is a Greek version of the Hebrew Bible. It is most often used when writers of the New Testament quoted the Old Testament. During the time of the Roman Empire, Greek was the world’s language. To have a copy of the Old Testament in a more common language was helpful.

III. The New Testament or Covenant

The New Testament was written in Greek, the common language of the first century. It was written by men who had a very close connection to Jesus or one of the Apostles. The collection of 27 books that comprise the New Testament were considered canon, or rule, by 367 A.D. In the middle of the second century (100-199 A.D.) Justin Martyr states that “on Sundays in the Christian worship assemblies the memoirs of the apostles were read together with the writings of the prophets.”

The books that were questioned in the New Testament as “canon” or the rule given by God, were: James, Jude, 2 & 3 John, 2 Peter, as well as Hebrews and Revelation to some extent.

When the church of Christ was first established it had not thought of a “new” testament. Its Bible was what we call the Old Testament. The authority for doctrine in the early church was based upon the apostles whom Jesus chose and those to whom Jesus appeared (i.e. Paul the Apostle). The early Christians copied letters given from one church and passed them on to others. Therefore we have thousands of copies of the writings in the New Testament, but like the Old, we do not have any personally signed manuscripts.

It is important for you to understand the Bible. Many churches teach doctrines that are not accepted by everyone. How do you know if these doctrines are true? Does the church have the authority to tell you? The place to begin is the question of Authority.

Books of the Bible Old Testament

Genesis – The Beginning of creation, story of Adam & Eve, Noah, Abraham and Joseph

Job – NOT written by Moses, but probably takes place during the timeline of the book of Genesis.

Exodus – The story of Moses and the 10 Commandments

Leviticus – The duties of the priesthood

Numbers – Information about each of the tribes, story of 12 Spies

Deuteronomy – The “Second Telling” of the Law (to the new generation that would enter the Promised Land)

The first five books (Genesis-Deuteronomy) were written by Moses

Joshua – Entering into the Promised Land (Canaan) and division of land according to the 12 tribes.

Judges – Stories of the spiritual failings of the people and the need for spiritual guides (judges) to help them become people of faith again.

Ruth – Story of Ruth that takes place during the days of the Judges

1 Samuel – Life of King Saul (first King of Israel)

2 Samuel – Life of King David (second King of Israel)

Psalms – poems written mostly by David, often put to music by Jews

1 Kings – Life of King Solomon (third King of Israel), division of Northern/Southern Kingdoms, Elijah the Prophet

Proverbs & Song of Songs/Solomon, Ecclesiastes – All written by King Solomon and tell moral truths (*Proverbs*), romantic love (*Song of Songs*), and the failing of selfish desires (*Ecclesiastes*).

2 Kings – More about the kings of the Northern/Southern kingdoms, Elisha the prophet

1 Chronicles – retelling of the stories of King Saul & King David

2 Chronicles – retelling of the stories of King Solomon, dividing of the Israel into two kingdoms (Northern/Southern)

Isaiah through Malachi – all are stories of the warnings prophets gave to the people of the Northern or Southern Kingdom about the need to repent or else they will be taken away in captivity. The Northern Kingdom fell first to Assyria and the Southern Kingdom fell to the Babylonians.

Esther & Daniel – stories that take place while most of the Jews are in captivity.

Ezra & Nehemiah – telling of the stories about these two leaders as they come back from captivity. Their role was to help restore Israel as a nation before Jesus came. This would be about 400 years before the birth of Jesus. Also the temple is rebuilt.

Understanding Sin

Introduction:

A. As you have seen in the overview of the Bible, God had a plan from before the creation of the world. 1 Pet. 1:18-21. The plan for Jesus to come to earth as a man was not an afterthought of God's or "Plan B," it was his eternal plan from the beginning.

Why did Jesus have to come to earth?

B. Gen. 2:15-17 tells us about one command that God gave Adam and Eve. If they broke that one rule, what would happen? What did happen? Gen. 3:1-7.

