

Serpents and Doves



Mapping our Spiritual Growth

Course Schedule

1	Introduction: Making Spirit-Led Decisions	1	Mason	Main Classroom	4/20
PART I: Living by a Different Standard in My Relationship with God					
2	Growing in My Belief (Knowledge-Faith)	2	Mason	Main Classroom	4/23
3	Growing in My Trust (Action-Faith)	3	Mason	Main Classroom	4/27
4	Identifying Temptations	4	All	Split	4/30
5	Overcoming Temptations	5	All	Split	5/4
6	Working in a Local Congregation	6	Mason	Main Classroom	5/7
PART II: Living by a Different Standard in Confusing Situations					
7	Glorifying God in Grey Areas	7	Ryan	Main Classroom	5/11
8	Dealing with Doubt	8	Ryan	Main Classroom	5/14
PART III: Living by a Different Standard in My Relationships with Others					
9	Dating	11,12	All	Split	5/25, 5/28
10	Having Godly Fun; Review	13	Ryan	Main Classroom	6/1

Lesson 1



Making Spirit-Led Decisions

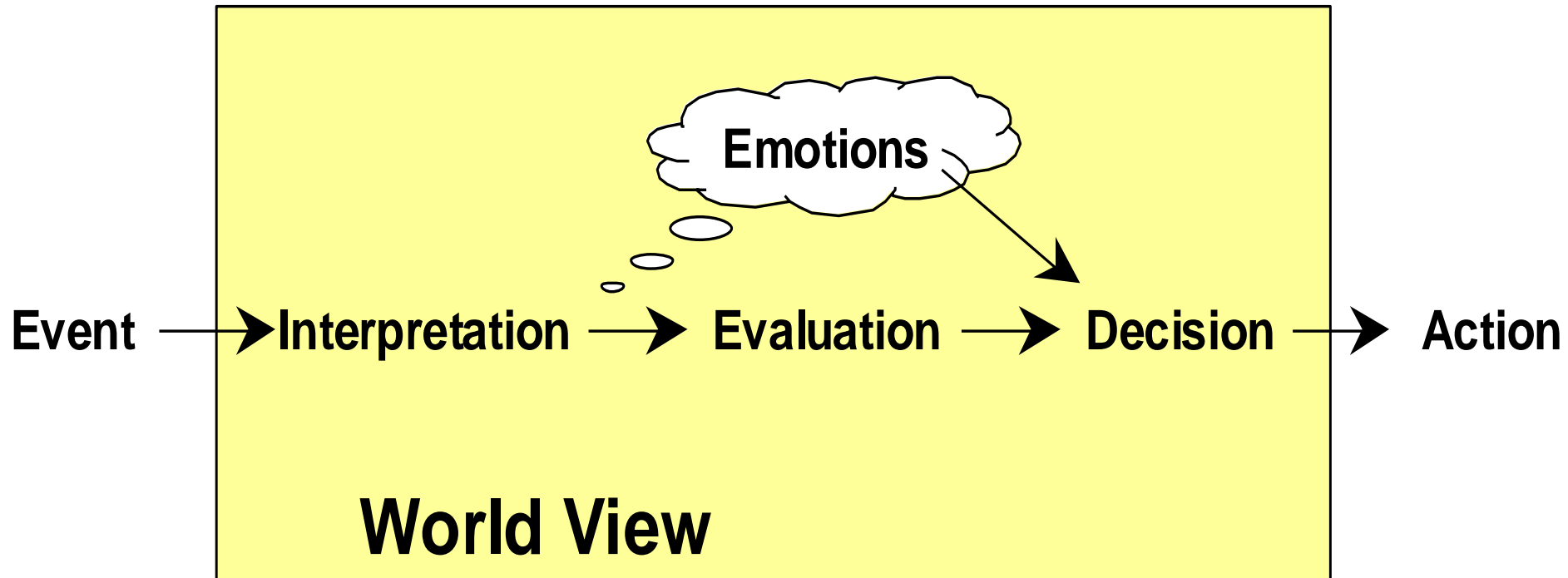
World View Defined

- **The mental model of the operation of all things, including man and his behavior. The fundamental explanations from which all other truth is determined.***

*** “...the fundamental cognitive orientation of an individual or society encompassing natural philosophy, fundamental existential and normative postulates or themes, values, emotions, and ethics. ...The term is a loan translation ... of German *Weltanschauung*”**

[Palmer, Gary B. (1996). *Toward A Theory of Cultural Linguistics*. University of Texas Press. p. 114.]

