



# **“LIFE UNDER GOD”**

**TERM 2**

**2014**

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# **“LIFE UNDER GOD”**

## **1. Introduction**

Living as a Christian in Australia in 2014 can be very confusing. On the one hand we believe in God and we believe that He is good and so that living his way will be the best for us. Yet, we make our way in life amongst friends who do not believe in God and who are, more and more, living in ways contrary to what Christians have taught. So, do we stick to the “Christian” way of living or not? And how do we know what God’s way is, really? With so many people disagreeing over the Bible and what it says, can we really know?

This term we look at some Christian foundations – in particular, we’ll be thinking through the doctrine of Scripture, the doctrine of creation, the doctrine of God’s providence and the doctrine of humanity. These studies will require some preparation, thought and research because they point us to deep questions. They raise practical matters of the very basis of belief in God, to what we think we are, as human beings, and we will seek to do these things, each time exploring whether we can really see Jesus Christ as the answer to our questions. And, if so, what that then means for living under God today.

**Kerry Nagel**

**April 2014**

## THE DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE

“The first thing that most people want to know about a book is what it’s about. When it comes to the Bible the first thing you need to know is not what it’s about, but who wrote it—that is, who the author is and where the words in the Bible come from. Some people dismiss the Bible as the uneducated ramblings of primitive and unscientific men and women. Perhaps the thinking is that anyone who grew up in a time before you could send a text message has nothing to contribute to sensible discussion. But this is a mistake. Sure it’s true that real men and women, at least some of whom were well-educated, wrote the words down on the page. Yet the Bible actually comes not from men and women but originally from God himself. It is one of his great acts of grace that God ‘speaks’ and in so doing reveals himself to us. Otherwise, we would be unable to know him with any certainty. (*The Bible, Scott Petty*)

“From one standpoint, the Scriptures (Scriptures means “writings”) are the faithful testimony of the godly to the God whom they loved and served; from another standpoint, through a unique exercise of divine overruling in their composition, they are God’s own testimony and teaching in human form. The church calls these writings the Word of God because of their authorship and contents are both divine.” (*Concise Theology, J.I. Packer*)

“The special revelation of God comes to us in and through the Bible. There we learn about and meet Jesus Christ. It is the basis and norm for all Christian preaching and teaching, and can therefore be described as the material form of special divine revelation.” (*Know the Truth, Bruce Milne*)

### **Further Reading**

<http://www.bethinking.org/bible/what-is-the-bible>

<http://www.bethinking.org/is-the-bible-reliable/isnt-the-bible-full-of-errors>

## Study 1

### “Can I Trust the Bible?”

(for week beginning Monday 28<sup>th</sup> April)

#### 1. Getting Started

If, as a Christian, I’m being told that the Bible is the way that God speaks to me, how can I know with confidence that it can be trusted? How can I know for sure that this is the book for me to base my life on and not other religious writings? What about the supposed contradictions in the Bible? How can I know that God has inspired the words of this book and how should that shape my life and my thinking?

- a) Which of these issues, if any, have you faced in your Christian walk and how have you gone about answering such questions?

Read the following article together and use the questions following for discussion.

#### **Appendix 1 - What Makes The Bible So Special?**

- b) What part(s) of this article stands out most for you, in terms of the unique nature of the Bible? Share with the group why.

#### 2. Turning to the Bible

- c) The Bible claims to be the Word of God. On what grounds can we believe this? Use the following passages to help you answer this question:

- Jesus' view of the Old Testament (Matt 4:4, 19:4ff; Mark 7:11-13; Luke 24:27, 44);
- The apostles' view of the Old Testament (Acts 2:16-35, 3:22-25, 4:11, 7:2ff, 13:29-37; Romans 1:2; Galatians 3:16-18);

**d)** McDowell claims that the unity of the Scriptures is only one reason among many which support the Bible's claim to be the divine Word of God. What other evidence does he suggest? What would you add?