C. Listen to the Bible: Rom. 6:23. What are the wages of sin? 1 John 1:5-6. Can God have fellowship (a relationship) with someone who walks in darkness? Is. 59:1-2 teaches us that sin separates us from God.

I. What We Cannot Do

A. Is there anything you or I can do to take away our own sin? God loves you very much, but how does he feel about your sin? Can we do good deeds so that God will ignore our sin?

B. This is where Jesus comes in. God knew from before the creation of the world that mankind would sin, but there was nothing they could do about sin, so God decided he would do something we could not – God would become man and show us how to live.

C. Eph. 2:1-6. What caused man to die? How did we get into this situation where our sin separated us from God?

II. What God Can Do

A. Eph. 2:8-10. Take a closer look at the two aspects that are need for salvation. Our part is faith, while God's part is grace. How would you define grace?

B. Consider the "before and after" picture in Titus 2:11-12; 3:3-7.

C. It is again stated in Rom. 3:23-26.

D. God's grace is extended to all who will believe (have faith). What does it mean to have faith? Heb. 11:1-2, 6. Faith starts by reviewing the facts you know. When we read Rom. 10:17 we learn that faith comes (gets its facts) by what?

Understanding The Cross

Introduction:

A. When a person is convicted of their own sinfulness, the next step becomes “What do I do about it?” No one wants to feel guilt all of their life, and God does not want you to live in guilt. But He does call us to deal with our sinfulness and accept the grace He gives to us. That action on our part is called repentance and on God’s part is called redemption.

B. Rom. 6:23 says, “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ.” What is sin? 1 John 3:4-6.

C. The 10th plague was the death of the first-born. Exodus 12:1-13; 21-28. God was going to “pass over” the homes belonging to the people of Israel when He saw what?

D. Describe the lamb that was to be used for the sacrifice.

I. Jesus the Passover Lamb

A. Acts 8:30-35, John 1:29-35, 1 Cor. 5:7.

B. What was the purpose of the lamb at the Passover? How is Jesus our lamb?

C. At what point in time was the crucifixion of Jesus? Luke 22:7-23. How is the Lord’s Supper that Jesus instituted and in which we partake each week similar in meaning to the Jewish Passover?

II. The Redemption

A. We often stop at the point above, but I want us to consider one more idea. We deserve to die in our sin, but Jesus not only paid the price on the cross, but in doing so, he bought us back, redeemed us.

B. While the lamb was the substitute, it was also the price paid to buy back the first-born. When Jesus, the Passover lamb and “first-born” of God, paid the price for our sins, he bought us back and redeemed us. Read Gal. 3:13-14 and 1 Pet. 1:17-21.

C. We have been bought with a price and belong to God. The story of the Passover is far deeper than just the last plague upon Egypt when Pharaoh let God’s people go, but is the story of salvation as seen in Jesus.

III. Repentance

A. Why did Jesus come to earth? Luke 19:1-10 is the story of Zacchaeus.

1. What was his job? How was he viewed?

2. What did he want to do? How do we strive to see Jesus today?

3. What did Zacchaeus do to show his repentance?

4. What did Jesus say was the reason he came?

B. Rom. 12:1-2

1. How do you present your body as a “living sacrifice?”

2. What does it mean to be “transformed?”

C. Matt 21:27-32. How were the tax collectors and prostitutes entering the kingdom of God ahead of the religious leaders of that day? Are you like the son in the parable that said you won’t, but changed and did the father’s will, or are you like the son who said he would but only gave lip service and never did obey?

Understanding Surrender

Intro:

A. We have read in the Bible that Jesus took our place on the cross. Understand that we because of our sin we deserve to die, but God did not want us to die in our sin. Since sin equals death, Jesus came to pay the price and die for the sin of mankind. When Jesus rose back up from the dead he conquered sin and death and took away the power of Satan over us. 1 Cor. 15:55-57, Heb. 2:14-18.

B. Our response to the love of Christ is that we want to change and follow his will, not our own fleshly desires. This action is called repentance.

