



ESSENTIALS OF A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW

30 KEY TRUTHS
OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

A companion guide to **THE VIEWFINDER** assessment



RenewaNation

Helping Children Develop a Biblical Worldview



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INTRODUCTION

When I was growing up, my parents used to tell me, “You are what you eat.” What we eat matters because it impacts our health and energy level. Similarly, the Bible declares that as a person thinks in his or her heart, so he or she is (Prov. 23:7). This is the Bible’s way of saying that we are what we think. When our thoughts align with the Bible, our life choices often do as well. When our thoughts are corrupt, our life choices will follow. Of course, biblical beliefs are not enough to live a godly life, but they are essential for godly living.

Worldview is a way of summarizing our beliefs about God, creation, morality, humanity, the Bible, and the purpose of life. Every person holds to a view, or a worldview, about all these topics. The issue is not, do we want to have a worldview? The real issue is, do we have a *biblical* worldview?

The beliefs we embrace are important. They determine our decisions, drive our passions, and impact our eternal destiny. Beliefs matter because they impact every aspect of our life. Francis Schaeffer once said, “People function on the basis of their worldview more consistently than even they themselves realize. The problem is not outward things. The problem is having, and then acting upon, the right worldview—the worldview which gives men and women

the truth of what is.” In order to live the truth we must first understand what the truth is. That’s a big reason why we wrote this book.

Essentials of a Biblical Worldview was written as a companion to The Viewfinder assessment to help the body of Christ apply 2 Corinthians 10:5, “We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.” There are many arguments and opinions circulating in our world today. Some of the ideas align with the Bible, but many do not. Discerning what is good from what is erroneous is an important but difficult task. The world is working to conform us to its way of thinking and living. We must continually renew our mind with Scripture so that we are living according to God’s Word.

Balancing truth and love

One of the challenges with a book like this is that worldview conversations may lead to controversy. Whenever an opinion is stated or a theological stance is taken, disagreements inevitably follow. While that is uncomfortable, the good news is that disagreements often lead to biblical clarity and commitment. Our goal with this book is to have conversations, some of them difficult, but do so in a posture of love. The Bible instructs us not to be divisive, argumentative, or judgmental. We want our relationships to be marked by the fruit of the Spirit and the truth of God’s Word.

There is distrust in some Christian circles for doctrine. This is embodied by some Christian leaders who speak

poorly of theological education. Others pit truth against love, suggesting that unity is more important than doctrinal clarity and often cite passages such as John 13:35 where Jesus tells His followers that the watching world will know that we are his disciples by our love for one another. The implication is that doctrine leads to division, so it is to be de-emphasized for the sake of unity as this is the most loving path for believers.

There are two biblical truths we must balance: love matters and truth matters. The presence of one does not negate the importance of the other. *How* we discuss beliefs, the words we choose, the tone we take, and the way we engage in conversations matters. Jesus provides many examples in Scripture that we can learn from, such as the woman at the well, doubting Thomas, or Mary and Martha. Each of these examples contain grace-filled encounters where love shines through. We want our convictions to be seasoned with kindness and grace, just like Christ.

Our gracious demeanor is to be equally balanced with truth. *What* we believe matters, because truth matters. We can act in a kind and compassionate way with someone who holds very different views and does not know Christ as Savior, or is living out of alignment with the Bible sexually, yet at some point it becomes unloving not to share the truth with this person even if it results in offense or alienation. Jesus provides many examples in Scripture regarding how we are to handle truth. The passages that speak of Christ overturning the tables in the temple, the bold teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, His repeated

exhortations to religious leaders, and His statements about His own identity all led to conflict, and ultimately to His crucifixion. His life was one controversy after another. In addition, the prophets and the twelve disciples seem to barely go a day without conflict or controversy. Paul stated that he debated *daily* in the marketplace. Peter was thrown in jail for publicly teaching that Jesus rose from the dead, which was offensive to many in his time. John the Baptist lost his head because he preached God's good design for marriage and Herod killed him for it.

What are we to make of Jesus, Paul, Peter, and John's handling of truth? Are they unloving? Did they fail in their attempt to bring unity with other believers? Their lives reveal that avoiding controversy and conflict at all costs was not a biblical goal. What we are to avoid is godless arguments, worthless speculations, and foolish controversies (2 Tim. 2:14; Titus 3:9). Christians tend to disagree about topics because we understand that truth matters and has eternal consequences. Often controversies arise, not because we know too much about the Bible, but because we know too little. The church at Corinth is one example.

A warning from the Corinthian church

Some people in the Corinthian church believed that religious prostitution benefitted the spiritual life and aided a person's relationship with God. Some in the church believed that having sex was as natural and necessary as eating food. The church at Corinth had embraced the cultural belief that "everything is permissible" and used

this to justify their actions (1 Cor. 6:12). They dismissed the importance of sexual purity due to the faulty belief that God would destroy the body so it didn't matter what they did with their bodies. Paul responded that just because something is biologically possible does not make it morally permissible. His guiding principle is that our bodies belong to God and are to be used in a way that honors Him.

The state of the church at Corinth sends a loud warning to us today. That group of Scripture-loving, Christ-following people had their sexual practices all wrong. They couldn't differentiate what was right from wrong or true from false. They looked more like the city of Corinth than the people of Christ. What occurred at the church of Corinth can easily happen in our hearts.

Some Christians may be in danger of embracing our culture's powerful messages, whether it relates to sexuality, the value of life, the origin of the earth, manhood or womanhood, the purpose of education, view of the Bible, or a long list of other topics.

Sometimes we are influenced by the ideas and standards of the world. When we grow up in a culture that tells us certain ideas are true and certain practices are good, we can embrace those ideas or practices even as we seek to follow Christ. Every Christian has potential cultural blind spots and worldly ideas that distort our worldview.

Why we wrote this book

We wrote this book as an introduction to the essential truths of the Christian faith. There is a viewpoint that

exists in some Christian circles that essential doctrines are primarily those that are salvific in nature. From an eternal perspective, this is true. However, our belief about marriage becomes essential when we are looking for a spouse and need to decide who to marry. Our belief about abortion becomes essential when we are pregnant and the doctor tells us the child will have Down syndrome and encourages the pregnancy to be terminated. Our belief about the purpose of education becomes essential when we have a four year old and need to make an educational choice.

We wrote *Essentials of a Biblical Worldview* to provide an explanation for the answers from The ViewFinder. Each topic is covered briefly, in a bite-sized manner. The purpose is not to provide a biblical theology of each subject, even though each topic is worthy of a full volume to explore them in greater depth. We have tried to concisely summarize in a few pages the essence of the biblical concept. Those who take The ViewFinder and read this book will not become experts in theology or gurus of worldview. However, you will become familiar with key truths necessary to develop a flourishing biblical worldview. Our hope is that this will spur you on to continue learning and growing in your worldview development.

We also wrote this book to bless you and bless our world. When we align our lives with God's Word, good things tend to happen. When we live out of alignment with the Bible, we can expect difficulty and destruction. Sadly, biblical illiteracy is on the rise and many Christians are

woefully ignorant of the teachings of the Bible. For many Christians, the Bible has little or no impact on their life choices and their impact of culture. The difference between how some Christians and secularists live is negligible. A hypocritical life negates our Gospel message to a lost world and limits our ability to be salt and light to culture.

The call of the Bible is to maturity. Paul declares, “Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me” (Col. 1:28-29). Paul also states, “When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways” (1 Cor. 13:11). We want to have a *childlike* faith that results in trusting God, but we do not want to have a *childish* faith that lacks doctrinal maturity. Thus the Bible exhorts us, “Do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature” (1 Cor. 14:20). We hope those who are in spiritual infancy will grow to maturity so that they can have an eternal impact on families, communities, schools, churches, and our world for Christ.

How to utilize this book

This book is a companion resource to The ViewFinder. If you have received this book, but have not taken The ViewFinder assessment, you can do that at our website: renewanation.org/viewfinder. While certain portions of this book stand on their own, it will make most sense and be most beneficial in conjunction with The ViewFinder.

If you have taken *The ViewFinder*, it is our hope that those who read this book will be encouraged into self-reflection, honest assessment according to Scripture, deeper study, and a stronger biblical worldview. Some groups have used this book for small group study, classroom teaching, or as a curriculum for discussion. Others have used it for their own spiritual growth. Use it in whatever way is most helpful for you so that God is glorified, the church edified, and the world transformed for Christ. Growing in our knowledge and love for God is a great joy. May you experience great joy as you seek to grow into the fullness of Christ.

Josh Mulvihill
Executive Director of Church and Family
Renewation



PART 1

GOD



1

THE CHARACTER OF GOD

THINKING CORRECTLY ABOUT GOD

It is critical to think correctly about God because a false idea about God is idolatry. A.W. Tozer states, “What comes into our mind when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” The most revealing thing about a person is what he or she conceives God to be like. A right concept of God is foundational not only to theological beliefs but to Christian living because a distorted belief about God leads to ungodly life choices. There is rarely an error of doctrine or application of ethics that cannot be traced to an imperfect view of God. Major problems occur when we believe that God is different from what He actually is.

In Psalm 50:21 God rebukes individuals for having a wrong understanding of who He is, “You thought I was

like you.” The Bible calls the atheist a “fool” (Ps. 14:1). We know certain aspects of God’s nature and character because He has revealed Himself to us in the Bible. God is good, merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast faithfulness (Ex. 34:6), loving (Eph. 2:4-5), forgiving (Ps. 130:4), gracious (Rom. 5:17), holy (1 John 1:5), and just (Acts 17:31). God created the world (Gen. 1:1), sent Jesus to redeem humanity from sin (John 3:16), and will judge the world and restore it to perfection (Rev. 21:4-7). Understanding who God is before a trial helps us to stand firm when we are suffering, savor God, and seek Him as refuge.

Question 1 measures a person’s concept of God in times of suffering. Letter A represents Moral Therapeutic Deism, letter B is an example of Karma, and letter D represents the prosperity gospel, which are all based on faulty views of God. God doesn’t promise to solve our problems (letter A or D) and suffering is not always a consequence of a choice we made (Letter B). Letter C is the closest answer to a flourishing biblical worldview.