### **Inspiration**

**e)** Read the follow excerpt from "The Blueprint" (Matthias Media) and discuss together.

#### ***The Divine Inspiration***

*This refers to the inspiration of the Scriptures by God. The use of the word 'inspiration' comes from 2 Timothy 3:16 and refers to God 'breathing out' the Scriptures. It means more than the Scriptures are 'inspired', or that they 'inspire' us. Shakespeare, Mozart and Rembrandt could all be described as 'inspired', by which we mean 'way above average'. They may also have an 'inspiring' effect upon us, by which we mean 'they lift us out of our normal, mundane lives'. However, theologically and biblically, the idea of inspiration is that the words are breathed out by God – the words of Scripture are God's words.*

*This in no way implies the method by which God inspires. It does not commit us to any idea of mechanical dictation or automatic writing. The inspiration did not remove the personality or style of the human author.*

*The Scriptures are treated as if there is a dual authorship: God and man, with the primary author being God. Psalm 110:1 is said to have been written by David and by God and by David speaking by the Spirit. The dual authorship can be seen throughout the Scriptures. (see Acts 2:34-35; Heb 1:3; Matt 22:43-44).*

### **3. Getting Personal**

- f) If the Bible is the inspired Word of God, how should that affect the way we use it?

### **4. Prayer Ideas**

- Thank God that He has not left us in the dark guessing, but has chosen to reveal himself to us through the words of the Bible;
- Give thanks for the unity of the Bible – that despite God using different people from different backgrounds, times and countries, there is complete harmony, pointing to God’s “breathing out” of Scripture.
- Pray that we would be people who not only know the word of God, but put it into practice in our lives.

### **5. If Time Permits....**

In a conversation with a friend at work, they suggest that the Bible is full of errors and contradictions. How would you seek to answer someone who raises these concerns?

## **Study 2**

### **“How Do I Trust the Bible?”** (for week beginning Monday 5<sup>th</sup> May)

#### **1. Getting Started**

If Bible is the unique, accurate, inspired word of God which can be trusted, practically speaking, how do I trust the Bible in day to day life? How does God speak to me through it? Is the Bible sufficient for my knowledge of God? How do I let the Bible guide and direct my life?

**a)** What are some of the ways in which our world undermines the Bible?

**b)** What temptations are there for Christian people to seek wisdom for life outside of the Bible? What are the possible dangers in doing this?

#### **2. Turning to the Bible**

**c)** Look up the following verses one by one and discuss what each verses reveals about the place of God’s word in the Christian life:

- Acts 20:32
- Romans 15:4
- 1 Corinthians 2:9-16 (cf. 1 John 2:27)
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Read the following excerpt from “The Blueprint” (Matthias Media) and discuss together:

**Authority**

*“One of the key issues in the Reformation was the question of authority. It was through reading the Bible that men such as Martin Luther and John Calvin came to question the authority of the established church of their day. Their chief point of contention was that the Roman Catholic Church had established itself as the authority for interpreting the Bible. They rightly saw that some of the Roman Catholic teaching directly contradicted what God had said in his word. The question clearly became: which authority will you follow? The Reformers were adamant that the Bible created the Church and not the other way around. Thus the church was to live in obedience to the Word.”*

- d) In what ways do Christian people undermine the authority of the Bible – consciously or sub-consciously? Discuss two or three examples together.
  
- e) In what ways can Christians emphasise the authority of the Bible? Discuss two or three examples together.
  
- f) Discuss the place of tradition, reason and experience in godly living. How do we ensure that the Bible remains our primary source of authority?

Read the following excerpt from “The Blueprint” (Matthias Media) and discuss together:

## **How Do We Know?**

*“The arguments so far seem to be circular. The Bible claims that the Bible is authoritative. If you believe the Bible, you will believe that it is authoritative. What happens if you don’t believe the Bible? How can you ever get onto that circle? What happens if you believe the Book of Mormon, or the Koran? These books also claim to be the authoritative word of God. Their authority seems ever bit as circular as the Bible’s. On one level, we should expect that the authority of the Bible will be found within the Bible itself. If it were found elsewhere, then there would be a rival claim to authority in matters of faith and conduct. If, for example, it was by reason that we concluded that the Scriptures were authoritative, then reason would become the supreme authority. The question remains: How can we ever get onto the circle?”*