C. We are told in the Bible that we are saved by grace through faith and not of works so that no one could boast. Eph. 2:8-9. In this lesson we want to examine faith a little deeper as we begin to understand the salvation that God offers us.

D. Let's start this lesson by using an equation of words/phrases that are used interchangeably in scripture.

Saved = Sins Forgiven = Eternal Life = Born Again

<u>Actions</u>	<u>Facts</u>	<u>Promises</u>
	John 3:16 "Jesus is God's Son" John 11:25-26 Mark 5:7-8 James 2:19	
	Rom. 10:9-10 "Jesus is Lord" Master, Ruler, Authority Matt 7:21 Matt. 10:32-33 2 Cor. 3:17-18	
	Mark 16:16 Matt. 28:18-20 "Jesus has all authority	

Lord, Help My Unbelief

Intro:

A. Would you call yourself a believer? What are you a believer in? What does it mean to be a believer?

B. Sometimes we can put ourselves in the place a person in scripture because they are dealing with a similar problem. One problem people have is growing in their belief. Read the situation that took place in Mark 9:14-29. Let's center on verses 22-24. As you consider the situation the father first asks "if you can do anything..." The reply that Jesus gives is what? What is the meaning of that reply? How does the father respond to Jesus (verse 24)? Define "unbelief."

I. Belief and Faith

A. The words in Greek are from the same root word. When used in this context it is not a system of beliefs, but the placing of trust in something or someone. This is something God demands from us to him. Heb. 11:6.

B. My faith or lack of, affects my whole spiritual life. Look at what Jesus says just before he ascends back into heaven – Mark. 16:15-16. Paul says something similar in Romans 10:8-13. Now look at how Paul builds this in verses 14-15. Believing is based upon hearing and then deciding to act upon that which you have heard. The Hebrew writer defines faith in Heb. 11:1.

C. What is the difference between the wise and foolish man in Matt. 7:24-27?

D. John 12:37-41. This section describes people who hear (or see) but refuse to believe. Belief is a choice and an action. It is something I choose to do or choose to not do. I can grow in my faith or I can choose to remain immature in my faith. But it boils down to choice. Do I want to believe – yes or no? If I say "yes" am I willing to pay the price? Read verse 42-43. Why would these people not confess their faith? To believe in Jesus requires more than an intellectual agreement of a spiritual fact. It requires a change of life to be like what he has taught. Read verses 44-50. Why will people be condemned according to these words? 2 Thes. 2:9-11.

II. How does a person overcome their unbelief?

A. The father in our story admitted his belief in Jesus was not at the level it should be and wanted help with it. Peter says to "add to your faith..." (2 Pet. 1:5) Faith is something that is described as "weak" and also as "great." A weak faith is one that should respond to God in a particular action, but for whatever reason does not. A "great faith" was only used to describe people who did not have the upbringing of a Jew but accepted wholehearted God's power in their lives.

B. What are some things you can do to help your faith grow? Can a relationship increase if there is no communication? Study is far more helpful than reading the Bible. But study should have a purpose; a reason. Do you read your Bible looking to change your life to become more like it teaches; or do you read your Bible simply looking to understand a God? How important is prayer to growing your faith? The very reason a person prays is because they believe. If I don't pray, I admit I have a weak or even non-existent faith. Faith begins by humbling coming before God and accepting His will for our life. Unless we desire to bring about a change in our life, our faith will not grow.

Understanding Baptism

Intro:

- A. To be a Christian, there are three things a person needs to understand:
 - 1. Faith – What is it that motivates your actions, thoughts & intents of the heart?
 - 2. Sin – What is it that separates you from God and leaves you?
 - 3. Grace – What is it that saves you from what you deserve?
- B. Is it possible to be saved OUTSIDE of, or excluding, Jesus?
- C. In your understanding, why did Jesus go to the cross?

