



1. Revelation's Great Controversy



2. It was April of 1994, and a great controversy was brewing in a small African nation. Its name was Rwanda. For many years, two people groups had dominated the landscape of that country. They were the Hutus and the Tutsis. For years, they had learned to coexist together peacefully. They worked together, they played together, they even went to church together. But all that changed one terrible day in 1994 when the Hutu president boarded his plane to go on an international trip. Minutes after take-off, his plane was shot down. He was assassinated in cold blood.

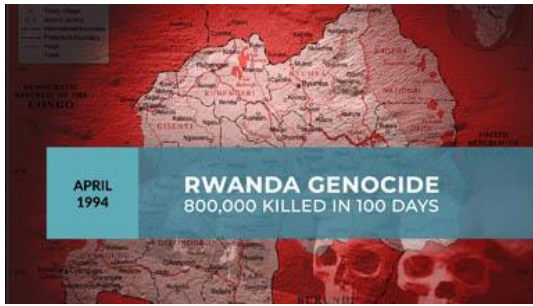


3. Nobody seemed to know who did it, or why. Immediately, the Hutus and the government blamed the rival Tutsis. They called them the enemies of this country and declared that in order for the country to survive, all Tutsis must be exterminated.

And so, for the next few weeks, when the sun went down at night, Hutus would arm themselves with machetes and clubs and other weapons. They would begin to scour their villages and their neighborhoods.



4. They would burst into the homes and even places of worship of their Hutu neighbors, rape the women, and butcher the men and the children. In about 100 days, 800,000 people lost their lives in that bloodstained nation. And all the while, the world turned a blind eye to the massacre. The United States said nothing, and the United Nations did nothing. It was one of the worst conflicts that ever hit the African soil.



5. **But Revelation talks about another great controversy**, one that is far worse than the Rwandan genocide. One that surpasses any world war that has ever taken place on the face of the Earth.



6. Revelation calls it the controversy between good and evil, or the conflict between Jesus Christ and Satan. The Bible tells us that it was Satan who first brought sin and sorrow to this planet, and that he has been working hard to try to pull humankind away from God.



7. Since that time, Jesus has been relentlessly working against him. The devil has been trying to destroy us, and Jesus wants to save us and to bring us back to God. And so, as we study this controversy in the book of Revelation, we're going to find out this Earth is the playing field. And more specifically, every decision we make in our heart and our mind is another playing field for that great controversy.

Tonight we're going to answer these three questions.



8. Number one, how did this great controversy begin? Number two, how did sin come into our world? And along with that, where did the devil come from? And number three, what is the solution? I'm happy to say that Revelation gives clear answers to all of those questions.?

So, I want you to take your Bibles and turn with me to Revelation 12:7-9. I want you to picture in your mind everything John describes in this vision.



REVELATION 12:7-9

"And war broke out in heaven, Michael and his angels fought with the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought. But they did not prevail,

9. The Bible says, "And war broke out..." where? "... in heaven, Michael and his angels fought with the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought. But they did not prevail,



REVELATION 12:7-9

nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So that great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan who

10. nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So that great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan who



REVELATION 12:7-9

deceives the whole world, he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

11. deceives the whole world, he was cast to the..." where? "...earth, and his angels were cast out with him."



REVELATION 12:7-9

deceives the whole world, he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

12. Now, we're going to stop there for a second. Right here, Revelation gives us the picture of a great controversy. It says that Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and his angels. Revelation is telling us the shocking truth that, at one point, Satan was a faithful angel in the courts of heaven. Do you realize that? Revelation tells us that he was once a mighty cherub who loved God, who honored God, and who was willing to follow the principles of God. But the Bible also tells us that at some point in his existence, Satan lost his love for his Creator.



REVELATION 12:7-9
deceives the whole world, he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

- 13.** It came to the point where he began to plant insidious seeds in the minds of the other angels that God is not love, that God cannot be trusted, that Holy angels should not have to follow God's principles. Holy angels should be able to rule themselves. They should not be subject to God's laws. And over a period of time—the Bible does not say how much time—Satan continued to plant these seeds of doubt until the deception eventually broke out in a full-scale rebellion.



REVELATION 12:7-9
deceives the whole world, he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

- 14.** A portion of the angels sided with Satan and tried to take over the throne of God. And when that happened, Revelation tells us that God had no choice but to cast out Satan and his angels. He became a fallen angel, and where did he fall to? To this earth. You see, it's a sad story to realize that sin came into existence because one loving angel became one unfaithful angel and rebelled against his Creator.