**g)** Read the following verses and discuss the role of the Spirit in our understanding of the Bible:

- 1 Corinthians 2:14-16
- Ephesians 1:17-18
- 2 Corinthians 3:14-18

*The work of the Spirit in imparting this knowledge is called “illumination,” or enlightening. It is not a giving of new revelation, but a work within us that enables us to grasp and to love the revelation that is there before us in the biblical text as heard and read, and as explained by teachers and writers. Sin in our mental and moral system clouds our minds and wills so that we miss and resist the force of Scripture. God seems to us remote to the point of unreality, and in the face of God’s truth we are dull and apathetic. The Spirit, however, opens and unveils our minds and attunes our hearts so that we understand (Eph. 1:17–18; 3:18–19; 2 Cor. 3:14–16; 4:6). As by inspiration he provided Scripture truth for us, so now by illumination he interprets it to us. Illumination is thus the applying of God’s*

*revealed truth to our hearts, so that we grasp as reality for ourselves what the sacred text sets forth.*<sup>1</sup>

- h) What is the link, then, between the authority of the Bible and the inspiration (study 1) of the Bible?

### **3. Getting Personal**

- i) From living in a society where life has been shaped by the values of the Bible, to today, a post-Christian society which has moved away from the Bible's thinking and values – what temptations are there for Christian people to follow the ways of the world rather than holding to the Bible's teaching?

### **4. Prayer Ideas**

- Pray for God's Holy Spirit to continue to 'illuminate' the words of the Bible, so that we can do and walk in the will of God.
- Give thanks for the authority of Scripture – that it shapes our lives and thinking.
- Pray for conviction in your own heart, that the Bible would be your supreme authority that governs and directs your life.

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<sup>1</sup> Packer, J. I. (1993). *Concise theology: a guide to historic Christian beliefs*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House.

## THE DOCTRINE OF CREATION

“Creation is that work of the triune God by which he called all things that exist, both material and spiritual, into existence out of non-existence.”  
(*Know the Truth, Bruce Milne*).

“How did God create the world? Did he create every different kind of plant and animal directly, or did he use some kind of evolutionary process, guiding the development of living things from the simplest to the most complex? And how quickly did God bring about creation? Was it all completed within six twenty-four-hour days, or did he use thousands or perhaps millions of years? How old is the earth and how old is the human race? These questions face us when we deal with the doctrine of creation.”  
(*Systematic Theology, Wayne Grudem*).

“The act of creation is mystery to us; there is more in it than we can understand. We cannot create by fiat, and we do not know how God could. To say that he created “out of nothing” is to confess the mystery, not explain it. In particular, we cannot conceive how dependent existence can be distinct existence, nor how angels and human beings in their dependent existence can be not robots but creatures capable of free decisions for which they are morally accountable to their Maker. Yet Scripture everywhere teaches us that this is the way it is. (*Concise Theology, J.I. Packer*).

### **Further Reading**

<http://www.bethinking.org/does-evolution-disprove-creation/let-there-be-light>

## **Study 3**

### **“Did God Create?”**

(for week beginning Monday 12<sup>th</sup> May)

#### **1. Getting Started**

- a) What views of the origin of the world, or universe, do your non-Christian friends believe? Why, do you think?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b) In one or two sentences, how would you say we (human beings) got here? What different views, amongst Christians, are you aware of?

#### **2. Turning to the Bible**

- c) **Read Isaiah 45:18-22.** What does the passage tell us about “the earth”?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- d) What does it tell us about God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- e) Any other observations from this passage? Discuss.

### 3. Some “Modern” Objections

- f) Evolution.** Many people today say they believe that the universe began with a “Big Bang”. Then, over millions of years, human beings evolved by a long process of “natural selection”. So, we have no need to believe in a “God”, a creator, because we can explain our existence in this way.

Now, while the Bible strongly declares that we are created by God, I do not believe it tells us “how” he did this (i.e. whether by some process of “natural selection” etc) I think, to read Genesis 1 as if it tells us the details of “how” is a mistake. Rather, the emphasis in the Bible is on who (God) did it and why. We will come to these matters more later in this study and in studies 7,8 and 9. But, what do I say if someone says “there is no creator”?

- g)** Read Colossians 1v15-17. What does this passage say about who was involved in creation?

- h)** What does it say about the purpose of creation?

- i)** What did Jesus do that suggested he is the creator? (e.g. see Matthew 8v23-27). Discuss.

#### 4. Drawing Things Together

- j) A strategy. If someone claims that there is no creator and that we got here by a process of evolution, we could try to show them the “gaps” in the theory of evolution. But detailed discussions about archaeological evidences and carbon dating may not be helpful. The focus of the Bible’s claims is that we know there is a creator, because he has visited humanity in the person of Jesus Christ. Discuss whether this strategy would help in speaking to your non-Christian friends. Why or why not?
- k) What do the passages we have looked at teach us about WHY we exist?
- l) What practical consequences follow from this for you?