The Role of a World View



Romans 8

- 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.
- 6 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.
- 10 And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life [spirit is alive – NASV] because of righteousness.
- 11 But if the **Spirit** of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Colossians 3

¹ If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ²Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. ³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

⁵ Put to death your members...

¹² Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on...

¹⁴ But above all these things put on love...

¹⁵ And let the peace of God rule in your hearts...

¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom

¹⁷ And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus...

Philippians 3

¹⁵ Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. ¹⁶ Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.

¹⁷ Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. ¹⁸ For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: ¹⁹ whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things. ²⁰ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

Paul's Reasons for His Decision

Acts 19:21 When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, "**After I have been there, I must also see Rome.**"

II Cor 5:9 Therefore we **make it our aim**, whether present or absent, **to be well pleasing to Him.** ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Acts 9:15-16 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to **bear My name before Gentiles**, kings, and the children of Israel. ¹⁶ "For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."

Decision: Go
To Rome

1 *Please God*

2 *Preach Christ to Gentiles, et al.*

Paul's Reasons for His Decision

Rom 15:20, 22-25, 28,32 ²⁰ And so I have made it my aim to **preach the gospel, not where Christ was named**, lest I should build on another man's foundation...

²² For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you. ²³ But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you, ²⁴ whenever I **journey to Spain**, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to **be helped on my way there by you**, if first I may **enjoy your company for a while**. ²⁵ But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. ...

²⁸ Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall **go by way of you to Spain**.

³² that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may **be refreshed together with you**.

3 *Preach where
Christ not named*

9 *Be helped to
go to Spain*

8 *Enjoy company
of Christians*

9 *Go by way of
you to Spain*

8 *Be refreshed
with you*

Paul's Reasons for His Decision

Rom 1:9-15 ⁹ For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I made mention of you always in my prayers. ¹⁰ making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. ¹¹ For I long to see you, that I may **impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established** -- ¹² that is, that **I may be encouraged together with you** by the mutual faith both of you and me. ¹³ Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hinder-ed until now), that I might **have some fruit among you also**, just as among the other Gentiles. ¹⁴ I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. ¹⁵ So, as much as is in me, **I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome** also.

6 *Impart Gifts;
Establish them*

7 *Be Encouraged*

5 *Have fruit
among Romans*

4 *Preach the
Gospel in Rome*

Paul's Reasons to Go to Rome

1. Please God (II Cor 5:9)
2. Preach to Gentiles (Acts 9:15,16)
3. Preach in New Places (Rom15:20)
4. Preach in Rome (Rom 1:15)
5. Bear Fruit (Teach People) in Rome (Rom 1:13)
6. Give Spiritual Gifts to Christians (Rom 1:11)
7. Be Encouraged Himself (Rom 1:12)
8. Enjoy & Be Refreshed by Roman Christians (Rom 15:24, 32)
9. Be Helped to go to Spain (Rom 15:24, 28)

Paul's Decision Structure

Most likely to change, when they do not satisfy lower-level goals

Go to Rome

Be Encouraged & Refreshed by Christians

Preach in Rome

Impart Gifts

[be helped to] Go to Spain

Grow & Be Encouraged Himself

Strengthen Others

Preach to Gentiles (in New Places)

Save Self

Save Others

Please God (II Cor 5:9)

Most Important, & Unchanging Goals

HOW?

WHY?