I. Baptism and Grace (Romans 6:1-14)

- A. Should we sin so that God extends to us more grace?
- B. What does it mean to have "died" to sin?
- C. What does it mean that "we were baptized into His death?"
- D. Baptism is a re-enactment of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Look at our passage and consider each aspect.
 - 1. We are baptized into His _____. That being true, the only reason to be baptized is to admit we are sinners and want to die to our sin. In baptism we join Jesus at the cross and put to death our sinful nature.
 - 2. Buried with Him. What is the point of a physical burial when someone dies? One question people have is why not pour or sprinkle? Why total immersion? Think of the symbolism of a burial as part of a death process. (More will be said later.)
 - 3. United in His resurrection. Baptism is the transforming power of grace into the lives of the believer. When we "come up" out of the water like Jesus "came up" out of the grave, we are a new creation or a new life. (Gal. 2:20)

II. Other Passages to Study on Baptism

- A. Galatians 3:27 – We become sons of God through what?
- B. Matthew 28:18-20 – Jesus taught that the way to become a disciple was what?
- C. Acts 2:36-41 – When the people were convicted that they had sinned, what did Peter tell them to do? According to verse 41, what does God do when we are baptized?
- D. Colossians 2:9-12 – How do we "put off" our sinful nature?
- E. 1 Peter 3:18-22 – What does baptism do?

III. Conversion Stories

A. If you want to know how a person becomes saved, then you need to look at the lives of people who were not saved and what they did to become saved. The place to turn in our Bible would be the book of Acts of the Apostles. This book is about church history – telling how people became Christians and how churches got started. Take a look at a few stories from Acts.

- 1. Acts 8:26-40. When the eunuch wanted to be baptized, what happened?
- 2. Acts 10:1-6. Was this man a "believer?" Acts 10:47-48.
- 3. Acts 16:13-15 Why would a good person need to be baptized?
- 4. Acts 16:29-34 Paul said that in order to be saved what needed to happen?

IV. Greek Language

A. The New Testament (New Covenant) was originally written in the Greek language. When a person translates from one language to another they have options on what word to use. Rarely do you have an exact word for word translation from one language to another.

B. The word "baptize" is a transliteration from the Greek language to the English. Translators took the main letters from the Greek word and made a new English word. In Greek, the word means:

1. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* "dip, immerse, wash"

2. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* "to dip in or under, to immerse, to sink"

C. In the original language people conclude that full immersion was used. There were words for "sprinkle" and "pour" but they were never used when talking about the way a person is baptized. This church wants to follow the Bible as closely as possible and therefore ONLY baptizes people by full immersion. It is how we recognize people as "members" of the body of Christ and therefore "members" of this church family.

V. Can I Lose My Salvation?

A. Read the following passages:

1. 1 Corinthians 9:27
2. Galatians 5:4
3. 1 Tim. 4:1-3
4. Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-31
5. James 5:19-20
6. 2 Peter 2:20-22
7. Revelation 3:16

B. While it seems clear that a Christian CAN lose their salvation, at what point that happens we do not know. Our goal should be to stay as close to God as possible and not even have to worry about this taking place. God desires for all men to repent and come to Him. God wants to forgive you of EVERY sin you commit.

C. Our Christ life should center upon obedience to the will of God. So what do we do when we sin? (1 John 1:5 – 2:2.)

Understanding Spiritual Growth

Introduction:

A. When you take a look at your life as a Christian, what are some steps you have taken to stay strong and remain in Christ?

B. Acts 2 tells the story of the beginning of the church. In that account we read of how the church began, and on the day of Pentecost about 3000 people were baptized and added to the church. These new Christians did four things that every Christian (young and old) needs to do. Read together *Acts 2:36-47*. In verse 41 we read that these new Christians “devoted” themselves. What does this word “devoted” mean to you? To what did they devote themselves?

I. Study (Apostles' Teaching)

A. One area to which these new Christians devoted themselves was the apostles' teaching. Each day and from house to house the apostles taught about Jesus and the way of life for a Christian. Why was listening to the apostles so important, and what do you think the apostles were teaching?