#### 5. If You Face the Issue

- m) There is a complex debate between some Christians over how to read Genesis chapter 1. Some Christians believe that the Bible teaches that the earth is about 6,000 years old and that the six “days” in Genesis 1 are to be taken as six, literal, 24 hour periods. Others read the chapter as a more symbolic picture from God, as to the beginnings of the world.

If you want to research this issue, please read the article, ***“Let there be Light”*** – see link on page 11.

*I am not sure the author deals with the view that if God used a process of evolution-as sovereign God he was involved “supernaturally” in every step. His discussion lacks, in my view, a proper understanding of the providence or rule of God, in every aspect of his world – all the time.*  
(K.N.)

**n) For the scientifically-minded** people among us, a fascinating side issue in recent discussion is DNA evidence regarding the origin of modern humans. I suggest you avoid the propaganda by Christian “Apologists” on this, but following up articles on “Mitochondrial Eve” will open up the issue well.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitochondrial\\_Eve](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitochondrial_Eve)

## 6. Prayer Ideas

- Give thanks to God for his work in creation. Be *creative* and thank God for particular parts of creation you’re thankful for.
- Pray and thank God for revealing the WHO and the WHY of creation – pray that that we would be people who trust in God and his purposes in creation.

## **Study 4**

### **“Coffee - Sin or Satisfaction?”**

(for week beginning Monday 19<sup>th</sup> May)

#### **1. Getting Started**

- a) “Mysticism is the view that the physical world is an evil thing and that true spiritual progress is only gained by leaving it behind. So, we explore disciplines that enable our minds and souls to escape the captivity of our physical environment. Then, our spirits can be free.”

Have you met people who think like this? Discuss similar ideas you have heard.

- b) What is your favourite food or drink? Why? Discuss.

#### **2. Turning to the Bible**

- c) Read Genesis 1v9-10, 17-19, 31. What does God say about his creation?

- d) Read Mark 7v14-23. While in the Old Testament there were various restrictions of what to eat, what does Jesus say here about food and “spirituality”?

- e) What does hinder spiritual growth, according to Jesus?

**f)** Various traditions within (and outside) Christianity have at times taught that sex is sinful, or at least “less spiritual”. Read 1 Timothy 4v1-5. What does this passage say about such teachings?

**g)** What is God’s view of the physical creation?

### **3. Drawing Things Together**

**h)** “We need to avoid two extremes with regard to the physical creation. The first is to treat it as evil in itself. The second is to worship enjoying it, as the purpose of life”. Discuss.

**i)** How do we avoid both of these errors, with regard to sex and marriage?

**j)** How do we avoid both of these errors with regard to coffee? Alcohol? Food?

### **4. Prayer Ideas**

- Give thanks to God for the beauty of his creative works, which we enjoy.
- Pray that we will be people who are busy worshipping the Creator and not the creation.

## THE DOCTRINE OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE

"Providence is 'that continued exercise of the divine energy whereby the Creator preserves all His creatures, is operative in all that comes to pass in the world, and directs all things to their appointed end' (Berkhof). The biblical doctrine takes its name from Genesis 22:8, "God himself will provide..." and is classically expressed in the story of Joseph whose abduction and deportation to Egypt were seen subsequently as the divinely intended provision for the needs of his famine-stricken family (Gen 45). Providence asserts that God, having called the world into being, continually sustains, renews and orders it." (*Know the Truth, Bruce Milne*)

"If Creation was a unique exercise of divine energy causing the world to be, providence is a continued exercise of that same energy whereby the Creator, according to his own will, (a) keeps all creatures in being, (b) involves himself in all events, and (c) directs all things to their appointed end. The model is of purposive personal management with total "hands-on" control: God is completely in charge of his world. His hand may be hidden, but his rule is absolute.