Spirit-Led Decision Structure (example)

Most likely to change, when they do not satisfy lower-level goals

↑
HOW?

WHY?
↓

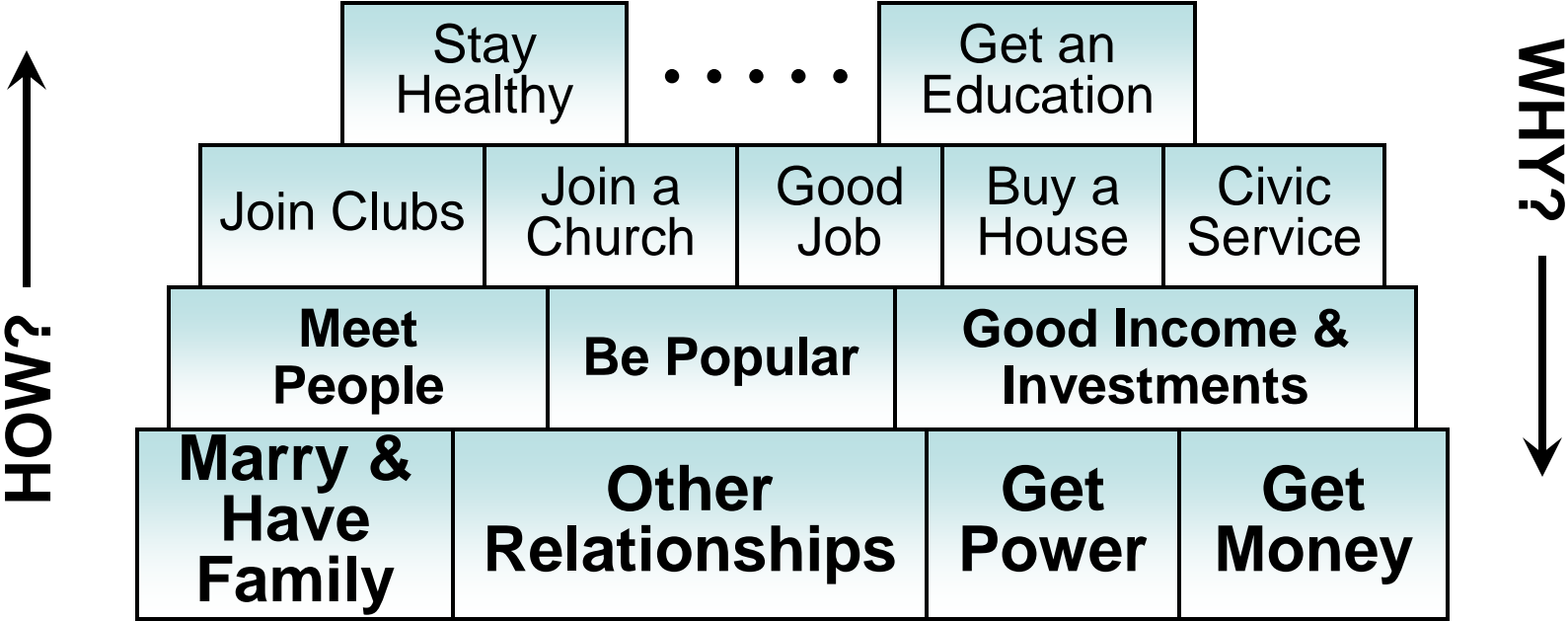


Most Important, & Unchanging Goals

Decisions Guided by the Flesh (example)



Decisions Guided by the Flesh (Who is this?)



Spirit-Led Decision Structure (example)



An Approach to Moral Dilemmas

0. Identify the activity, decision, issue, or conflict causing the dilemma.
 1. Determine if there is something explicitly wrong.
 - **Make a plan to overcome the sin & reduce temptations**
 2. Determine if the influence of the World will increase.
 - **Make a plan to eliminate, reduce, or limit exposure**
 3. Determine if my responsiveness to the World will increase.
 - **Make a plan to eliminate, reduce, or limit exposure**
 - **Determine how to modify my responses (knowledge)**
 4. Determine how the decision supports or hinders life goals
 - a. Which goals supported? Required? Are there better alternatives?
 - b. Does it detract from accomplishing spiritual goals?
 - **Make a plan to remove, replace, or modify the activity**
- Set a schedule of accomplishment. Get help. Make a commitment to others...