When the question is raised, “why does God allow pain and suffering?” it’s often because we feel pain and suffering are unjust and we are innocent or undeserving of such affliction. The Bible reminds us that due to sin, no one is innocent or undeserving. We are fallen sinners living in a fallen world and all experience the consequences of our sin and the sin of others. Praise God that he provides forgiveness of sin to all who repent and trust in Christ.

God is sovereign and good, yet life is filled with brokenness, trials, and tears. In Christ, nothing we experience

is wasted or worthless. God is always working in our affliction. God uses bitter suffering to bring about sweet redemption, just as he did at the cross (Acts 4:27-28). God's purposes for suffering may never be fully understood, yet the Bible tells us that God's people experience affliction for many reasons such as a means to draw nearer to God, grow our faith, glorify God, and focus our gaze on our heavenly home.

God is our refuge and strength in times of trouble. His mercies are new every morning. He promises to comfort those who seek Him. The presence of suffering does not diminish the goodness of God and should not weaken our trust in Him. God does not keep us from pain and suffering, but He is a good Father who will give us comfort, peace, patience and the strength we need. "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 Cor. 1:3-4). All Christians can look forward to heaven where there will be no more pain, sadness, or tears.

Affliction will come because our world is broken. Yet God is sovereign and good. It is in the moments of deepest need and desperation that God provides Himself to satisfy the soul, warm our hearts, and find satisfaction in God alone.

2

SALVATION

BY GRACE ALONE, THROUGH FAITH ALONE,
IN CHRIST ALONE

The Bible teaches that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone—which is represented by Letter B. It is not enough to be a good person or live a good life. We cannot work for our salvation nor earn it through any human merit. We receive salvation as a gift from God. God saves us by His grace when we put our faith in Christ as the One who died for our sins and rose from the dead on our behalf.

Ephesians 2:8-9 clearly states that salvation is by grace alone, “For it is by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” Grace is God’s unmerited favor. If we did something to earn it or deserve it,

it is not grace. If God owes it to us because we are good people, it is not grace. Grace means that we get the opposite of what we deserve. We deserve God's wrath because we have sinned against Him. No amount of good works can pay for our sin. Instead, God saves us by His grace.

There are common errors that must be guarded against when it comes to salvation and good works. Letter A errs by adding works to salvation. This view can be summarized with the following equation: Jesus + good works = salvation. Examples of good works may include baptism, church attendance, or giving of finances.

Many Christians believe in the pervasive error that good works have no connection to salvation. This person believes that since we are saved by faith through grace alone, a person can profess to believe in Jesus and live in habitual sin. Salvation results in a changed heart, which leads to a life of good works. Good works are not the *cause* of salvation, but the necessary *fruit* of it.

The Bible teaches that we are not saved *by* good works, we are saved *for* good works. If there are no good works that follow a professed conversion then it can be questioned whether that person is truly saved. Genuine saving faith manifests itself in good works (James 2:14-26). Biblically, good works include obedience to God's commands, works of love for others, and a God-centered orientation in all that we do.

Letter C errs by eliminating the need for faith in Christ and relying fully on good works. In this view, a person may achieve salvation by living like Jesus, especially in love,

compassion, patience, forgiveness, and hope. Letter C can be summarized with the equation, Christ-like good works = salvation. In this view, Jesus is an example to follow, but not our Savior.

Letter D is a faulty view because it is not the sincerity of faith, but the object of faith that matters. A person can sincerely believe with all his or her heart in the wrong god for salvation, yet the Bible teaches that the object of faith must be Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). Let us be grateful that God has provided *a way* for salvation through Jesus Christ. Some people naturally resist God’s grace because it robs us of all our pride. However, there is no other way of salvation. It is by God’s grace alone.

3

HELL

SATISFYING THE DEMANDS OF JUSTICE

Hell is not a popular topic in our day, but if you get rid of hell you may as well get rid of the cross. If we are not under God's wrath, then Jesus did not need to go to the cross and we don't need to be saved. Emphasizing God's love while minimizing or denying his wrath is not compatible with Scripture.

"How can a loving God send someone to hell?" is a question about the character of God. The Bible tells us that God is love (1 John 4:16). If God is loving, He cannot be unloving at the same time. The first thing we must do to answer this question is to believe that God is love. If that is true, then everything He does is an expression of that perfect love. Our culture incorrectly defines the phrase "loving God" to suggest that God will tolerate anything we want to do, and as a result, hell is not compatible with love.

God is not only loving, but he is also just. Justice requires payment for sins committed. The just payment for sin is eternal punishment in hell. Because God is just, He will not ignore or excuse sin. Because God is love, He provides a way for our sin to be paid for through the death and resurrection of Christ. When we refuse Jesus as our sin substitute we must pay the penalty ourselves (Rom. 6:23). If God were fair, we would all go to hell, because we have all sinned. God did not compromise His justice to forgive us. His justice demands the penalty be paid. Jesus paid the penalty for all who trust Him. As a result, God is both just and the justifier of the person who has faith in Him (Rom. 3:26).

Romans 1 tells us that God's truth is made clear to all people who have ever lived. There is ample evidence for every human to know that God exists. As a result, they owe allegiance to Him. Therefore, people are without excuse (Rom. 1:20). God receives no enjoyment from punishment in hell, but those who reject God deserve their eternal destiny.

The Bible teaches that after death we go to heaven or hell based on whether or not we had faith in Jesus Christ as Savior. There will be a new heaven and new earth for believers (Rev. 21:1) and unbelievers will be thrown into hell, an everlasting lake of fire (Rev. 20:11–15). There is no second chance for redemption after death (Heb. 9:27).

Letter C aligns with the biblical view of hell held by the majority of Christians through history. Letter B has elements of truth, but lacks the biblical teaching of God's wrath

in hell. Hell is more than just the absence of God's goodness, it is also the presence of God's wrath. Letters A and D emphasize the love of God at the expense of his justice and claim that God will overcome all evil (universalism) or destroy all evil (annihilationism). Letter D erroneously suggests that references to hell in the Bible are symbolic, not literal. Both of these views weaken or eliminate the need for the Gospel, distort the biblical teaching of justice, and result in a low view of God. Letters A, B, and D attempt to eliminate the difficult reality of hell, each to various degrees. Hell exists to satisfy the demands of justice and is most clearly expressed in Letter C.

4

EXCLUSIVITY OF CHRIST

COMPARED TO MORMONISM

Mormons are often kind and loving people but are deceived by a false religion that distorts the inerrancy of Scripture, character of God, nature of Jesus, and the means of salvation. On the surface Mormonism and Christianity may appear to be very similar, but when beliefs are compared it is easy to see that Mormonism and Christianity are different religions, which is why Letter B aligns with a flourishing biblical worldview.

Mormonism and Christianity have major differences in beliefs that cannot be categorized as denominational differences (Letter A). Here is a sampling of what Mormons believe:

- **Polytheism:** Mormons believe God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are three different gods. This is different from the Christian doctrine of the

Trinity, which says that God is one being with three distinct persons.

- **Humanness of God:** Mormons believe that God was once a physical person and that he has one or more wives in heaven. Mormons believe God was not always God, but attained that status through righteous living.
- **Humanness of Jesus:** Mormons believe that Jesus was once a man who became God. Jesus is believed to have only been a man while he lived on earth, not the Son of God. Mormons do not believe in the Virgin birth, but that Jesus was conceived by Mary and Joseph. Mormons deny the deity of Jesus.
- **Divinity of Man:** Mormons believe that men who live righteously can become a god of their own planet, just like Jesus. Each woman will live on the planet where her husband is god.
- **Spirit Children:** Mormons believe that before babies come to earth, they exist in heaven. Mormons also believe that a husband and wife will have the opportunity to have spirit children together after they are dead.
- **Polygamy:** Tens of thousands of Mormon members have married more than one person whereas the Bible says that marriage is between one man and one woman.
- **The Bible:** Mormons believes portions of the Bible are untrue or inadequate. Mormonism

contradicts the Bible and has added three books that are considered divinely inspired: The Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and The Pearl of Great Price.

Mormonism looks like Christianity because both religions share a belief in God, heaven, and Jesus. However, the Mormon understanding of these topics and many others are not biblical. Mormons and Christians are not saying the same thing in a different way (Letter C). Mormonism is a works-based religion that takes Christian terms and redefines them in an unbiblical manner. All religions do not lead to the same place. A flourishing biblical worldview believes in the exclusivity of faith in Jesus Christ for salvation and is able to recognize the differences and distortions of other world religions compared to Christianity.

5

THE DEITY OF JESUS

BELIEVING IN THE PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST

Jesus asked his followers one of the most important questions in history, “Who do you say I am?” (Matt. 16:15). It’s important that we answer that question correctly because our eternal destiny depends on it. Every other religion denies the deity of Jesus and teaches that Jesus was a wise teacher to learn from, a prophet that points us to God, or a righteous man to imitate. The Bible tells us that Jesus was more than an example to follow (Letter D). Jesus wasn’t just a representative of God (Letter A), he was God in human flesh (Col. 1:19). The Bible also teaches that Jesus was not a created being (Letter C), but He has always existed (John 1:1-3). Who is Jesus? John 1:1-3 provides three answers to this question.

1. Jesus is God

- John claims Jesus was God. John 1:1 states, “The Word was God.”
- Jesus claimed he was God. “Again the high priest asked him, saying to him, ‘Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?’ Jesus said, ‘I am’” (Mark 14:61-64). Under trial, Jesus claimed to be God and was crucified for it. The charge was posted above his head on the cross, “King of Kings.”
- Other people believed Jesus was God. For example, after Thomas felt the wounds in Jesus hands and feet, Thomas said, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28).
- Belief that Jesus is fully God is necessary to being a Christian.

2. Jesus is eternal

- John 1:2 says of Jesus, “He was in the beginning with God.”
- The religious leaders did not know who Jesus was so they asked him, “Who are you?” (John 8:25; 53).
- Jesus answered by saying, “Before Abraham was born, I AM!” (John 8:58). I AM is a name for God. In Exodus 3:14 God the Father called himself, “I AM.”
- Jesus is claiming that, like God, he is eternal. He has always existed. Jesus has no beginning

and no end. “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end” (Rev. 22:13).