Some have restricted God's providence to foreknowledge without control, or upholding without intervention, or general oversight without concern for details, but the testimony to providence as formulated above is overwhelming. (*Concise Theology, J.I. Packer*)

Providence is the beneficent outworking of God's sovereignty whereby all events are directed and disposed to bring about those purposes of glory and good for which the universe was made. These events include the actions of free agents, which while remaining free, personal and responsible are also the intended actions of those agents. Providence thus encompasses both natural and personal events, setting them alike within the purposes of God. (*New Dictionary of Theology, S. Ferguson & J.I. Packer*)

## Study 5

## **“Is God in the World Today?”**

(for week beginning Monday 26<sup>th</sup> May)

### **1. Getting Started**

- a) “God created the world, then stepped back and let it spin out of control. Sure, God is powerful, but he doesn’t get involved in the details of people’s lives.” Discuss.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b) As Christians we believe that God uses all things for God (Rom 8:28), what things in your life or in the world have caused you to question this?

### **2. Turning to the Bible**

- c) **Read Isaiah 46:8-11.** What does God say about his control of world events? Discuss.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- d) How should this affect our thinking about events in the world today, if at all? Discuss.

**e)** Read Matthew **6:25-34** and **Matthew 10:26-31**. What do these passages teach us about God's control over the smaller details of our lives?

**f)** How should this affect our thinking about events happening in my life right now? Share together.

### **3. Getting personal**

**g)** We may not always be able to see how God is using things for good, but how does God call us to respond to his sovereign control of all things? Use the following passages to help answer this question:

- Philippians 4:6-7
- Matthew 6:31-34

### **4. Prayer Ideas**

- Share some particular ways that God is actively at work in your life today – give thanks to God and continue to ask him to work in and through you.

## THE DOCTRINE OF HUMANITY

“What is humanity? Today this question continues to haunt us, for despite the enormous technological advances of our period and our vastly enhanced knowledge of the human species at the biological, chemical, and psychological levels we are still apparently no nearer arriving at a definitive answer.....what are we? Where did we come from? What is the meaning of our life? Is there any final significance in the age-long human struggle?” (*Know the Truth, Bruce Milne*).

“Scripture does not provide us with a classified anthropology. But, on the other hand, it does state a number of principles concerning the nature of man, which are of great importance because the whole of subsequent scriptural doctrine is based upon them.” (*In Understanding Be Men, T.C. Hammond*).

“The doctrine of humanity is important because of its relationship to other major Christian doctrines. Since the human is the highest of God’s earthly creatures, the study of humanity brings to completion our understanding of God’s work and, in a sense, of God himself, since we do learn something about the Creator by seeing what he has created. For only humans are said in the Bible to have been made by God in his own image and likeness (Genesis 1:26-27). Thus, a direct clue to the nature of God ought to emerge from a study of humans.” (*Christian Theology, M.J. Erickson*).

### **Further Reading**

<http://www.bethinking.org/human-life/what-does-it-mean-to-be-human>

<http://www.bethinking.org/human-life/what-is-the-image-of-god>

## Study 6

### **“What Is It To Be Human?”**

#### **Created in “God’s Image”**

(for week beginning Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> June)

### **1. Getting Started**

In these final three studies in this series, we look at what we are as human beings. The fact is that we answer this question for ourselves, as we make decisions about how to live our lives. For example, if single, should I get married, or remain single? If married, should I work at staying faithful? In choosing work, what do I think will “satisfy” me? If facing retirement, what do I decide to do with my time? (work part-time? Play golf or bowls all day?)

The way we answer these sorts of questions, says something about what we think we are. (We will examine some of these more closely in the following studies.) And then, there is the question of how I relate, if at all, to God?

**a)** Which of the above issues are you facing, if any? What principles are directing your thinking on the issue at present? (e.g. marriage and singleness, work, retirement)

**b)** If someone were to ask you what you live for, how would you answer them? Why? How does that affect your life? Discuss.

### **3. Turning to the Bible**

**c)** **Read Genesis 1:26-28.** What do these verses teach us about all human beings? Discuss.

**d)** A key question is- what the phrase “image of God” means? If we are like God – in what ways? Briefly share some initial thoughts.

**e)** Human beings are clearly different, in God’s opinion, from all other creatures. From the following verses, what are some of the consequences of this?

**i) Genesis 9:4-6**

**ii) Proverbs 17:5; 14:31**

**f)** Considering what you have discovered about God’s opinion about human beings, discuss the following statement: “whaling is murder” (ie. is killing whales really murder?).