Sardisa is a friend from church who is a year behind you in school. You are both in marching band at school, and you spend a lot of time together on the bus riding to games and competitions. Recently, Sardisa was excited because some of the “cool” kids in band have asked her several times to hang out with them on Friday nights after the football game. You believe that these kids might not be the best influence on her, but Sardisa insists that all they do is hang out and talk and watch movies. When you mention the bad language you have heard these new friends use, and the crude subjects you have heard them discuss, she insists that they don’t do anything like that when she’s around. Finally, Sardisa gets angry at you and asks, “In and of itself, is it *wrong* for me to hang out with them?”

Now it’s Friday night again, and you’re riding back to the school after the football game. Sardisa tells you, perhaps somewhat defiantly, that she’s going to hang out with her “new friends” tonight. **What do you say to her?**

Questions to Consider:

- *Is it wrong for her to hang out with these kids?*
- *Given what you know about these kids, what are some temptations Sardisa might encounter?*
- *What questions should you ask her in your conversation?*

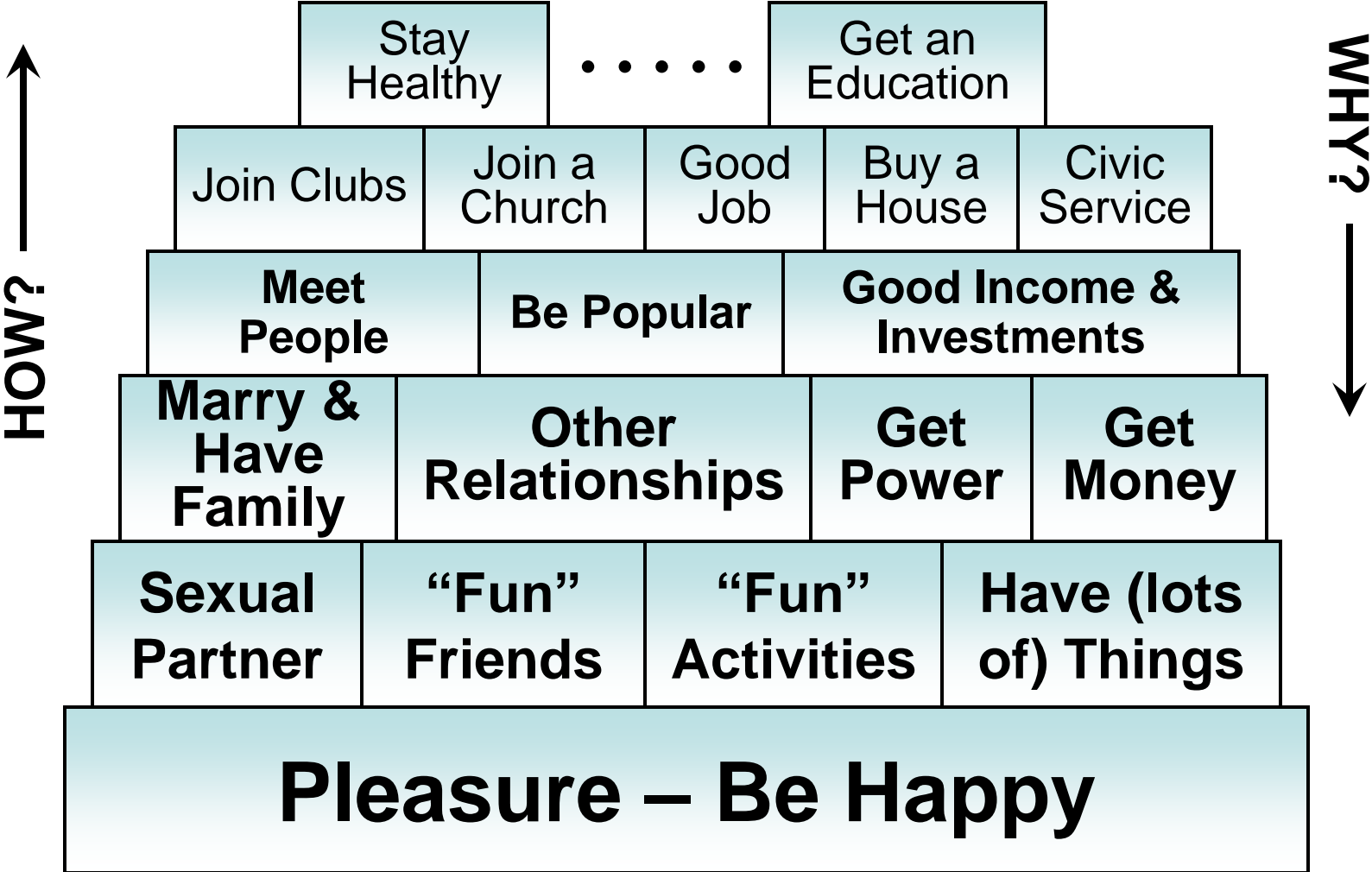
Symptoms of Wrong Thinking

- **Forgetting that the whole world lies under the power of the evil one**
 - “It’s just a natural desire” “It’s just a normal reaction.”
 - “Everyone else does it.” “No one would think anything about it.”
- **Forgetting that obeying the flesh or the spirit is a progressive service**
 - “Just this one time won’t hurt anything.” “As long as you don’t go too far...”
 - “I don’t think it’s a sin if done in moderation (balance).”
- **Forgetting that we have a will that exists apart from the flesh**