- 15.** But when you think about it, the same rebellion that he instigated in the courts of heaven, he has now brought to this earth. He plants the same insidious seeds in our minds. He wants us to believe that God is not love, that God cannot be trusted, that humankind is too sophisticated and we need not be subject to the principles and the commandments of God. As a result, we have all kinds of woe and heartache and sorrow right here on this earth. Think about it—when some of the angels in heaven pulled away from the principles of God's Word, did it bring pain? Yes or no? Indeed, it did.



- 16.** And so here on this earth, the more the devil pulls us away from the principles of happiness contained in the Scriptures, the more suffering we begin to see on the face of the earth. The more we say God's Word is archaic, irrelevant, and unnecessary, the deeper our society is plunged into sin and degradation. Christ seeks to bring us back to God and His truth. He seeks to save us from all this pain. But the devil seeks to separate us from God and destroy confidence in His Word. That is the great controversy which Revelation begins to talk about.



17. Now Revelation is not the only book in the Bible that gives us a glimpse into this rebellion. I want to go all the way back to the Old Testament because God gave some of His Old Testament prophets a bigger window into this controversy.

Turn in your Bibles to Isaiah chapter 14, and I want to start reading in verse 12. What you're going to read here is rather interesting. God gave Isaiah a picture into what was going on in the heart of Satan when he rebelled. The Bible is going to reveal his inner most thoughts.

ISAIAH 14:12

"How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations!"



18. The Bible says, *"How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations!"*

ISAIAH 14:12

For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the



19. *For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the*

ISAIAH 14:12

congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High."



20. *congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High. "*

Now, I'm going to pause here for a second. Here in Isaiah, we are told that the devil's name in heaven was what? Lucifer. Now see, "Lucifer" simply means "day star", which indicates to us that he was a glorious, a beautiful, and a mighty angel. God had given him power and authority over a portion of the angels.

ISAIAH 14:12

congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.”



21. But you see, Lucifer has now become synonymous with evil, because Lucifer is a fallen angel. And really, that influences our world even today. If you’ve ever watched one of those science-fiction movies, what name do they often tend to give the most villainous character in the film? What do you think? Yes, they call him Lucifer. When is the last time you saw a mother who has just given birth to a baby, lay that baby on her bosom and look to the nurse and say, “You know, I’m going to call him Lucifer?” That never happens.

ISAIAH 14:12

congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.”



22. So here you have Lucifer, now a fallen being, leading a rebellion against his Creator. Isaiah shows us what Lucifer was thinking in his heart, that he will ascend into heaven and will exalt his throne above God’s. He even says, “I will be like the Most High.” He wanted to be God. He was willing to do anything to obtain the throne of heaven, and that included instigating a full-scale rebellion against God. It’s a very sad story when you think about it. An angel, Lucifer, who was given everything an angel could want—honor and glory, living in perfect paradise in the courts of heaven. And—for whatever reason—it just wasn’t enough.

ISAIAH 14:12

congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.”



23. When he rebelled, he was cast out of heaven along with those angels who chose to follow him. He continues to bring that same rebellion upon this planet. He convinces us that we can be our own God, that we don’t have to be subject to a higher authority, that we no longer need the principles of God’s law. And as he continues to lead this planet away from God, we become separated from Him because sin separates us from God, just as sin separated the fallen angels who decided to follow Lucifer. The separation grows wider as time goes on. And as time goes on and this planet continues to reject God’s Word, the world gets progressively worse.

EXCUSES



- I know what Your Word says, *but* . . .
- I know what Your commandments say, *but* . . .
- I know what You ask of me, *but* . . .

24. Many of us would say, “I’d never do what Lucifer did. He tried to make Himself God. He wanted to be in control.” But don’t we do the same thing when we say, “Lord, I know what Your Word says, but I don’t want to do it”? “Lord, I know what your commandments say, but it’s inconvenient for me”? “Lord, I know what you ask of me, but I want to be in control of my own life”? When we do that, aren’t we making ourselves a god above God? Aren’t we following our own way instead of His way? Aren’t we trying to be in control?



- I know what Your Word says, *but* . . .
- I know what Your commandments say, *but* . . .
- I know what You ask of me, *but* . . .

25. But Isaiah is not the only Old Testament prophet that was given a glimpse into this conflict. I want to take you somewhere else. Let's go to the book of Ezekiel. This passage brings up some very important points and answers the question many people ask: Did God create the devil?



EZEKIEL 28:13-16

"You were the anointed cherub who covers. I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God. You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery

26. The Bible says, and this is God speaking to Lucifer, "*You were the anointed cherub who covers.*" A cherub is a mighty angel. "*I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God.*" That's speaking of heaven. "*You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery*



EZEKIEL 28:13-16

stones. You were perfect in all your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you. By the abundance of your trading, you became

27. *stones. You were perfect in all your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you. By the abundance of your trading, you became*



EZEKIEL 28:13-16

filled with violence within, and you sinned. Therefore I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God."