B. Today we do not have the apostles with us. How can we devote ourselves to the apostles' teachings? How important is personal study, group study and worship to any Christian? What reason might a person have to not be at any service of the church? How do you feel about the four formal services we offer? What benefit do you get from them? *1 Pet. 2:1-3*.

C. Let me share with you some of the studies that are currently going on:

1. Sunday School – 9:30 A.M. each week. Currently there are three classes: in the auditorium, in the fellowship hall, and in the library.
2. Wednesday – 7:30 P.M. each week. Currently there are two or three adult classes.
3. Small Group Studies – There is a ladies class that meets at Sarah Sindorf's apartment on Tuesdays, twice a month at 8:00 in the evening. There is a class that meets for those 50 and older at the building on the first and third Monday morning at 10:30 for an hour. We also have two small groups that meet on Fridays. The Nichols host one at their home the first and third Fridays from 7:30 to 9:00; and I host one at the building on the second and fourth Fridays from 6:30 to 7:30.

II. Worship and Fellowship

A. The Christians in the early church gathered every Sunday to worship God. It was probably a different, style than we have today in our services, but the purpose is the same – to praise God and to be encouraged through the Lord's Supper.

B. We have two worship services on Sunday (10:30 A.M. and 6:00 P.M.). These services are different and we encourage people to come to both services. We offer two services, in part, to encourage one another to grow closer as a family and deeper in our knowledge of the Bible. My lessons on Sunday night are very different in style/

C. What do you find most beneficial from our worship services? Which service seems to give you greater spiritual encouragement and strength, and why?

D. Fellowship is about connecting to the family of God – spiritually and socially. We want to see you often at as many things as possible.

Understanding the Lord's Supper

Intro:

A. One area you might have noticed is how often we partake of the "Lord's Supper" and that we spend time talking about it before sharing it with everyone in attendance. The Whitehall Church of Christ is a place that shares the Lord's Supper with everyone who desires it. While we do not promote children partaking of the Lord's Supper unless they have been baptized, we do not stand in judgment of anyone partaking.

B. In this lesson we will discuss the name "Lord's Supper," how often it was done, how it affects me, and views of the bread and cup.

I. The Name – Lord's Supper

A. Let's be honest, a bit of cracker is far from a supper. One has to wonder why it is called such if it is not an actual meal. Below is a list names we could call this meal.

1. 1 Cor. 11:20 – Lord's Supper
2. 1 Cor. 10:16 – Communion
3. 1 Cor. 10:20 – The Lord's Table
4. Luke 22:17, 19 & 1 Cor. 11:24 – Eucharist (the Greek word normally translated "giving thanks")
5. It is also associated with a religious meal known as the Love Feast (2 Pet. 2:13 and Jude 12)

B. This time of remembrance was first started by Jesus on the night he was betrayed by Judas. Many people refer to this time as "the Last Supper." So the Lord's Supper began at a common meal. It was during that meal that Jesus told about the bread being his body and the fruit of the vine being his blood. You can read about this in Matt. 26:17-30, Mark 14:12-26 and Luke 22:7-23.

C. In these passages Jesus talks about unleavened bread and wine. How close do we need to be to those elements? In our church we use unleavened bread and non-fermented juice. Would pizza and Coke work just as well?

II. When Was It Taken?

- A. On what day of the week did Jesus institute this time of remembrance?
- B. Starting with what book of the New Testament is the church established?
- C. When did the church partake of the Lord's Supper?
 1. Acts 20:7
 2. 1 Cor. 11:18 (when did the church come together?)
 3. Is there any example or implication that this was done at other times than in worship (weddings, births or funerals, for example)? When do you believe is the most biblically accurate time to partake of the Lord's Supper?