 - “I just couldn’t help myself.” “That’s just the way I am.” “...Get carried away.”
 - “I was so [lonely, scared, sad, angry...], I just lost control/wasn’t responsible”
 - “I just can’t help feeling that way.” “You can’t change the way you feel.”
- **Wanting to be left alone (uncriticized) about decisions**
 - “Why is everyone on my back about this...” “It’s a personal decision.”
 - “What I do with my [money, time, body, life...] is my business.” “You’re judging me.”
- **Speaking for God, or arguing that we know best, despite His teaching**
 - “I don’t see anything wrong with...” “...might be good...” “...no harm done...”
 - “I just don’t see how God can expect...” “God wants me to be happy, so...”
- **Looking for a loophole that will allow what we want to do.**
 - “Show me where the Bible says it’s a sin to ...” “...So you think I’m going to Hell if I...”
- **Trying to partition our lives to put the decision out of the reach of God**
 - “I don’t see that [---] has anything to do with my religion.”
 - “That’s something that has to do with my private [or secular] life.”
- **Changing the subject**
 - “I know people in the church who do a whole lot worse things than [----].”
 - “I’m not going to change because people in the church have treated me so badly.”

Spirit-Led Decision Structure (example)



Decisions Guided by the Flesh (example)



Lesson 2



Growing in My Belief

Example: Gideon's Belief

6:19-21 – Sign – Consumed Meal with Fire

6:25-26 – Task – Destroy Baal's Altar; Build Jehovah's

6:30-32 – (Sign) – G's Father Defends Him

6:33-35 – Task – Gather Israel for Battle

6:36-40 – Sign – Signs of the Fleece

7:2-7 – Task – Reduce Size of Israel's Army

7:9-15 – Sign – G Overhears Midianite's Dream

(6:14) – Task – Save Israel from Midian

Gideon's BELIEF had to be built to a level where he had enough TRUST to act on God's instructions.