- The Jewish leaders understood the importance of Jesus’s claim to be the eternal “I AM.” At this, they picked up stones to kill him (John 8:58-59). Jesus did not try to convince the Jewish leaders that they misunderstood him.

3. Jesus is creator

- John 1:3 states, “All things were made through him; without him not any thing was made that was made.”
- Jesus is not a created being. He is the creator of all things. “All things were created by him and for him” (Col. 1:16).
- The importance of this truth cannot be overstated. If Jesus was created like every other human, then he is not God. If Jesus came into existence at his birth, then he lied and cannot be trusted.

Three responses to Jesus

- Deny. This was the response of the Jewish leaders. They refused to believe that Jesus was fully God.
- Distort. Some people change or twist details about Jesus that they do not like. These include

his virgin birth, miracles, resurrection, or anything supernatural.

- Believe. What the Bible teaches we are to believe and what we cannot understand we take on trust. Just because something is hard to understand does not make it false. We should expect God to be hard to understand. The Bible claims that Jesus is fully God.



PART 2

THE BIBLE



6

THE INERRANCY OF SCRIPTURE

BEGINNING WITH A STRONG FOUNDATION

Question 6 focuses on the critical topic of inerrancy. One of the most important aspects of biblical worldview formation is what you believe *about* the Bible and how the Bible shapes your living. What we believe about the Bible is the foundation for all biblical worldview development. That means it is not enough to know what is *in* the Bible; we need to develop robust confidence *about* the Bible. What we believe *about* the Bible determines how we interpret what is *in* the Bible. We must have a high, exalted view of God's Word.

Ultimately, we must decide if we believe the claims and content of the Bible or if we believe it is inaccurate or in error in any way. We can have unwavering confidence that the

Bible is true, trustworthy, and without error. It is not blind faith. Trust is based on robust evidence such as the transformation of lives, the unity of message throughout the entire Bible, the Bible's indestructibility throughout history, archaeology that authenticates its accuracy, fulfilled prophecy, and thousands of ancient manuscripts prove the Bible is accurate and unchanged.

Recognizing the Bible is true and trustworthy is foundational for a believer to submit to its authority. Ultimately, the Bible is without error because it comes from God himself. Because God is without error, His Word cannot contain errors. "All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal" (Ps. 119:160, NIV). We can trust the Bible because we can trust God. The Bible is without error in all its teachings. Jesus testified that the Bible cannot be broken, and devoted His earthly life to fulfilling the Law and the Prophets. Jesus provided an example regarding how one is to approach the Bible; He believed the Bible was true and lived His life according to its words. We would be wise to do the same.

The Gospel writers did not contradict one another in their accounts of women at the tomb. Each author chose to emphasize different details, such as the names and number of women at the tomb, for different reasons. All the Gospels speak of a group of women and some Gospels identify some of those women by name. Luke names three women and then states "other women" went as well. How many women were at the tomb? At least five. The four different accounts of the women at the tomb are all accurate

and the total number of women at the tomb includes the following people: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary the mother of James, Salome, and Joanna. The Gospel writers did not contradict one another; rather they complemented one another. The Bible is not in error in this detail.

The Bible will never fail us. It will not mislead us. The teachings of the Bible are sure and safe. They are the reliable rule and guide in all matters of faith and life. In addition, the Bible is free from all falsehood and mistake. This safeguards the fact that the Bible is true in all that it says. Our job is to believe the Bible, receive its teaching, and submit our lives to it.

If the Bible contains errors, then our knowledge of God may be in error. The domino effect is in play—“false in one, uncertain in all.” If we believe there are errors in part, how do we know there are not errors in other areas? Departure from complete trustworthiness of the Bible is a serious error, as it is the bedrock on which all else rests. Letter A is the correct answer and helps to develop a strong foundation for a flourishing biblical worldview. Letters B, C, and D fall short of a biblical view of Scripture due to the belief that the Bible may be inaccurate or in error.

Resolve to believe whatever you find in the Bible; whether you like it or not. Beware of the danger of receiving some of what the Bible teaches and rejecting other parts. Settle in your mind that you will receive all and believe all, and that what you cannot understand you will take on trust.

7

THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

OBEYING THE BIBLE

The Bible is clear that a Christian is to only marry another Christian, which results in Letter D as the correct answer. Second Corinthians 6:14-15 states, “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever?”

Christians are told not to marry non-Christians. This may sound unspiritual, but your daughter doesn't need to ask God if she should date the nice non-Christian guy who just asked her out. Sure, he's handsome. And funny. He serves at the local food shelter and loves little kids. He comes from a good family. He even goes to church. But

God has already given His answer in the Bible. Christians are not to marry, and therefore should not date, non-Christians. Your daughter's job is to apply God's wisdom to dating.

What is the purpose of dating? *Date to find a mate.* Use dating as the discerning process for marriage. The goal of dating is clarity. Its intention is marriage. Its danger is intimacy. Its requirement is being equally yoked. Marshall Segal explains this well, "While the great prize in marriage is Christ-centered intimacy, the great prize in dating is Christ-centered clarity...The purpose of our dating is determining whether the two of us should get married, so we should focus our effort there." [1] God's design for marriage speaks to his design for dating.

Eventually, one of our dates will become our mate. This should lead to a selective dating process. If a person isn't marriageable, he or she isn't datable. Plenty of young people casually begin dating someone they don't intend to marry, only to find their heart grow fond over time. Then they are faced with a difficult dilemma—at least in their own mind. Should they end the relationship and experience heartache, or continue the relationship and marry an ungodly spouse?

Many people fool themselves into thinking that they will work the Jesus thing out later and that love will overcome religious beliefs. This is faulty thinking. Faith needs to be the strength of a relationship, not the cause for division.

Marriages are based on one of two foundations: the redemption of Christ or rebellion to Christ. One unites;

the other divides. One invites blessing; the other invites curses. A marriage relationship between a believer and an unbeliever is established in direct disobedience to 2 Corinthians 6:14-15.

The young person who obeys the Lord and seeks a future mate according to God's standards will experience what Proverbs 18:22 describes: "He who finds a wife [or husband] finds a good thing and obtains favor from the LORD."

8

METHODS OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

UNDERSTANDING THE TRUE MEANING OF THE BIBLE

Question 8 focuses on the methods we use to interpret the meaning of the Bible. Should we look to personal experience (letter D), science (letter A), history (letter B), or rely on the Bible to explain itself (letter C)?

The principles and methods of interpreting the Bible are known as hermeneutics. Second Timothy 2:15 commands us to be involved in a careful interpretation of the Bible: “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who . . . rightly handles the word of truth.” When we are interpreting the Bible we are asking the question, “What does this mean?” Interpretation is trying to understand the true intent of the author.

Interpretation is affected by the culture in which the author wrote, the biases we bring to the text, and the context in which the passage is found. We cannot understand a verse without understanding a chapter. We cannot understand a chapter without understanding the entire book. We should learn to interpret Scripture with Scripture and to consult resources such as commentaries to best understand a passage.

The most important principle to help us properly interpret, understand, and apply Scripture is that the Bible should be interpreted literally. The Bible is to be understood in its normal and plain meaning, unless the passage is intended to be symbolic or metaphorical. For example, when Jesus calmed the storm in Mark 4:35-41, this principle of biblical interpretation says we should understand this literally—there was a storm that Jesus commanded to stop and it obeyed Him. Any attempt to spiritualize the event as an example of the storms we face in life or deny the literal miracle is to do a disservice to the text and ignore the true meaning of the passage. A literal interpretation helps us remain faithful to the intended meaning of Scripture and avoid distorting God's Word.

A second principle of biblical interpretation is that Scripture is always the best interpreter of Scripture. For this reason, we should always compare Scripture with Scripture in order to determine the meaning of a passage. For example, based on the teaching about baptism in the New Testament we know that Paul is not encouraging the Corinthian church to baptize the dead when he states,

“What do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf?” (1 Cor. 15:29). The purpose of baptism is to publicly profess faith and obedience to Jesus, thus we know that Paul would not command baptism for the dead because there is no opportunity to publicly profess faith. Scripture helps us to understand Scripture.

In the case of First Community Church; science (letter A), history (B), and experience (D) are not the primary filters we use to understand the Bible. The Bible is the interpretive grid we use to understand science, history, and experience. Therefore, letter C is consistent with a flourishing biblical worldview. We should be concerned to arrive at a correct interpretation of every text of the Bible. We must guard against interpretive methods that lead us to misapply Scripture or distort our understanding of God’s truth.

9

THE SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE

LEARNING TO APPLY GOD'S TRUTH TO LIFE

Question nine is an example of the sufficiency of Scripture applied to grandparenting. The Bible teaches its own sufficiency. Paul tells us that God's "grace is *sufficient*" (2 Cor. 12:9, emphasis added). Nothing else is needed for salvation or strength in times of weakness. Peter proclaims, "His divine power has granted to us *all things* that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3, emphasis added). God has given us *everything* we need for life. The all-sufficient resources God provides are addressed in 2 Corinthians 9:8 (emphasis added): "And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having *all sufficiency* in *all things* at all times, you may abound in every good work." Every good work that God has called you to, He has sufficiently provided "all things at all times" to enable you to accomplish the task.

The Bible contains what we need to faithfully parent, grandparent, work in our career, educate a child, pastor, make a good decision, or find a solution to a life problem. The average Christian operates as if something more than the Bible is needed to navigate life, make decisions in today's world, or raise a child. Christians often affirm the authority of the Bible, yet repudiate it when they look to other sources for guidance.

In Mark 12:24, Jesus states, "Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God?" Error flows from a lack of knowledge and understanding of the Bible. Jesus once said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" (Luke 11:28). We are blessed when we apply God's Word to life.

Let's apply the sufficiency of Scripture to parenting and grandparenting. Not only does God define in the Bible what a parent and grandparent are to do, but He also describes how parents and grandparents are to make disciples and pass on faith to future generations. God doesn't call parents and grandparents to a task without telling us how to accomplish the outcomes He desires.