III. What The Lord's Supper Means & Does – 1 Cor. 10:14-22 & 1 Cor. 11:17-29

- A. It promotes unity within the church
- B. It is a time for me to reflect upon Jesus
- C. It proclaims my belief in a second coming
- D. It forces me to think about how and why I am partaking
- E. It is a time to reflect upon my own spirituality

IV. Views of Bread and Wine

A. Transubstantiation View – normally considered a "Roman Catholic" view and teaches that the bread and wine actually become the literal body and blood of Jesus. This is because Jesus himself calls this "his" body and "his" blood.

B. The Consubstantiation View – was developed by Martin Luther and teaches that Christ's body and blood are truly present "in, with and under" the bread and wine. The elements do not actually change their substance into the flesh and blood, but they become the same as heat is present in a piece of hot iron, so Christ is present in the elements. This view is associated with the Lutheran Church.

C. Symbolic View – is where the bread and wine simply represent Christ's body and blood. Since Jesus used symbolic speech on several occasions, it can be accepted that Jesus was placing emphasis on the reason more than the elements used. The word "communion" in the Bible means "fellowship with." The symbolic view allows people to "fellowship with" Christ instead of partaking in his actual body and blood.

Understanding Giving

Intro:

A. Have you ever felt that churches are more interested in your money than in you? Many people are turned-off of churches because of the emphasis placed upon money.

B. What does the word "tithe" mean?

I. Giving in the Old Testament

A. The command in the Old Testament was to offer a tithe to the Lord. When Malachi, the last of the Old Testament prophets, saw the poor giving of the people of Israel he would write: (Mal 3:8-10) "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, 'How do we rob you?'" "In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse-the whole nation of you-because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it."

B. Tithes were what were expected by the law, and offerings were that which you gave above and beyond what you had to give. It was a gift to God.

II. New Testament Giving

A. In the New Testament there is never a command on how much to give. Instead, like most of the New Testament laws, it is your heart that God considers.

Review the following passages:

1. Luke 6:38
2. 2 Cor 8:1-8
3. 2 Cor. 9:6-15
 - a. Giving is something I should think about
 - b. Giving is something I should be happy about
 - c. Giving is done to meet a need
 - d. Giving is an expression of my thanks to God

Understanding Prayer

Introduction:

- A. What do you think is the point of prayer?
- B. When do you pray? (time or times during the day)
- C. How often do you pray?
- D. Do you feel comfortable praying to God?
- E. Do you feel comfortable praying if others are listening?

I. Learning To Pray

A. In the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7) Jesus teaches about many subjects. One subject is prayer. Read Matt. 6:5-15.

1. In verses 5-8 Jesus says not to pray to be seen of men. Give an example of when you think that someone is praying only to "show off" before people?

2. He also says that we should not "babble" or ramble. Some churches have you repeat the "Lord's Prayer." Do you think it is good to pray this prayer many times in a row?

3. When Jesus taught how to pray, what do you learn from this prayer?

II. Conversational Prayer

A. Prayer is a time to talk with God. It is a time to share you heart, emotions, and mind. David was great at sharing what he felt. In many of the Psalms you read about his joy that he expressed to God and in other times you read about his sorrow and repentance over sin. Many of these Psalms were prayers and became song the Jews sang as worship.

B. When you pray, do you openly talk with God like you would a friend?

C. Read Ps. 51 and see how David prayed a prayer of repentance.

D. Read Ps. 8 and see how David prayed a prayer of joy about God's greatness.

III. Hard Passages On Prayer

A. There are some passages that don't have easy answers. In context we find that God is NOT some genie that we can use whenever we want and make him do our will. Prayer is not a list of desires and wants. We cannot manipulate God in prayer. Prayer is a way to talking with God, in faith believing that what he knows is the right thing will take place.

B. Consider these passages:

1. Mark 11:20-26. How much power is there in a prayer of faith?

2. 2 Cor. 12:7-10. Why did Paul not get his prayer answered with a "Yes?"

3. James 4:1-3, 5:13-18. What are "right motives" and how can we be like "Elijah?"

Conclusion:

A. Paul was a man who spent long hours in prayer. Why would a person spend much time in prayer?

B. How do you think prayer could help you be a stronger Christian?