28. *filled with violence within, and you sinned. Therefore I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God."*

Now, I'm going to go back to something that's written right in the middle of that passage. Notice, the Bible says of Lucifer that he was a created being. When he was created, what does the Bible say? He was perfect in all his ways until iniquity was found in him.



EZEKIEL 28:13-16

filled with violence within, and you sinned. Therefore I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God."

- 29.** You see, it's important to understand, God did not create the devil. God did not create evil to be on the face of the earth. What God did is He created a perfect, loyal angel who used his freedom of choice to rebel against God and iniquity was found inside him. Because truthfully, where does sin begin? In the heart. And then from the heart, we act out on it. And clearly, Ezekiel says that violence was found in Lucifer from within and eventually he acted it out in a full-scale rebellion. And when that happened? God cast him out of heaven and into this Earth.



EZEKIEL 28:13-16

filled with violence within, and you sinned. Therefore I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God."

- 30.** But that leads us to a question that many people ask: does God know the future? Yes or no? Does He know the end from the beginning? Indeed, he does.



IF GOD KNOWS THE FUTURE, THEN WHY DID HE CREATE LUCIFER?

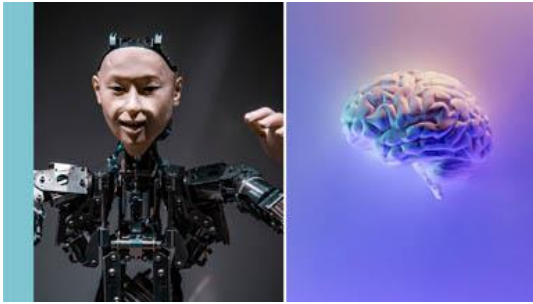
- 31.** If God knows the future, then why did He create Lucifer?

If God knew that Lucifer was going to turn evil, if He knew that Lucifer would rebel and cause all this heartache, why did God create him to begin with? How many people think that's a good question? Can I see your hands? Sure, it is. Anybody who may be reading the Bible for the first time would be very apt to ask that question.



FREE WILL

- 32.** So, this is where we must understand the concept of free will. You see, God did not create His angels, nor does He create us, as robots who are forced and programmed to follow Him. We have a choice. We were not created as mindless robots. Why? Because you cannot develop a love relationship with a robot. In order to develop a love relationship with the beings that you create, they must have the freedom to choose to love you back.



33. Let me give you an example. Let's take a husband and wife relationship. Now, it may be that there are some wives here who may be thinking, "If I could just open my husband's head and program his brain to think exactly like I do and do what I want him to do, we would have the perfect relationship." Did I hear some ladies say, amen? Conversely, I suppose some men would also say, "If I could just program my wife to think like me and do what I want, then yes, life would be perfect." Now, the men are saying, Amen!



34. On the outside, that might seem logical. But let me ask you a question. With a relationship like that, could you truly fall in love with each other? You could not, because in order for a love relationship to develop, two people must have the freedom to love each other back. (You could also use you and your spouse in the illustration)



35. If you are forced to do it, it is not love. And when someone has the freedom to choose, there is always the risk that they may choose not to love you back, or to stop loving you. Probably all of us have faced that pain in our life, whether it's a dating relationship that broke up or maybe even a marriage, and that is a very painful experience. You see, God knew that if He created us with the freedom to choose, there would be the risk that we might cause Him pain by choosing not to love Him back.



36. But God took that risk because He loves us enough to give us liberty and the ability to choose. All of us are created with the desire for freedom and liberty. In fact, there are many citizens of countries around this world who are crying out for that liberty. Even our forefathers wrote that liberty is an inalienable right, something that God put inside of us. They were right about that; God gives us a free will.



37. But let's go further than that. You say, well, I can understand why God gave Lucifer the freedom to choose, but what about this question—and this is a question somebody is bound to ask—



38. When Lucifer rebelled, why didn't God just destroy him?

Picture someone reading the Bible for the first time. And in Revelation, it says that Lucifer rebelled against God and he was cast out of heaven—and where was he cast? To this earth.



39. Can you see someone asking the question, "God, why did You send him down here? Why did you give him a chance to come and bring woe to this earth? Why didn't you just destroy him? Why didn't you just give him a lightning bolt and blot him out of existence?" And, according to human thinking, that would sound like a logical idea.

But there are at least two reasons why God did not do that. One has to do with fear.