**g)** Give a basis for opposing racism, from your understanding of what we are as human beings. Discuss.

- h)** With the coming of Jesus, we see the “image of God” more fully. Read Colossians 1:15-17 What does this passage teach us about our purpose as human beings? Discuss.

### **3. Getting Personal**

- i)** How does the fact that you are a being made in God’s likeness affect your view of yourself?
- j)** If we are created “for Christ”, how does this affect what I think will truly satisfy me, as a person? Discuss.

## Study 7

### **“In God’s Image – Work”** (for week beginning Monday 9<sup>th</sup> June)

#### **1. Getting Started**

- a) If you have a paid or unpaid job at present, how do you feel about it? Why do you feel this way? Discuss.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b) If you have no work, or are unable to work, describe how you feel about this. Why do you feel that way? Discuss.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- c) Should Christians retire from work? If so, at what age? Discuss.

#### **2. Turning to the Bible**

- d) **Read Genesis 1:31 - 2:3.** How is God’s “creative activity” described, in these verses?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- e) What does God do after creating? How does this point us to God’s ultimate goal of creation?

- f) Part of being “in God’s image”, is that we are made for a task similar to the one God is involved in. From Genesis 1:28, what are we men and women told to do? (Apart from filling the earth and increasing in number.)
- g) In Genesis 2:15, how is this task now described for Adam and Eve?
- h) So, it seems that some sort of “work” is part of what we are made for – part of what, then, might satisfy us in life (even if not paid). What example does the Lord Jesus give us in this regard? (Read John 9:1-5; John 17:1-5)
- i) If Jesus is returning....what about work? It seems that some early Christians had decided that there was no need to work, since Jesus was returning. **Read 2 Thessalonians 3: 6-13**
- j) What is Paul’s instruction to those who think they don’t need to work?
- k) What reasons does he give?

### **3. Getting Personal**

- l)** How do the principles we have seen above help us to decide- if at all – what job to do?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- m)** If we are created in God's image and God is a 'worker', then is the dream of "work-free" retirement, lasting decades, a wise goal? Why or why not? Discuss
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- n)** If you are nearing retirement, or retired, how should these principles affect your own planning?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- o)** Consider again your attitude to your current work. (If 'employed', paid or not). How do the principles in Scripture challenge, if at all, your thinking? Discuss.

## Study 8

### **“In God’s Image – Relationships”**

(for week beginning Monday 16<sup>th</sup> June)

#### **1. Getting Started**

- a) Who are your most significant “friendships” with? (If married, outside your marriage partner.) What time do you give to these?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b) If able to do so, identify your two most difficult relationships (e.g. at work? wider family?) How do you ‘manage’ them? Discuss

#### **2. Turning to the Bible**

- c) **Read Genesis 2:18-25.** What one aspect of God’s “initial” creation, is described as “not good”? Why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- d) What does God do to solve this?

- e) God creates male and female, to relate to each other – for companionship. But also notice that Adam and Eve do not only relate to each other. Who else are they created to interact with? And in what way? (**Read Genesis 2:15-17; 3:8-9**)
- f) So, part of being made in God's image is about being created for relationship. How do we see this in the Lord Jesus? How does he show that relationships are important to him? (e.g. see what passages such as **Matthew 14:23; Matthew 26:36-38** tell us about Jesus and his Father). Discuss.
- g) Many of us have a primary companionship in marriage. What does **Matthew 22:30** tell us about our future, in this regard?
- h) If someone finds themselves single, or single again, should they seek to be married? (**See 1 Corinthians 7:38**)

- i) Where else might we look for relationship, if not in marriage? (e.g. see **1 Corinthians 12:27**). Discuss.

### 3. Getting Personal

- j) How can you be more “deliberate” about relationships? (If you need to think more on it.) If we are made in God’s image, and a key part of that is relationships, how should that affect such matters as:
  - i) moving interstate , or across town?
  - ii) retirement
- k) In the bible, marriage is not the answer to life. (**see 1 Corinthians 7:38**) How can we avoid language that points to a “worship of marriage”? (e.g. always asking single people “if there is anyone on the scene?”) Discuss.

- I) Many of us are married, and many are single. If those of us who are single are to be included, those married need to consider this. e.g. when did we last have a single friend over for dinner? Is this an issue in our culture, do you think? Discuss

# APPENDIX 1 — “WHAT MAKES THE BIBLE SO SPECIAL?”

By Josh McDowell - <http://www.josh.org/resources/study-research/answers-to-skeptics-questions/what-makes-the-bible-so-special/>

Christianity believes and teaches that the Bible alone is the revealed Word of God. Even though it was written by men, the ultimate author was God Almighty. This claim was not invented by the Church, but is the claim the Bible makes for itself.