If the Bible were all that we had, it would be enough to teach us how to parent and grandparent so that children would come to faith in Jesus and grow as disciples of Christ. The sufficiency of Scripture means that we don't need extra-biblical sources to figure out how to parent or grandparent. The sufficiency of Scripture doesn't mean we cannot benefit from additional sources outside the Bible, but it does mean that they are secondary and should

never be the primary authority or used as a substitute for the Bible.

Does the Bible shape your perspectives and practices on parenting and grandparenting? That's the critical question. Or do you look to other sources? The actions of many Christians reveal that they do not believe the Bible is sufficient to address life issues or answer our greatest needs.

The Bible has many references to grandparenting, but they are often missed because the Bible uses phrases such as children's children, son's son, father's father, or forefather to speak about grandparenting. As you read three examples, pay attention to the responsibilities God gives grandparents.

- “Teach them [God’s commands] to your children and your *children’s children*” (Deut. 4:9 AMPC, emphasis added).
- “Fear the Lord your God, you and your son and your *son’s son* by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long. . . . You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children” (Deut. 6:2, 5–7, emphasis added).
- “Tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord . . . which he commanded our fathers

to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the *children yet unborn*” (Ps. 78:4–6, emphasis added).

The one word that describes the totality of a grandparent’s role biblically is the word heritage. Grandparents have inherited a faith they are to pass on to their children (Eph. 6:1–4; Deut. 6:2–9) and their grandchildren (Deut. 4:9; Ps. 78:1–8). This is the biblical idea of heritage.

Specifically, the grandparent’s role is best reflected in letter D. Grandparents are to be disciple-makers of future generations by focusing on the salvation and sanctification of their family (Ps. 78:7–8). Grandparents are to pay close attention to their own walk with Christ (Deut. 6:4–8) and live a Christ-centered life worthy of imitation so they can say to a grandchild, “Imitate me as I imitate Christ.” A grandparent’s priority is to be their grandchild’s Christ-like maturity (Col. 1:28–29).

Society communicates a powerful message that grandparents are extras, not essential to the family. Nothing could be further from the truth. A grandparent’s main role is not to spoil a grandchild nor be his or her companion. Grandparenting is more than being an encouraging voice, loving friend or a supportive help. A grandparent’s purpose is not to indulge themselves during the last third of their life. God designed grandparents as disciple-makers for the purpose of passing on a heritage of faith to future generations.

10

THE RELEVANCY OF THE BIBLE

THE LIVING WORD OF GOD

The Bible is as relevant today as it was when it was first written. The Bible never becomes obsolete or outdated. It is always green, fresh, and new. It is a well that is never dry, a field that is never barren, and a mine that is never exhausted. It applies to the heart of every person, in every country, at every age and stage, and at every point in history—even the soccer mom and the hard-working husband.

The Bible is the Word of God and is to be received with thanksgiving. It is to be believed as God's instructions, obeyed as God's commands, and embraced as God's promises. No other book in history comes near its wisdom, accuracy, and majesty.

There is a reason the Bible is the best-selling book of all time: It is the only book ever written by God. The Bible

explains the origin of life, the purpose of our existence, how we are to live, and what we can expect in the future. If the Bible is irrelevant in what it teaches about these things, then we are left to speculate and the Bible is of no value to the world. Without the Bible we would not know the answers to life's main questions.

The Bible is relevant for all of life. The Bible is God's witness to himself. It shows us the way that leads to heaven. It shows us everything we need to know, everything we need to believe, and everything we need to do. It will show us what we are—sinners. It will show us who God is—perfectly holy. It will show us the great redeemer—Jesus Christ. It will show us how to live—wisdom.

The Bible is the grand instrument by which souls are converted to Jesus Christ. The mighty change is often begun by a text or doctrine of Scripture as it sinks into the heart of man. The Bible is “able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:15). God gave us the Bible to make us wise for salvation. God caused the Bible to be “written for our instruction” (Rom. 15:4). No book in existence contains such important content as the Bible.

God has declared the Bible is “profitable” for us. It is given for our learning, a sword with which all soldiers of Christ should be armed, and a light to our feet. Second Timothy 3:16 tells us that the Bible is to be used for teaching, reproof (conviction), correction, and training in righteousness. It is the primary way young people are built up and established in their faith. It is the Word of God that

causes growth, teaches a person how to walk in this world, and how to live to please God in all matters of life. It teaches us how to be a good son or daughter, husband, wife, father, mother, grandparent, educator, pastor, employee, or neighbor. Therefore, letter B is the correct answer.



PART 3

MORALITY



INCOME INEQUALITY

CARING FOR THE POOR AND NEEDY

Is it the role and function of civil government to ensure that all of its citizens have an equal amount of income? Is it immoral or unjust for one person to make more money than another? Question eleven has to do with these questions. What does the Bible teach regarding the role or function of civil government when it comes to the income *equality* or *inequality*?

Answer D comes closest to a biblically-informed response to Bill's encouragement to vote for a particular candidate because he or she promises to fix the moral injustice of income inequality. Income equality is never presented in Scripture as a moral matter. God does not expect or require income equality among people, nor is income inequality mentioned as an injustice. Helping the poor, on the other hand, is often mentioned in Scripture, both

in the Old and New Testaments, as something humans are to do. We are not to oppress the poor. (See Lev. 25:35, Deut. 15:11, Prov. 14:31, 19:17, 22:9, 28:27, 31:20, Matt. 19:21, Acts 20:35, Gal. 2:10, 1 John 3:17-18.)

It is true the first followers of Christ in Jerusalem had “all things in common,” as we read in the book of Acts (v. 2:44). This is a factual statement made by the writer of the book of Acts, describing how things were done at that time, in that place. But this is not the same as an injunction or command that all followers of Christ should do this everywhere thereafter. There is no indication this arrangement continued in other places after the first Christians were dispersed from Jerusalem, and Paul does not write to churches about “sharing all things in common.” Paul does, however, write to them about remembering those in need by helping them financially.

Answer A contains several unbiblical statements. The Bible does not teach that low wages are morally unjust. “Low” is a relative term. The Bible also does not teach that the taxes of higher earners should be higher. The Bible does not teach it is the role or function of civil government to reduce income inequality.

Answer B contains a true statement with respect to the fact that the Bible is clear about remembering the poor. There is nothing in Scripture that expressly prohibits civil government from creating policies to help the poor (this is a good thing), but there is nothing in Scripture that would lead one to conclude God’s blessing on a nation is measured *according to* its economic policy. A nation with

helpful economic policies for the needy while maintaining other economic policies in clear moral conflict with God's Word, such as the funding of abortion, cannot expect the blessing of God.

It is true that civil servants should care about people who are struggling economically (as we all should), but Answer C is incorrect in saying it is "not right" that some people should have "so much more" than others. Inequality of wealth (and income) is not a moral issue, in and of itself.

12

HOMOSEXUALITY

LIVING ACCORDING TO GOD'S DESIGN

Is homosexual practice a sin? Does the Bible teach that homosexuality is wrong and forbidden by God? This is the focus of question twelve.

Answer A claims the Bible does not forbid homosexual practice, as some are saying today. This is an example of revisionist theology. Revisionist teaching rejects what has been accepted by Church leaders and theologians for over 2,000 years. It reminds us of George Gershwin's song, "It Ain't Necessarily So," from the Opera *Porgy and Bess*, where a singer claims that what we read in the Bible may not be actually true after all. It may be interesting to hear in an opera, but the idea has serious consequences in real life.

The Bible is neither vague nor unclear about homosexuality being a sin. Leviticus 18:22 says, "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination." In the

New Testament, the Apostle Paul identifies homosexuality as sin in Romans 1:26-27. (See also 1 Tim. 1:10.)

Answers A, B and D all imply that moral/immoral behavior is determined by individuals for themselves, as though every person can do “what is right in their own eyes” (Judges 21:25). This is an unbiblical notion, as it sets up individual humans as judges of what is morally right or wrong, and removes the Bible from its proper position as the true, universal and unchanging Word of God (true for all people, in all places and circumstances, at all times). It lowers the Bible to a book of relative guidelines, rather than the Word of God. (See Ps. 12:6, Prov. 12:15, Matt. 4:4, Luke 11:28, John 17:17, I Thess. 2:13, Heb. 4:12, James 1:21-23, 2 Tim. 2:15, 3:15-17.) For all the reasons given above, Answer C is the biblical reply to Professor Smith’s question.

13

THE SOURCE OF MORAL AUTHORITY

EMBRACING THE BIBLE AS
THE FINAL AUTHORITY

Where does morality come from? Who makes the rules? Does biblical morality provide norms for everyone, across all cultures? This is the issue question thirteen addresses.

Once again, as with the previous question, the issue is whether moral or immoral behavior is up to individuals to determine for themselves (thus being *subjective*, with every person doing “what is right in their own eyes”), or whether moral and immoral norms are *objective*, coming from outside of humans. What is the source of moral authority? A subjective, human-centered approach to moral order sets humans up as the judge of what is morally right and wrong, thus removing the Bible from its proper

position as the universal, unchanging standard (for all people, in all places and circumstances, and in all times). Subjective morality reduces the Bible to a book of relative guidelines, rather than the Word of God (See Ps. 12:6, Prov. 12:15, Matt. 4:4, Luke 11:28, John 17:17, 1 Thess. 2:13, Heb. 4:12, James 1:21-23, 2 Tim. 2:15, 3:15-17.)

To have an authentically biblical worldview requires embracing the Bible as the final authority for all things, including moral order. This is why Answer B is the only correct answer.

Up until the later part of the 20th century, the word “tolerance” meant that we allowed others to have their various opinions, without forcing or pressuring them to think differently, even though they may be wrong. But starting in the later part of the 20th century, the word “tolerance” changed to mean we don’t just *allow* others to have their opinions, but we *agree* that their views of morality are just as valid as biblical views. By the 21st century, the word “tolerance” meant that we not only *agree* that all views are equally valid, but we *celebrate* others’ views of right and wrong. Anyone who does not celebrate such views, is now considered “intolerant,” as was reflected in Ms. Johnson’s statement.