40. Think about it. I want you to picture the angels. Lucifer has told them that his way is better than God's. So, as soon as Lucifer questions God and steps out of line, boom, God kills him and blots him out of existence. What would that have communicated to the other angels?



- 41.** Imagine in your mind the conversations the other angels would have had. “Boy, did you see what happened to Lucifer? As soon as he stepped out of line, God killed him. Man, we better do what God says or God may kill us too.” And the angels would have begun to serve God out of fear because they were afraid not to. And you see, a relationship of fear is not something God wants with His created beings.



1 JOHN 4:18
“...perfect
love casts
out fear...”

- 42.** The Bible says, “...perfect love casts out...” what? [Congregation: “Fear.”] Yes, “fear”. You find that in 1st John 4:18. So, to have a love relationship, fear cannot be involved. On this earth we would call a relationship of fear a dysfunctional relationship.

I’ll give you an illustration.

Unfortunately, all of us have probably seen or heard about a woman who has been abused by a man, who stays and gets repeatedly abused.



1 JOHN 4:18
“...perfect
love casts
out fear...”

- 43.** She’s afraid that if she leaves, he will do worse to her or even to her children. And so, she stays with him, not because she’s in love with him, but because it’s an enslaving relationship of fear. That’s not the kind of relationship God wants with His angelic beings or with us human beings. He wants free choice. He wants a relationship of love. And so that the angels would not fear Him, He did not destroy Satan on the spot.



- 44.** But there’s a second reason. God is fair.

Think this through. Satan claimed that his program, his principles were better than God’s. Did the angels know what Satan’s program was? Had they ever seen the program of sin carried out anywhere? Not really. All they had known was the perfect paradise that God had given them, surrounded with unutterable love.



45. Now, that should have been enough for them. But in order to be fair, this is in effect what God does. He says to Lucifer, “All right, I will give you a chance. I will send you down to the earth. I will allow you to carry out your program if, and only if, the people allow you. I will allow the universe to observe your program. And when time is all said and done, I’ll let them choose who they want to follow.”



46. Adam had a choice who they wanted to follow. And when they listened to Lucifer’s voice instead of God’s voice, it opened the door for sin to come to this planet. And now, after a few thousand years of Satan’s program of sin and suffering, it doesn’t take a college degree to figure out that Lucifer’s program has caused devastation on planet earth.



47. This is Revelation’s great controversy. You see, we sometimes think to ourselves, “God, it’s not fair. Good things happen to bad people and bad things happen to good people. Why, God?” If God stopped every evil thing from happening in this world, we would never get a true picture of what sin really is. We would never get a true picture of how much we need salvation and how much we need Jesus.



48. So, even though it breaks God’s heart to see the tragedies and atrocities that happen on this earth, God does not always stop them from happening. He allows us to see what Satan’s program looks like—sin, suffering, and tragedy—so that we will choose to follow Christ and receive eternal life.



- 49.** But see, there's a safety switch to this. Did you catch it? The only way Satan would be allowed to carry out his program on this earth is if human beings opened the door. Human beings would have to choose to follow Satan's way. So, now the Great Controversy switches playing fields and comes to this planet, starting with Adam and Eve.



- 50.** We started tonight in Revelation. Now we're going to Genesis. We started in the last book of the Bible, now we're going to the first book of the Bible, because the great controversy is changing playing fields. It started in the courts of heaven. Now it is coming down to planet earth and into our hearts and minds.

So, let's go back to Genesis 3:1-6, and let's notice how sin came to this planet.



GENESIS 3:1-3

"Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Has God indeed said,

- 51.** The Bible says, *"Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Has God indeed said,*



GENESIS 3:1-3

"You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of

- 52.** *'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'* And the woman said to the serpent, *'We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of*



GENESIS 3:1-3

the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, "You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die."

- 53.** *the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you ...' do what? ...die.'*

Now, was God clear there? Was there any mistake in what He said? Don't eat it, don't touch it, or you will die.



GENESIS 3:4-6

"Then the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God,

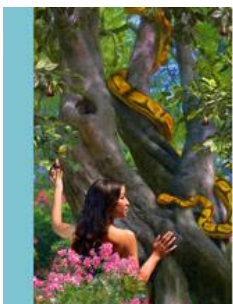
- 54.** *Now verse four, "Then the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God,*



GENESIS 3:4-6

knowing good and evil.' So, when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make

- 55.** *knowing good and evil. So, when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make*



GENESIS 3:4-6

one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate."

- 56.** *one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate."*

Now, we have to stop right here. There are so many lessons pictured in that passage that we often skip over them too fast. Here the devil apparently changes himself into the form of a serpent, and he plants himself right beside the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the one tree that God said they should not go near.