“The word of the Lord endures forever” (1 Peter 1:25, The Modern Language Bible). “All Scripture is God-breathed” (2 Timothy 3:16, MLB). “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21, KJV).

Over 2,000 times in the Old Testament alone there are clauses such as, “And God spoke to Moses,” “the word of the Lord came unto Jonah,” and “God said.” Moreover, the Bible claims to be a record of the words and deeds of God, thus the Bible views itself as God’s Word. The mere fact that the Bible claims to be the Word of God does not prove that it is such, for there are other books that make similar claims. The difference is that the Scriptures contain convincing evidence as being the Word of God.

One reason that the Bible is different from other books is its unity. Although this book was composed by men, its unity reveals the hand of the Almighty. The Bible was written over a period of about 1,500 years by more than forty different human authors. These authors came from a variety of backgrounds, including Joshua (a military general), Daniel (a prime minister), Peter (a fisherman), and Nehemiah (a cupbearer).

The authors of the various books wrote in different places, such as the wilderness (Moses), prison (Paul), exile on the Isle of Patmos (John). The biblical writings were composed on three different continents (Africa, Asia, and Europe), and in three different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek).

The contents of the Bible deal with many controversial subjects. Yet, the Bible is a unit. From beginning to end, there’s one unfolding story of God’s plan of salvation for mankind. This salvation is through the person of Jesus Christ (John 14:6). Jesus Himself testified that He was the theme of the entire Bible.

“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. . . . For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?” (John 5:39, 46, 47, KJV). In another place: “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself (Luke 24:27, KJV; see also Luke 24:44).

The Old Testament is the preparation (Isaiah 40:3). The Gospels are the manifestation (John 1:29). The Book of Acts is the propagation (Acts 1:8). The Epistles give the explanation (Colossians 1:27). The Book of Revelation is the consummation (Revelation 1:7). The Bible is all about Jesus.

The entire Bible is a unity with each part needing the others to be complete. Dr. W. F. Albright puts it this way: “To the writers of the New Testament, the Hebrew Bible was Holy Scripture and they were the direct heirs of its prophets. It is, accordingly, quite impossible to understand the New Testament without recognizing that its purpose was to supplement and explain the Hebrew Bible. “Any attempt to go back to the sources of Christianity without accepting the entire Bible as our guide is thus doomed to failure” (cited by Roger T. Forster and V. Paul Marston, *That’s a Good Question*, p. 67).

Lest anyone think this isn’t something marvelous, we’d like to give you this challenge. Find ten people from your local area having similar backgrounds, who speak the same language, and all are from basically the same culture. Then separate them and ask them to write their opinion on only one controversial subject, such as the meaning of life.

When they have finished, compare the conclusions of these ten writers. Do they agree with each other? Of course not. But the Bible did not consist of merely ten authors, but forty. It was not written in one generation, but over a period of 1,500 years; not by authors with the same education, culture and language, but with vastly different education, many different cultures, from three continents and three different languages, and finally not just one subject but hundreds.

And yet the Bible is a unity. There is complete harmony, which cannot be explained by coincidence or collusion. The unity of the Bible is a strong argument in favor of its divine inspiration. The unity of the Scriptures is only one reason among many which supports the Bible’s claim to be the divine Word of God. Others which could be explained in detail are the testimony of the early church, the witness of history and archaeology, and the evidence of changed lives throughout the centuries, to name but a few.

These factors led the great archaeologist, W. F. Albright, to conclude, “The Bible towers in content above all earlier religious literature; and it towers just as impressively over all subsequent literature in the direct simplicity of its message and the catholicity of its appeal to men of all lands and times” (*The Christian Century*, November 1958).

The Bible is special. It is unique. No other book has any such credentials. No other book even comes close. “England has two books, the Bible and Shakespeare. England made Shakespeare, but the Bible made England” (Victor Hugo, cited by Mead. *Encyclopedia of Religious Quotations*, p. 49).

## NON-CHRISTIAN CONTACTS - PRAYER LIST

Group Member	Non- Christian contacts
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