MORAL RELATIVISM

OBEYING GOD'S COMMANDS

Question fourteen touches on the issue of where divine moral authority is located. Is it *only* written in a Book, or is it *also* written in our heart? The Bible tells us God's laws *are* written in human hearts (see Rom. 2:15, Heb. 8:10). But what happens when what our heart tells us is in conflict with what the written Word of God tells us?

The problem with leaning on our heart is that the human heart is subject to the effects of sin. Any human conscience can be seared through sin and rendered insensitive to God's law written on our heart (1 Tim. 4:2). In addition, upbringing and personal experience may get in the way of God's law written on the human heart.

Answer C is not fitting, because the human heart, and the various feelings that come with it, can lead us astray. Scripture tells us the human heart is "deceitful above all

things” (Jer. 17:9). Therefore, to simply follow our heart can be dangerous. We must submit our heart and feelings to the clear, written Word of God whenever there is a conflict between what our heart tells us, and what the written Word says. Praying for clarity on matters that have already been clearly addressed in the written Word of God may sound good, but doesn’t align with the Bible. Only answer D is fitting.

15

PHYSICIAN- ASSISTED SUICIDE

REJECTING VOLUNTARY MURDER

The key to answering Question #15 is in the word “suicide.” Does it make a difference if the suicide is self-inflicted or physician-assisted? Not really. Both cases are suicide, and suicide means the taking of one’s life voluntarily.

It is impossible to build a biblical case for taking one’s own life. Suicide (even if assisted by a physician) is nothing short of self-murder, and murder is clearly forbidden by Scripture (Exodus 20:13, Deuteronomy 5:17, Matthew 15:18-19, Romans 13:9). If it’s not right to do something to someone else, it’s not right to do it to yourself. The Bible teaches that our days are numbered and our time is in God’s hands (Psalm 31:15, Job 14:5-7). Suicide takes the decision regarding the number of our days into our own hands.

Answer A is not a biblical response because murder is not a grey area in Scripture. While there are some legitimate occasions for killing human beings (see Exodus 22:2-3, Romans 13:4), God does not give Christians freedom to choose something forbidden by Scripture. Yes, it is a personal decision, but it violates Scripture.

Answer B is commendable in so far as it elevates the notion of alleviating suffering. There is no biblical reason for not putting our pets out of their misery when they are in great pain. But they are animals, not humans. Not only are our family members more important than pets, but they are in a different category altogether, being made “in the likeness and image of God” (Genesis 1:27). No dog, regardless of how lovable, is made in the likeness and image of God. While the Bible is clear about caring for animals (Exodus 20:10, Deuteronomy 22:4, Proverbs 12:10), the killing of animals (as for food) is not forbidden. Accompanying suicide with prayer does not make it right.

This is not to say it is wrong to allow a human being to naturally die when a person’s life is only sustained artificially. Pulling the plug on an artificial lung machine is not the moral equivalent to giving someone an overdose of sleeping pills, even if the person wanting to die asks for this.

Answer D fails to meet the biblical test because humans simply do not have the choice to do with their own bodies whatever they wish. Human beings do not belong to themselves. They belong to God (Psalm 24:1).

For all of the above reasons, answer C is the only fully biblical response to question fifteen.



PART 4

PURPOSE



THE PURPOSE OF LIFE

TO GLORIFY GOD

In John 10:10, Jesus declared: “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” In John 15:11, He said: “These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.” There is no question that abundant life and the joy that comes with it are great byproducts of knowing Christ. But is being joyful our *purpose*? Were we created so that God could give us joy? While answer A certainly has elements of truth, insofar as Christ came to give us abundant life, and we can experience great joy in heeding His words, this does not address Caleb’s question: “What is the purpose of life?”

With respect to answer B, which says the purpose of life is “to live out our God-given potential,” someone has aptly said, “Our potential is God’s gift to us; what we do with that potential is our gift to God.” This may be true, but did God create us *so that* we can give Him this gift? Living out

our God-given potential by putting the gifts and talents He has given us to good use is something we should do, as we know from Ephesians 2:10: “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” Answer B, however, does not adequately address the big question, *to what end?*

Answer D also contains great truths. We should love others, for sure. We should make a difference in the world, for sure. But again, this does not clarify our purpose. To what end are we attempting to make a difference in the world? Certainly, being happy is a by-product of loving others and making a difference in the world. But to say the purpose of life is *so that* we can be happy falls short of the biblical purpose.

Answer C comes closest to addressing the question of the purpose of life because this answer centers on Christ’s purpose for our lives, not just on our own happiness. Perhaps the best justification for saying Answer C is the best of the four possibilities given, is Christ’s prayer for His disciples seen in John 17. Consider this prayer:

“Father...glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you...I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do...I am glorified in [my disciples]...As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world...The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one... so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.”

In this remarkable prayer, Christ is not just praying for His disciples of 2,000 years ago, but for His future disciples, including those of the 21st century. As seen in His prayer, Christ's ultimate aim in coming to earth was to glorify His Father. This ultimately is why He did the work He did on earth. This, too, is why we do the work God created us to do, as mentioned not only in Ephesians 2:10, but in Genesis 1:26-28, where we read that humans were created for the express duty of stewarding God's creation. Our ultimate purpose in all this, is the same as Christ's ultimate purpose: *to glorify the Father*. This is how our joy is "made complete," or, as Christ put it in His prayer, "so they may have the full measure of joy within them."

THE THEOLOGY OF WORK

TO SERVE CHRIST
AND LOVE OUR NEIGHBOR

Is there really such a thing as a secular job in the life of a Christian? Why is a so-called secular job not considered authentic service of Christ, so long as the job is legal, ethical and of legitimate service to others?

Colossians 3:23 says, “*Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not men.*” Here Paul is addressing slaves, who had no choice about what sort of work they were doing from day to day. In the next verse, Paul reminds them, “*it is the Lord Christ you are serving.*”

If the slaves of Paul’s day were serving Christ by doing *whatever* work they did for their masters “as for the Lord” (even though most of their masters were probably not

believers), how much less can we say today that the work we do for Company XYZ is not service of Christ?

If God calls someone to be a pastor, and that person goes to work for Company XYZ instead, this could be a Jonah-sized problem. But any follower of Christ who works for Company XYZ *can* serve Christ in and through that work as much as a pastor serves Christ in and through *that* work. It is a matter of how the Lord directs a person's steps.

The wife who made a distinction between a secular job and the Lord's work has a problem with the sacred-secular divide. This is the unbiblical bifurcation of life into two categories, commonly tagged "secular" and "sacred." But this bifurcation fails to consider that *all* things are *God's* things. Psalm 24:1 tells us "the earth is the Lord's, and all it contains (NIV)." Acts 10:36 tells us, "Jesus is Lord of all." Not just the Lord of "church matters," "eternal things," or "religious affairs." As Followers of Christ, our *entire* lives are to be lived for Him, in every area, not just our "church lives," or "religious endeavors."

Answer B falls short on the husband's part. In this case, he, like his wife, falls into sacred-secular divide thinking. If he is truly wondering if God is directing him to become a pastor, he should definitely pray about this matter. But he should not do so because "ministry is a higher priority" than his work for Company XYZ.

Answer C also falls short. This answer implies that so-called secular work has importance only in so far as it allows money to be generated for church work and

missions. This notion fails to take into account that all work that provides a legitimate and useful service to others has intrinsic value *in itself*. We are to love our neighbors (Matt. 22:39, Mark 12:31), and most work done outside of a church setting is of legitimate benefit to the community-at-large. We love our neighbors by driving grocery trucks, painting houses and repairing washing machines.

Because legitimate work is an act of loving service to others, and is to be done as service to God, work outside of a church setting has true value beyond providing a place for opportunities to evangelize. Opportunities to let our light shine in places that may be dark (in terms of few fellow believers being present) is a good reason for followers of Christ to work outside of church settings, but our purpose for doing work that Company XYZ requires is not evangelism. Our purpose during work hours is to produce an excellent product or service, as though the customer were the Lord Himself (that is, doing our work “for the Lord.”)

For all the reasons stated above, Answer A is the most biblically aligned.

THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION

TO EQUIP FOR EVERY GOOD WORK AND
STEWARD GOD'S WORLD

The Bible does not use the term education and this reality has erroneously led many Christians to assume the Bible is silent about the subject. The Bible has a lot to say *directly* about the education of children, but uses terms such as teach, listen, wisdom, and learn. In addition, the Bible also has a lot to say *indirectly*, particularly regarding gaining wisdom, applying oneself diligently, and acknowledging the Lord in all things. The Bible is very prescriptive about what children are to be taught (see Psalm 78:4-5, Ephesians 6:4, Titus 2:1-6), who is to teach children (Luke 6:40, Prov. 1:8, Deut. 4:9) and how children are to learn (2 Tim. 3:15-17).

When it comes to the purpose of *education*, it helps to understand what purpose God had in mind for *humans*, even before He formed Adam from the dust of the ground. Did God have a job description in mind for human beings? The answer is straightforward. Genesis 1:26-28 gives us our job description on planet earth: “Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground’” (NIV).

Humans don't *own* planet earth (only God does, as we read in Psalm 24:1), but humans were given *charge* over it. Psalm 115:16 states: “The heaven of heavens is for God, but he put us in charge of the earth” (The Message). Psalm 8:3-6 says: “When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet” (NIV).

To rule over all of God's creation on planet earth, humans use mathematics. We write, we spell and we read.

We do research. We learn how to make things. We farm. We mine. We invent light bulbs. We create computers. We compose music. We raise families.

The purpose of education is to equip the next generation to rule well over this material world (2 Tim. 3:17). We are to be stewards (“vice-regents”) over God’s creation, and in so doing, we fulfill the job description God gave humans in Genesis 1.

This job description requires students to understand who they are, and how God has wired them for certain reasons, as alluded to in answer D. But answer D does not address the greater purpose for this discovery.

Education’s purpose requires that virtue be developed in students, for sure, along with practical life-skills, as stated in answer B. But this answer does not address the purpose for virtuous character and practical skills.