GENESIS 3:4-6

one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate."

57. Now, there's a principle there. Notice, God did not allow Satan to go roaming around all the other parts of the garden pursuing Adam and Eve. He was limited to that one area where God had told Adam and Eve they are not supposed to go. See how fair and just God is? He didn't just take Satan and throw him down to Adam and Eve. He was restricted to a particular part of the garden. And Genesis tells us that somehow Eve wandered near that forbidden tree. And as she nears it, she notices the serpent in its branches. And the serpent begins to talk to her.



GENESIS 3:4-6

one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate."

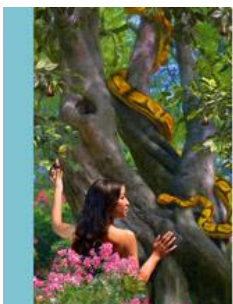
58. Now, I've got to stop right there. I can tell you, that would not have worked with my wife. She hates snakes. Actually, that's an understatement. She loathes them! As soon as she would've seen that snake, she would have been 10 miles down the path. She would not have even waited around to see what it had to say.



GENESIS 3:4-6

one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate."

59. But there was a charm about this snake, and it caught Eve's attention. She listened, and she heard, "Has God said you can't eat of any of the trees?" Now, did God say that? He did not. God didn't say, "You can't eat of any of the trees." He said, "You can have all of them, except the one in the middle." You see how the devil was already trying to twist God's Word and confuse Eve. And then finally, Eve speaks to the serpent. This was her mistake. She stood there and had a conversation with the devil.



GENESIS 3:4-6

one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate."

60. When temptation comes our way, God says, run. Pray, then get away from it. God tells us not to purposely put ourselves in a position where we know that weak human nature is going to be tempted. So, back to Eve. She begins to reason with the devil, which is always a bad idea. And she says, "Oh no, God says that we can eat of all the trees, just not the one in the middle. God says when we eat of it, we will die. It will bring death into this world." And the devil comes right back, and he blatantly says, "You will not surely die."



GENESIS 3:4-6

one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate."

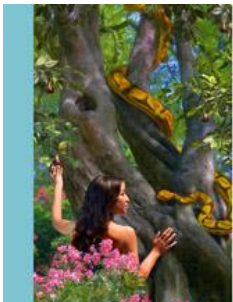
- 61.** Then I want you to notice what he says next, because it's very important. There's something here that is directly tied to the book of Revelation and the book of Isaiah. Notice what the devil says in verse five. He says to her, "God knows in the day you eat of this fruit, your eyes will be opened. You will have special knowledge. You will be like God."



GENESIS 3:4-6

one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate."

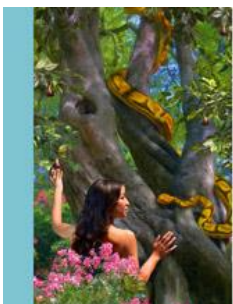
- 62.** In other words, he's saying to her, "God is withholding something good from you. The fruit on this tree, it's something that's good. It's something that's desirable. If you eat of it, you'll know good and evil. You will have a higher knowledge than you have now. You will be like God."



GENESIS 3:4-6

one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate."

- 63.** Who was it that Isaiah said wanted to be like God? Lucifer! And now Lucifer is putting the same thought in the minds of human beings. So, when Eve took of that fruit and ate it and gave it to her husband, that opened the door. That gave permission to Satan to begin to carry out his program of sin on this earth.



GENESIS 3:4-6

one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate."

- 64.** And from that moment on, every person that was born into this world after Adam and Eve is born with the tendency to sin already in them. Do you understand that? You see, traditionally we think sin is only bad things that you do. Well, that's part of it. But sin is like a disease we are born with. It's like a cancer inside of us. You see, sin means we are born with a tendency from the start to do what's wrong. When I am left on my own, it's easier for me to do wrong than it is for me to do right. That's the human nature.



65. Now, let me give an example of that. Let's suppose that I'm working on my house. I'm outside. I'm nailing things together. And, lo and behold, I'm not paying attention, and suddenly, the hammer slips, boom, I hit myself on the finger. Automatically—in less than a second—maybe something comes out of my mouth that shouldn't. The curse word flies, and I'm mortified. I can't believe that I said that! The word came out so quickly and naturally, why? Because it's part of my nature. It's easier for us to do wrong than it is to do right.



66. I'll give you another example. We could even use children for this. Do you think I have to teach my children how to fight with each other? I don't have to teach them that—they do it automatically. It's in their nature! And not just my children, all children, because they have the same human nature. I have to teach my children how not to fight.