Two Components of Faith

Belief

- (Historical Facts)
- Acknowledge Accuracy of Scriptures
- Know Scriptures
- Accept Scripture as True/ Authoritative

SALVATION

Trust

- Follow Commandments
- Make Hard Decisions in Accordance with True Principles
- Live by Different Standard

Knowledge and Belief

If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.” (John 10:37-38)

Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, “He told me all that I ever did.” [...] And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.” (John 4:39, 41-42)

Knowledge and Belief

- For the Bible to be true and authoritative, it must be:
 - Propositional
 - External to me (not something I make up)
 - Intrinsically true (true whether I accept it or not)
 - Able to be understood alike by everyone
 - Able to be accepted or rejected
 - Available
 - Revealed in a way I can understand
 - Achievable
 - Able to be followed by everyone (not just “elite”)
 - Applicable to all eras and cultures

Truth is Propositional

He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. (John 1:10-12)

And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, “It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.” (Acts 13:46)

Where Does Truth Originate?

All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. (Matthew 11:27)

No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him. (John 1:18 NKJV)

Yeah, but I can't just talk to Jesus and have Him teach me directly. How is truth delivered to me?



How Do We Receive Truth?

How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will. (Hebrews 2:3-4)

(See also Hebrews 1:1-2 and 1 John 1:1-3)

Okay, but what does this knowledge do for me?



What Does This Knowledge Do?

And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

(John 17:3)

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. [...] For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.”

(Hebrews 8:10-12)

Well, why do so many “Christian” groups have different practices? Are there many ways to fulfill this covenant? How can I know who’s right?



Who is Right?

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. (Colossians 1:9-10)

Who is Right?

...Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth. [...] They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work. (Titus 1:10-16)

So how can I know for sure that I'm right?
What does it mean to be "sound in the faith" or to "walk in a worthy manner"?



Who is Right?

And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. (1 John 2:3-6)

So I have to follow Jesus' example and commandments. Most “Christian groups” follow some of them. How close do I have to get?



How Close Is Close Enough?

For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. For he who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. (James 2:10-12)

So every saved person has to know and keep all of God's laws to be acceptable?



How Close Is Close Enough?

Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:19 ESV)

But if this is accurate, somebody who doesn't understand basic scriptural principles will misunderstand just about everything else. Is that right?



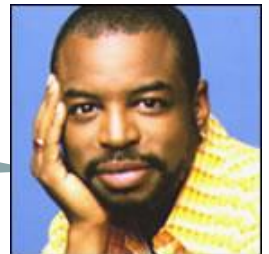
Do I Have to Get the Basics First?

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. (Colossians 1:9-10)

“[Things] to Know and Ways to Grow”

- Bible Study:
 - Daily Reading
 - Choosing what to read
 - Meditation
 - Study Resources
 - **Memorization**
 - **Teaching**
- Prayer
- Make a Plan and Be Held Accountable

But you don't have to take my word for it...



Lesson 3



Growing in My Trust

Belief and Trust Contrasted

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? **If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?** So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! (James 2:14-19)

Demonstrating and Building Trust

- Do Hard Things
 - Gideon reduced his army to 300
- Do Things that Are Unpopular
 - Gideon removed the Baal, Judges 6:25-32
- Do Things When You Don't "Feel" Like It
 - Gideon worked through his fear, Judges 6:10-11
 - "Act Into Feelings" (Do it because it's right; the desire will often come later)
- Remember that our Trust is not in the assured outcome of our actions, but in God's power to keep His promises, Romans 4:20-21

Case Study

A brother named Diasporo who is about your age has not been at services for several weeks now. The elders have tried to contact him several times, but he won't talk to them. Finally you text him, and when you ask why he's been gone so much, he says he is having a "crisis of faith," and that "the old-fashioned CoC worship doesn't do it for me anymore." When you ask him why it doesn't work for him anymore, he says it "doesn't build his faith like it used to," and that he's looking for "something more meaningful in worship." He agrees to meet you for coffee on Sunday to talk about it. Come up with a list of questions you want to ask him in your conversation.