Answer A speaks of education as a way to ensure democracy, but does not address education’s higher purpose and aim from a biblical perspective. Only answer C addresses education’s highest purpose.

THE PURPOSE OF FAMILY

TO BEAR CHILDREN, RAISE THEM IN THE
LORD, AND CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER

What is the biblical purpose for the family? Is the family whatever you make it? Does a family exist wherever love exists? The answer to the last two questions is no. God designed the family, so He gets to define the family and the reason for its existence. Because God created the family, we should naturally ask why he created it. What purpose did God create the family for?

A biblical family begins with each member understanding and fulfilling the unique role that God has given him or her. God created the family to consist of one man and one woman who are given the command to bear children (Be fruitful and multiply). A biblical family consists of parents and children (biological or adopted), but also

includes extended family members such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews.

The Bible summarizes the role of a husband and wife in one word: head and helper. These truths are found in Genesis 2:15-18 and Ephesians 5:22-33 and form the backbone for the roles of a husband and wife. Ephesians 5:22-26 provides further guidelines for husbands and wives in marriage. Husbands are to love their wife like Christ loved the church. They are to be the servant leader who willingly sacrifices for the family through protection and provision. Wives are helpmates who provide strength and support in areas where their husbands lack. To be a helpmate is to willingly follow and faithfully support the loving leadership of her husband (1 Pet. 3:1, Col. 3:8, Eph. 5:22). The best example for wives is found in Ephesians 5:24 where we read, “As the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.”

God created the family for His glory and man’s good. Colossians 1:16 states that “all things were created through him and for him.” This includes the family. Family is from God and for God (Col. 1:16). The Bible teaches that marriage is good. This may seem obvious, but the rising cohabitation rate reveals that many people do not believe in marriage. This view is not new. We are told that some in the Ephesian church “forbid marriage” and taught that singleness was a greater form of spirituality. Paul combated this ascetic mindset by responding that “God created everything to be received with thanksgiving... For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected”

(1 Tim. 4:3-5). Marriage is good, and we are to enthusiastically receive it and faithfully champion it. Negative views of marriage are common and we must guard against them taking hold in our heart.

In the Bible, marriage is called a covenant—a very serious, unbreakable promise patterned after God’s promise to us. We see this in Malachi 2:14 when the prophet states, “The LORD was witness between you and the wife of your youth...she is your companion and your wife by covenant.” Genesis 2:24 says that the husband and wife are to “hold fast” to one another, which means that marriage is for life. Jesus says, “What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate” (Matt. 19:6). If we take this literally, it sets a very high standard for marriage. In conservative evangelical circles, the most common interpretation of Scripture is that the Bible makes provision for divorce in the most severe instances: cases of unrepentant sexual unfaithfulness (Matt. 19:9) and abandonment by a gospel-rejecting spouse (1 Cor. 7:15). However, Malachi 2:16 reminds us that God hates divorce, so reconciliation should always be the goal.

What is God’s purpose for raising children? Letter A contains elements of truth. The family exists to care for one another and should be concerned to raise children that are valuable members who contribute to society. But is this the end goal of the family? This is not the primary purpose that God created the family.

Letter B reflects a Western cultural mindset and applies it to parenting. Western society is extremely independent

and autonomous. However, if we were to travel to other parts of the world, this same mindset is not consistent. It is good to raise a child to be responsible and not rely on parents for survival. However, God does not command parents in the Bible to make this their goal for parenting. The negative result of this approach to parenting is that it can result in distant and disengaged families who lack intimate relationships, experience limited communication, and see little responsibility to one another after a child leaves the home.

Letter C also has elements of truth, but includes the unbiblical idea of self-esteem. The family is to be Christ-centered and it is good to provide a safe place for children to grow up. However, the concept of self-esteem is not a biblical priority for the family. Self-esteem is a concept developed by psychology to provide meaning and purpose found in self rather than in God.

Letter D is the most biblically accurate answer. The Bible is clear that one of the purposes of marriage is to bear children (Gen. 1:28), that parents (particularly fathers) are to raise children in the instruction and discipline of the Lord (Eph. 6:4, Prov. 1:8), and that the family exists to care for the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of one another. Paul tells us, “Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Tim. 5:8).

God’s plan to make children into disciples primarily occurs in the midst of the family. It is in the context of the faithful family that children are best taught, shaped, and equipped. Our goal as parents isn’t just to make a disciple,

but to raise disciple-makers who go and make disciples of others, beginning with their children and children's children at home, across the street, and around the world.

20

THE PURPOSE OF THE GOVERNMENT

TO PROTECT AND PUNISH

Does the Bible address the role and purpose of civil government? Yes, it does. One of the most specific portions of Scripture is Romans 13, where the Apostle Paul describes the function of civil government in a letter written to followers of Christ living in one of the most powerful empires in human history: Rome. This was a place where civil government was not favorable toward followers of Christ, to say the least. Yet, Paul wrote these specific words about the legitimate, God-given function of civil government (Rom. 13:1-7):

“Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established

by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience. This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor" (NIV).

Romans 13, however, does not address situations in which civil government contradicts the higher law of God. When human governments contradict divine government, it is divine government that trumps human government. Examples of this are in the book of Acts, where early Christians were commanded by the religious authorities of the day to stop teaching about Christ. They did not comply (see Acts 5:27-29). Likewise, in the Old Testament, when Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were commanded by King Nebuchadnezzar to bow down to an idol, they refused (Dan. 3). When any government conflicts with divine government, we are obligated to "obey God rather than men," as Peter put it in Acts 5.

Answer A reflects what is written by Paul in Romans 13, but answers B, C and D contain added functions of civil government neither mentioned in Romans 13 nor in any other portion of Scripture.

While there is nothing in Scripture to specifically prohibit civil government from educating its citizens, there is nothing that would lead us to think education is a God-given purpose for civil government. On the contrary, the primary responsibility for the education of children rests with parents (Deut. 4:9, 11:19, Eph. 6:1-4). The danger of having education run by civil government is that any government can easily prohibit God's truth from being a part of education, as we have seen happen in the United States through government-run schools. Answer B is not correct.

Answer C is also not biblical, for reasons we have previously stated in reference to question eleven.

As for providing universal health care, the Scriptures are silent on this matter, but it does not appear in Paul's list of civil government functions in Romans 13. Although universal health care through civil government is not prohibited by Scripture, to say this is one of the *purposes* for civil government, from a biblical perspective, is not possible. Therefore, answer D is eliminated.



PART 5

CREATION



VIEWS OF CREATION

GOD CREATED THE WORLD IN SIX DAYS

Answer B is the most biblically accurate answer because it holds to a literal interpretation of the creation narrative in the book of Genesis, which maintains that the universe and all life on earth were created by direct acts of God in six, twenty-four hour days, with humans being created in their present form on the sixth day (Gen. 1:1-31; Ex. 20:11; Ex. 31:17). Determining that creation occurred about 6,000 years ago is accomplished by calculating the years provided in biblical genealogies and dates that scholars have established for when biblical figures lived.

A biblical worldview is shaped by the belief that God created the world in six literal days. Many Christians believe it is inconsequential to believe the world was created in millions of years or in six days. The primary reason why it matters is that it sets a dangerous and destructive

precedent for biblical interpretation. When we begin to interpret portions of the Bible as symbolic or metaphorical, it opens the door to interpreting other portions of the Bible in the same way. Were Adam and Eve real people or symbolic? Did the flood of Genesis 6 really happen or was it a literary device? Did the supernatural acts of God in the Bible and the miracles of Jesus actually happen or are they mythical to make a spiritual point? If the straightforward language of Genesis 1 can be explained away as symbolic, why not do the same with other portions of the Bible? Could the Resurrection be explained away as metaphorical? Where does symbolism end?

Nothing about Genesis 1–3 suggests that it is symbolic, mythical, or written as a spiritual metaphor. If creation in Genesis 1 is not literal, then we cannot believe Adam was a literal person and the biblical explanation of sin entering the world through Adam is also not a literal reality. If we did not fall because of Adam then we have no need to be redeemed by Christ, and the New Testament teaching that Jesus is the second Adam makes no sense, “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:22).

Letters A, C, and D are different versions of a similar answer that suggest humans evolved over time. Due to a naturalistic view of life, modern scientific observations place the age of the universe at billions of years old and believe there were long periods of time between each created day. As a result of the impact of secular humanism, the rise of science, and Darwinism, these theories are popular, but are not supported by Scripture. A biblical

COMPARE AND CONTRAST: KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CREATION AND EVOLUTION

Creation	Evolution
<p>1. God created the world and everything in it. (In the beginning God created; Gen. 1:1)</p>	<p>1. World formed from a big bang; chance.</p>
<p>2. God created in six days. (On the first day...there was morning and there was evening; Gen. 1:3-31)</p>	<p>2. Evolution takes millions of years.</p>
<p>3. Humans are special, the crown of creation. (God created man in his own image; Gen. 1:27)</p>	<p>3. Humans are not special, just another animal.</p>
<p>4. Death was result of Adam's sin. (original world was death free—humans and animals were vegetarians; Gen. 1:29-30)</p>	<p>4. Death was present before sin.</p>
<p>5. God created the world good. (...and God saw that it was good; Gen. 1:25)</p>	<p>5. Nothing inherently good about the world.</p>
<p>6. The world was created in its entirety. (Universe was created complete; Gen. 1)</p>	<p>6. World became what it is over time.</p>
<p>7. Your purpose: love, obey, serve God.</p>	<p>7. Your purpose: love, obey, serve self.</p>

creationist begins his research about origins of the earth and life with the Bible. An evolutionist starts with an anti-biblical worldview, believing that God had no involvement in the process. The Bible provides an account of the creation of the world. It says that God created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1) and He created man (Gen. 1:26-27), thus letter B is the most biblically accurate answer.

CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

HUMANS ARE THE CROWN OF CREATION

Humans alone are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-28), which sets them apart from the animal world and makes them distinct from all other creatures. As the highest form of God's earthly creation, humans can have a unique and eternal relationship with God. They share many of His attributes, are capable of knowing and glorifying Him, and have inherent value and worth not shared by animals. The fact that man himself is the image of God is why Jesus died on his behalf. Letter C aligns with the Bible and is an important aspect of developing a flourishing biblical worldview because it acknowledges the truth that humans have value and dignity because they were created by God for a purpose.

Both the Old and New Testament contain passages that explain the concept of the image of God. The Old Testament contains three passages that directly speak of the image of God: Genesis 1:26-27; 5:1-3; and 9:6. While sin seriously deformed God's image in man the Bible does not state that the image was lost. Fallen man still exists in the image of God. Sin distorts the image, but does not destroy it. Looking ahead to New Testament we will see what was lost due to sin is restored through salvation. The goal of redemption is the restoration of the image of God in mankind (Rom 8:29).

James 3:9 teaches that because man is made in God's image he is valuable and worthy of being spoken to in a kind and compassionate manner. Cursing men is degrading and violates the image of God in others. James 3:10-12 makes the point that it is inconsistent to praise God and curse man since he is made in the likeness of God. Just as we are not to use the Lord's name in vain we should not curse men because it dishonors God and man.

Second Corinthians 3:18 points out that all men behold and reflect the glory of God as His image bearers. Just as Moses face reflected the glory of God after he had been in face-to-face communication with him we can reflect the glory of God, like a mirror, to others. Second Corinthians 4:4 teaches that because Jesus was without sin we see in Jesus the image of God in its perfection. To best understand the image of God we look to Jesus.

A significant New Testament passage on the image of God is found in Romans 8:29. From this passage we learn

that redemption's purpose is to make us more and more in the image of Jesus Christ. Everything works together to conform followers of Christ into His image. The final New Testament passages to consider are found in Paul's letters to the Ephesians 4:22-24 and Colossians 3:9-10. While believers are the image of God they need to constantly work to grow in this image. The Christian is to put off the old self with sinful practices and put on the new self who is ruled by the Holy Spirit. Believers are to forsake their old behaviors for those of Christ. The metaphor is one of clothing; stripping off the dirty, worn out garment and replacing it with new, clean clothes. The image of God, impaired by the fall, is to undergo a radical reorientation through the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Due to sin, man no longer images God properly. The image must be restored. Jesus not only restores the image, but is also the standard bearer through which we understand and interpret the image of God. We are to look to Christ to understand what it means to be made in the image of God and when we do we will discover that love stands at the center.

Letters A, B, and D fall short of a biblical view of humanity. Letter A is incorrect because sin did not destroy the image of God. Letter B and D are incorrect because these answers state that the image of God is based on function such as thinking, creating, or being in relationship. By definition, if a person had reduced mental capacity, according to this view, they would not be created in the image of God.

These answers are not biblical and do not recognize a human's distinct value and worth because they are human not because of what they are capable of doing. The creation of human beings is the pinnacle of the creation story. After creating everything else, God created man in His image and said it is "very good."

23

NATURAL REVELATION

CREATION REVEALS THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Letter B is the correct biblical answer because it separates God the Creator from His creation. God created everything and makes Himself known in His creation, but is distinct from His creation. God's creation is a testimony to His existence and reflects aspects of His glory. Theologians call this biblical doctrine natural revelation, which is truth about God that can be learned by observing His creation. It doesn't exist in words, as does the Bible, but is non-verbal. Psalm 19:1-4 reveals the abundance of natural revelation. Paul points out in Romans 1:18-25 that while God's power and divine nature can be seen in His creation, many still ignore the glory of God that is so evident around them.

The other answers reflect pantheistic, new age, and mystical views of nature. Some people are deceived to believe that God is everything and everything in the universe is God. The rocks, trees, water, all of earth and God are one and the same. Even man and all creatures are one with nature (Star Wars refers to this as “The Force”). Many people have chosen to worship the creation rather than the Creator. These faulty views characterize God as an impersonal force, and contradict the reality that God is a personal Being who seeks a personal relationship with the people He created. While God does reveal Himself through nature, it does not bring us into direct contact with God.

24

SATAN

A REAL BEING AND ENEMY OF GOD

The Bible speaks of Satan as a real, living being who was created by God, rebelled and fell from Heaven, is dangerous and crafty, lies and deceives, has great power and intelligence, and tempts and attacks God's people. There are numerous Scriptures throughout the Bible that refer to the existence of Satan and even mention him by name, such as Revelation 20:1-3. Ezekiel 28:11-19 describes his fall.

Second Corinthians 11:14 says that Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Ephesians 6:11-13 tells us that we are to "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." Satan is so prevalent in our

world that James 4:7 admonishes us to “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

Letter A aligns with the Bible and is consistent with a flourishing biblical worldview. The other answers suggest that Satan is real, but must be ignored, or that Satan does not exist at all. If these views are true, then the Bible isn't true. One of Satan's most effective weapons of deceit is for people to not recognize him as a living being or to acknowledge his efforts to afflict and destroy human life. He is more than a symbol of evil or a representation of man's evil nature. If he were not real, Peter would not have warned us that, “Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (I Pet. 5:8).

25

RACISM

AN ATTITUDE OF PRIDE

All people descended from Adam and Eve and are one race equal before God. Evolutionary theories place people into categories of status based upon different ancestry. It is human nature to desire a higher status and more worthiness than others. The Bible doesn't justify treating people unjustly because of skin color or physical differences. Acts 17:26 states, "He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth." Every person is created in the image of God (Gen 1:27). Every person comes from the same source, from one blood. Therefore, Letter C is consistent with the Bible.

The other answers are popular narratives in contemporary culture, but ignore the biblical view of race and weaponize the issue. Racism is an injustice and racist attitudes are wrong. However, the solution is not solely

in reconciliation or multiculturalism, but in recognizing the root problem of pride and arrogance, which creates a sense of superiority and prejudice. An attitude of superiority leads people to regard those who are different with contempt. There is no biblical justification for treating people differently simply because of different physical features. Racist attitudes are antithetical to the Gospel. Recognizing the sin of pride is the only resolution.



PART 6

HUMANITY



HUMANISM

EXALTING MAN, REJECTING GOD

Civilization is indebted to Christianity for many of its best institutions. From the Bible are drawn the best laws by which society is kept in order, the standards of marriage, and the roles and responsibilities of every member of the home. To the Bible we owe nearly every humane and charitable institution in existence. The sick, poor, orphaned, or disabled were seldom thought about before the Bible. It is the Word of God that resulted in hospitals and schools. Had it not been for the Bible we may have lived in chaos and died in misery.

By contrast, humanists believe that people can create a healthy society, and live a happy and purposeful life without God or religion. God is either irrelevant or He does not exist at all. Humanists attempt to understand the universe, build a democratic society, and solve its problems

by relying on science, human reason, experience, and free inquiry. History reveals that humanistic societies often lead to totalitarian leadership, which results in despair, destruction, and the death of people. The Bible teaches that God created the world and has a personal interest and involvement in His creation, including human beings. It teaches that man is to place his trust in God and depend on Him for purpose and direction in life.

The Bible is clear about those who reject God. According to David, “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds; there is none who does good” (Ps. 14:1). Jesus said, “The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day” (John 12:48). The Humanist view of the world is built on deceit. Paul warns us in Colossians 2:8, “See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.” (See also 2 Thess. 2:9-12; 1 Cor. 2:14; Rom. 1:18-26; Heb. 11:6; John 17:3).

Letter D is the biblical answer. The other answers describe important aspects of a healthy society, but erroneously suggests that human effort alone gives meaning to life, provides personal fulfillment, and can solve society’s problems. Humanism claims to be compassionate, value human dignity, champion planetary responsibility, care about social justice, and provide service to others. However, it is a worldview that regards science as the only

reliable source of knowledge, and rejects any evidence of God or any supernatural power. It teaches that humanity is on its own in the world, is responsible for its own destiny, and focuses on human efforts to meet human needs. The humanistic worldview ultimately provides no meaning to life, no basis for law or morality, and no concept of what it means to be human.

THE NATURE OF MAN

RECOGNIZING THE NEED FOR REDEMPTION

The Bible teaches that children are born with a sin nature. Psalm 51:5 says, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” Ephesians 2:3 affirms that, “we were by nature children of wrath.” Genesis 8:21 declares, “The intent of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” In Romans 7:14-25, Paul refers to the sin which indwells us as he discusses the conflict of our two natures (see also Rom. 3:9-20).

God did not create the human race sinful, but because of the fall of man, it became sinful. Being born with a sin nature means that the nature of every person is corrupt, wicked, and rebellious. Children do not need to be taught to lie, steal, or defy a parent’s authority because they are a sinner by nature. The fact that we are born with a sin nature does not mean that we aren’t capable of doing good,

or of choosing between good and bad, for God also gave us the ability to choose. Children have the ability to distinguish right from wrong, can judge between good and bad, and have a sense of morality. Our sin nature results in eternal condemnation if not for redemption through Jesus Christ.

Letters B, C, and D are not supported by the Bible. They are popular with contemporary thought and in developmental psychology, but contradict the biblical truth of a sinful nature. The progressive view is that human beings are inherently good. They are born good, but are corrupted by society. If this were true, the younger a child, the purer they are. This would eliminate the obvious need to teach even the youngest child to make good choices. It also implies that teaching might harm them more. Insisting that a person's nature is good fails to explain why atrocities have been committed throughout human history and why laws are required to control human behavior.

An opposite view suggests that children are born evil, or at least with a tendency to do wrong, and society can make them good. According to this view, the external influences on a child cause negative or positive behavior. According to the Bible, the primary problem is that the heart is a fountain of wickedness. Sin comes from within a child as well as from external sources. A biblical view of human nature must take into account the heart, not just behavior. Christians must reject the idea that children are born as a morally neutral blank slate or that they do not possess a sin nature. Such a view weakens or eliminates the

need for the Gospel. Letter A represents the correct biblical answer and a flourishing biblical worldview.