67. Do you think you have to teach your children how to be selfish and hoard their toys? No, they do that automatically. It's part of this tendency towards evil that we were born with. You can read about this in the book of Romans.

ROMANS 3:23

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."



68. Romans chapter 3 and verse 23 says,

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

How many people does it say sinned? All. Does that leave anyone out? All of us are already born with sin inside of us. But then it gets worse.

ROMANS 6:23

"The wages of sin is death...."



69. Notice what it says in Romans 6:23:

"The wages of sin is death...."

The wages of sin is what? It is death. Now, let's just think this through for a second. So far, do those two verses give us good news? Yes or no? Definitely not.

ROMANS 6:23

"The wages of sin is death...."



70. If all of us are born with a heart of sin, we already have sin inside of us that we will eventually act out. And the Bible says, the result of sin is death. Because that's what sin does. It separates us from God, and God is the giver of life. It means that eventually we will die and be eternally separated from Him. That is not good. That means from the time of Adam and Eve, every human being would be hopeless and unable to be saved. But that's not what God wants.

ROMANS 6:23

"The wages of sin is death...."



71. Now, picture God's dilemma. Human beings have just sinned and opened the door to Satan's program. God's law says the wages of sin is death. The sinner must eventually die, or sin would exist forever. But God created humankind. God loves humankind. God doesn't want us to have to die.

ROMANS 6:23

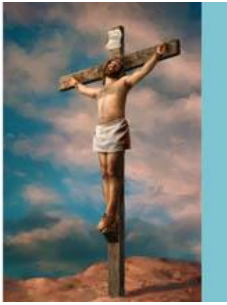
"The wages of sin is death...."



72. So how does God get rid of sin but at the same time save human beings who are sinners? That's God's dilemma. And that's where prophecy introduces to us what the Bible calls the glorious plan of salvation. I want you to read with me John 3:16.

PLAN OF SALVATION
JOHN 3:16

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

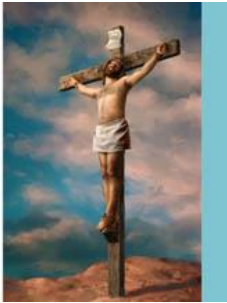


73. The Bible says: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

See what God did? Jesus Christ took the form of a human being. He would leave the perfection of heaven, a place where all angels bowed down to Him in adoration. He would come down here and take our nature. He would walk this chaotic, sin-ridden earth for 33 and a half years. He would allow Himself to be nailed to a cross.

PLAN OF SALVATION
JOHN 3:16

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

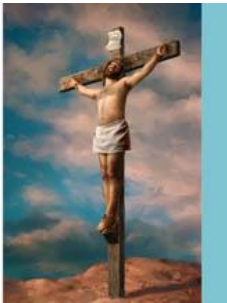


74. He would pay that death penalty for us. And when we accept Him as our Savior, He would allow His righteous life to count for you and for me.

That's what the Bible calls the plan of salvation, which had been formulated from the foundation of the world. Do you realize the Bible tells us that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit had already formed the plan of salvation before Lucifer ever rebelled?

PLAN OF SALVATION
JOHN 3:16

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."



75. They had a plan already made in their minds that if human beings would use their free will to rebel against God, then Jesus would be the One who would come and pay the death penalty for us, because God can't change His law. God will not change the fact that the wages of sin is death. So, God Himself comes in the form of Jesus to pay that death penalty. So, do you realize what that means? That means Jesus is the answer. Can you say, Amen?

JESUS IS THE ANSWER



- Jesus Paid the Penalty of Death for Us
- Jesus Took the Blame for our Sin
- Jesus Offers Forgiveness
- Jesus Lets His Perfect Life Count for Us

76. He took the blame for our sin. He's the One that offers forgiveness. He allows His perfect life to count for us. When someone accepts Christ as their Savior, their unrighteous, messed-up life is laid on Jesus. He was stricken because of our sins, smitten because of our transgressions. He took the blame.



- Jesus Paid the Penalty of Death for Us
- Jesus Took the Blame for our Sin
- Jesus Offers Forgiveness
- Jesus Lets His Perfect Life Count for Us

77. I want you to think something through. How many of you have ever experienced guilt when you know you did something wrong? Could I see your hands? How does guilt feel? Feels pretty lousy, doesn't it? Some people can barely handle their own guilt in this world for wrong choices that they've made.



- Jesus Paid the Penalty of Death for Us
- Jesus Took the Blame for our Sin
- Jesus Offers Forgiveness
- Jesus Lets His Perfect Life Count for Us

78. Do you realize when Jesus died on the cross of Calvary, He was bearing the guilt and the responsibility of every single sin that would ever be committed on the face of this earth? All the sins of billions and billions of people. He felt as though He was the one that committed all the sins, the murders, the robberies, the atrocities.



- Jesus Paid the Penalty of Death for Us
- Jesus Took the Blame for our Sin
- Jesus Offers Forgiveness
- Jesus Lets His Perfect Life Count for Us

79. You see, Jesus didn't just die from the physical pain of hanging on a cross. That's part of it. The fact is, He died from a broken heart. He felt that separation from God because He was bearing the guilt of the world, an awful feeling of guilt that we can't even begin to understand. That's why in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus said, "O My Father, if possible, let this cup pass from Me" Matt. 26:39b). He was already feeling that guilt. Jesus did that for you. He took your guilt so that you could take His righteousness and that you could be saved. Can you say, Amen?



- Jesus Paid the Penalty of Death for Us
- Jesus Took the Blame for our Sin
- Jesus Offers Forgiveness
- Jesus Lets His Perfect Life Count for Us

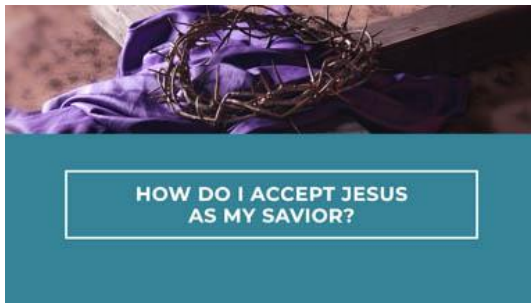
80. When you accept Jesus Christ as your savior, the perfect life He lives counts for you. That means during the time of judgment when God looks at the record of your life, He doesn't see all your sins and mistakes. He sees the perfect life of Jesus that counts for you! You have been given Christ's righteousness. What would it feel like to think that God could look at you as though you are perfect? That's what it means to have Jesus Christ as a personal savior.



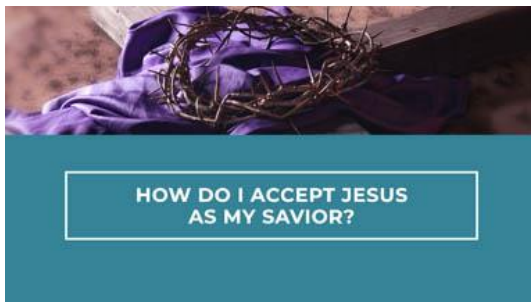
- Jesus Paid the Penalty of Death for Us
- Jesus Took the Blame for our Sin
- Jesus Offers Forgiveness
- Jesus Lets His Perfect Life Count for Us

81. Christ surrendered Himself to the cross. Now He asks you to surrender your hearts to Him. Will you trust Him as your personal Savior?

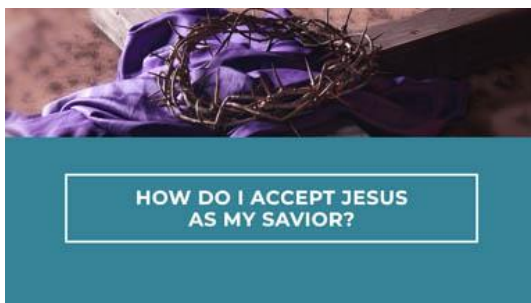
So, here's what I want to do in our time that remains tonight.



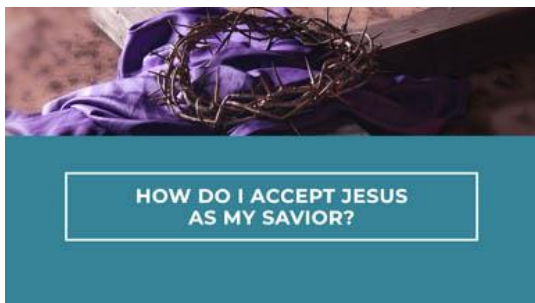
82. We're going to answer the question: How do I accept Jesus as my Savior? You say, why should you cover this in a prophecy seminar? Sometimes we think this is not a prophetic subject, but I want to ask you a question. What's the purpose of the book of Revelation? Is the purpose of Revelation to educate us about antichrist and the mark of the beast? We might say, that's a secondary purpose, but what is the main purpose? It is to lead us into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.