28

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL AND SUFFERING

LEARNING TO TRUST
THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

If God is supremely good and supremely powerful at the same time, why does suffering occur, when He could easily keep it from happening? Could He not keep a tornado from forming that kills hundreds of men, women and children? Does He not care? Could He not stop a mass shooter from pulling the trigger? If He truly loves all people, as the Bible says He does (John 3:16), then why does He allow evil-doers to murder children in schools? Why does God allow Satan to keep roaming about the earth “like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour?” (I Pet. 5:8).

These are difficult questions. They remind us of Job, in the Old Testament, who suffered greatly. His children

died in a violent wind (Job 1:18-19). He lost his wealth (Job 1:14-17), as well as his health (Job 2:6-7). As he sat covered with painful boils, with his “friends” telling him that he must have done something wrong to deserve all this trouble, and his wife advising him to “curse God and die,” Job had no helpful or satisfying answers to the “why” question.

Job had one thing in the middle of all his pain and suffering. He had an unfailing trust in God. The kind of remarkable trust that allowed him to say: “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him” (Job 13:15, KJV).

When humans trust God, even when we have no answers to the “why” questions (especially questions about pain and suffering), God is glorified, as in Job’s case. When Jesus Himself suffered unspeakable pain and suffering on the cross, His Father could have delivered Him from the phony trial that led to pain, but did not. Jesus asked if there could be some other way. But He concluded: “not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42). Jesus and Job held the same resting trust: “though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.”

There is only one Supreme Will to be concerned about, and it isn’t ours. Our place is not to find fault with our Creator, but to trust Him in all circumstances. Our trust is tested and becomes greatest when we don’t understand the “whys” behind the horrific “whats” in a fallen, broken world.

Another factor to consider in the “why does God allow evil, pain and suffering” question, is that God created humans in “His likeness and image” (Gen. 1:26-28).

We have minds that can reason. Not as puppets on strings, but as self-regulating beings. We can create (on a limited scale), and we can make choices. In this regard, with certain finite limits, we are “free agents.” This does not mean we blame God for evil, pain and suffering. On the contrary. It means God created human beings with the remarkable capacity to make choices, even really bad ones, such as setting our own will above His, if we so choose.

On the hopeful side of things, we know that the broken condition of this world will not last forever. Someday, Satan and all his helpers will be put away for eternity (Rev. 20:10). Someday, there will be a new heaven and a new earth (Isa. 65:17; 66:22; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1). Someday there will be no more pain and suffering (Rev. 21:4). From a human perspective, it seems like the broken condition of this present world is lasting for a very long time, going on now for approximately 6,000 years! But from God’s perspective, it has only been a short time, for 1,000 years is as a single day for the Lord (2 Pet.3:8).

In 2 Corinthians 4:8-17, Paul wrote: “...we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh...Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light

affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison” (NIV). Thank God for this hope!

Letter A is incorrect, because in spite of the world’s broken condition, the earth is still the Lord’s, and all it contains (Psalm 24:1). The Creator has not abandoned His creation, nor has He “relinquished” it to Satan. God will ultimately restore it. He will remove all evil, pain and suffering from the world, as the later part of Letter A rightly says.

Letter C contains some truth. It is true that God is just, and that He doesn’t ignore or excuse anyone’s sin. It is also true that sometimes suffering is the result of “not living as God expects us to.” But we cannot conclude (as apparently some of Job’s friends did), that all of our pain and suffering is the result of not living as God expects us to. It is true that God allows us to experience the consequences of our actions, but to conclude that all of our suffering and pain is the result of our bad actions is not a biblical truth. That’s Karma, not God’s Kingdom.

Letter D fails, too, because there is no evil whatsoever in God. I John 1:5 assures us: “God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.”

It is also true that what Satan plans for evil, God uses for good. It is comforting to know that all things work together for good to those who love God, and are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28-30). Even bad things can work together for good, when we love the Lord regardless of our circumstances, and we embrace His purpose for our lives—which, ultimately, is to bring glory to Him,

as Job and Christ did through their response to great pain and suffering.

Only Letter B is fully, biblically correct. We are all living under the curse of Adam's sin, and sometimes we suffer as a consequence of our personal disobedience. But at other times, it is a mystery as to why we suffer. No matter what level of suffering we might be faced with (have you suffered more than Job or Jesus?), we can grow in our faith, we can grow in our trust, and we can grow in our confidence that "all things work together for good to those who love God, and are called according to His purpose."

Psalm 40:1-3 states, "I waited patiently for the Lord (not for my circumstance to change or for a self-help solution); he inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear God, and put their trust in the Lord."

ABORTION

VALUING THE LIFE OF THE UNBORN

What does the Bible say about abortion? Numerous passages in the Old and New Testament tell us that life begins in the womb. In Isaiah 44:24 we are told, “This is what the Lord says— your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the Lord, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself.” It is important to recognize that it is God who forms life in the womb. In a similar passage, Jeremiah 1:5 states that God knew us before He formed us in the womb.

Exodus 21:22-25 calls for the same penalty for someone who causes a baby to die in the womb and for someone who commits murder: death. The death penalty applies to both situations because God considers the life of an unborn child to be just as valuable as the life of a grown man. Exodus 21:23 states, “If men fight and hit a pregnant woman and

her child is born prematurely...” (NIV). God recognizes a baby in the womb to be a human being, just as human as you and I.

Psalms 139:13-16 speaks of God’s role in creating every person and recognizes the unconditional value and worth of a preborn child. “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be” (NIV).

In Luke 1:41-44 Mary, who is pregnant with Jesus, meets with her cousin Elizabeth, who is pregnant with John the Baptist and we read the following, “when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby *leaped* in her womb.” Life begins in the womb. God referred to John the Baptist as a child before John was born. Life begins at the moment of conception in the womb, not when a child is born.

According to the Bible, abortion is murder. It is the killing of a human being who has been created by God in His image (Gen. 1:27). Abortion is not about a woman’s right to choose (Letter C). It is a matter of life and death for a human being. In the unfortunate case of pregnancy resulting from rape or incest, two wrongs do not make a right. A child should not be murdered for the evil act of another human being. The child can be given in adoption to a loving family (Letter B).

Letter D attempts to justify an abortion because a child will potentially be born with a disability. A person's worth is not determined by their quality of life or their usefulness to society, but by their existence. Aborting a child before there is a heartbeat is still murder. The responsibility to begin or end life does not belong to parents. God is the creator of human life and only He should determine who can live or die.

Some individuals who hold to a pro-choice position believe the Bible does not address abortion. As a result, they believe a woman has the freedom to decide to abort or keep a child. The term "abortion" does not appear in the Bible, but the principles about the purpose, value and origin of life are very clear in the Bible, as noted above. Some pro-choice individuals argue that they do not support abortion, but they support a woman's right to choose. This position makes as much sense as saying that they hate rape, but support a man's right to commit the act. When we rename the murder of a child as a "choice" we are still in direct conflict with the Bible. Abortion in any form, at any time, under any name is murder. Letter A is the biblical answer.

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THE ROLE OF HUSBAND AND WIFE

EMBRACING GOD'S
GOOD DESIGN FOR MARRIAGE

What is the role of a husband and wife according to the Bible? Summarized in one word: *head* and *helpmate*. The role of a husband and wife can be summarized in a single question. Wives can ask a husband, “How can I help you?” Husbands can ask a wife, “How can I serve you?”

The word head comes from Ephesians 5:23 where Paul states, “For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church his body, and is himself its Savior.” In a nutshell, headship means loving leadership and sacrificial service and it is to be patterned after Jesus’ love for the church. To be the head means that the husband is a sacrificial leader who serves his wife and is busy protecting and providing for her, both spiritually and financially.

A husband's role comes with a towel and washbasin, not a throne and crown. Husbands are to pattern their leadership after what Jesus did on the cross, not what Jesus does on the throne. For the husband, leadership is about giving, not receiving. Paul says it like this, "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Eph. 5:25). The kind of leadership that Paul describes is modeled by Jesus, characterized by love, and oriented toward giving. What Jesus did for the church, a husband is to do for a wife. That is headship.

The word helpmate comes from Genesis 2:18 where Moses states, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." The Hebrew word for helper means "aid" or "assist." It carries with it the idea of providing strength and support in an area that is lacking. God created a wife to come alongside her husband to offer support and supply strength where it is needed. Eve was created as Adam's helpmate, and together, they formed a perfect team with complementary roles to accomplish the work given to them by God. To be a helpmate means that a wife is called to willingly follow and faithfully support her husband.

Proverbs 31:10-12; 27-29 provides a picture of what a helpmate looks like: "An excellent wife who can find? Her worth is far above jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her and he will have no lack of gain...She does him good and not evil all the days of her life. She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and bless her; her husband also,

and he praises her saying ‘Many daughters have done nobly, but you exceed them all.’ Proverbs 31 reminds us that a wife’s life is not solely wrapped up in a man. The Proverbs 31 woman is both a strong business leader and an able household manager.

It is worth noting that the Bible never refers to the wife as the head or the husband as a helpmate. Only Eve was a suitable helper for Adam (Gen. 2:18; 20). The role of head is reserved for men and the role of helpmate is reserved for women. In Scripture, a husband is called to sacrifice and a wife is called to surrender. Both are called to difficult tasks. If roles are reversed and a wife steps into the overall leadership role of the home, the husband will often withdraw or fight or a marriage will not function smoothly.

There are many voices in culture trying to convince us that the roles of husband and wife are determined by personality or preference rather than gender-specific personhood. The world encourages couples to mix and match as they wish and treat roles as an a-la-carte option that is left up to personal choice. The cultural value that drives this mindset is egalitarianism (Letter A and B) and feminism (Letter C), where personal preference trumps all. Both should be rejected.

We must recognize and reject the underlying gender message of culture: *sameness*. Society is working hard to eliminate any difference between male and female. The egalitarian message of sameness in marriage is a departure from biblical teaching. Husbands and wives have the same immeasurable worth (Gen. 1:31), but have different and

complementary roles. Letter D aligns with a biblical view of marriage.

Note

- ¹ Marshall Segal, "When the Not-Yet Married Meet: Dating to Display Jesus," June 2013, www.desiringgod.org/articles/when-the-not-yet-married-meet-dating-to-display-jesus.