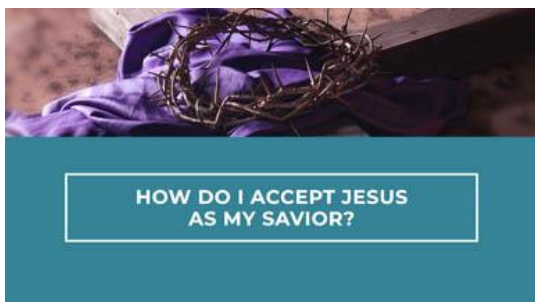
83. That's what all prophecy is meant to do—to point us to Jesus. Not to antichrist, not to the mark of the beast. Yes, we'll study those things, but prophecy points us to the cross. So, for me, I feel that it would be unconscionable of me to spend the whole seminar going through Bible prophecy and the book of Revelation, without explaining how a person accepts Jesus Christ as their Savior. That's what I want to do in our time that remains.



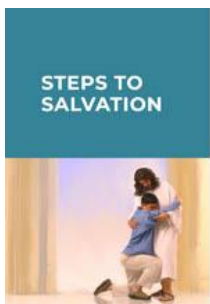
84. Many people ask the question, what do I do to accept Jesus? Am I supposed to say a few magic words? If I just go to church and sit in a pew, does that mean He's my Savior? Do I have to come forward in an altar call and do something? How do I accept him as my Savior? How can I be saved?



85. You will be amazed how many people do not know the answer to that question. Many just assume that because they sit in a pew and listen to sermons, they have accepted Jesus. So, what I'd like to do is to take you through the three steps of what it means to accept Christ as your Savior. Because in almost every meeting I've done, there is at least one person who realizes, they've never accepted Jesus as their Savior, and chooses to do so on that night.



86. For some, this may be a review to help us recommit our life to Jesus. But I don't feel I can go any further in Revelation until we talk about how to invite Jesus into my life. So, I'd like to share with you the three steps.



STEP 1: REPENTANCE

Desiring something better.
Desiring to turn around.

87. **Step number one is repentance.** Repentance is when I start to experience a sorrow for sin. It's when I start desiring something better than what I have now. I'm going down a path where I am not following God. His principles aren't in my life. And so, those choices are bringing me pain and heartache, and I want something better than what I have. Repentance is when I want to turn around and go in a different direction. That is God's Holy Spirit trying to reach us and to give us the gift of repentance. Notice what it says in John 6:44. It's printed on the screen for you. Jesus spoke these words.



"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him."

88. He said, *"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him."*

Now, this reminds me of a story. There was once a man who was going to a set of revival meetings, much like this one. One night the preacher used this very verse that talks about the Father drawing people. The man was intrigued by it. So, he went to the preacher after the meeting. He said, *"Preacher, you read that verse from John 6:44, so let me ask you a question."*



JOHN 6:44

"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him."

89. *When I come home from work each night, I'm so dog tired. I just want to sit in my easy chair, order a pizza, and relax, and watch TV the rest of the night. I don't want to go anywhere. But there's just something deep inside of me that says, 'You ought to go to that meeting tonight. There's something good waiting for you there. You need to go and open up the word of God.' And even though I'm utterly exhausted, something pulls me out of that chair to come to the meeting. Preacher, is that like what Jesus said? Is that God drawing me?"*



JOHN 6:44

"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him."

90. And the preacher said, "Yes sir, it is. That's God trying to draw you to something better." I believe that's what's happening for everybody who's here tonight. God is drawing you. Let's be honest. There's a lot of other things you could be doing tonight. You could be going to a restaurant. You could be home watching TV. You could be cleaning the house. Though I don't know why anyone would want to clean the house instead of coming to a seminar! The point is there are 100 other things you could be doing.



JOHN 6:44

"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him."

91. But for some reason, the Holy Spirit has drawn you, and you have responded to dedicate an hour of your time to come and open the word of God. Why? Because you want something better. Believe me, it's not your human nature that's drawing you here tonight. That is God's Holy spirit drawing you to Jesus, wanting to give you that something better.



STEPS TO SALVATION

STEP 2: CONFESSION

Admit that I'm a sinner and ask Jesus to be my Savior.

92. **Then comes step number two: confession.** This is where I respond to the desire for something better. I respond to Jesus by admitting that I am a sinner and I need a Savior. Then I prayerfully take the step of asking Jesus Christ into my life to forgive me, cleanse me of sin, and take control of my life. I can't just sit there and assume. I must ask Him and give Him permission to do so. Jesus will not force His way into our lives. It's little like a marriage proposal.



93. *[You could use your proposal story here.]* Let me tell you about one couple's experience. Their names are David and Marquita. David met Marquita while going to school near Chattanooga, Tennessee. A year after they graduated, they were making a trip down South to visit Marquita's family for Thanksgiving. David had planned to propose to her on this trip, but she didn't know it. He wanted to surprise her. So, he took her to one of the special places where they used to go when they were dating: the Tennessee River Park.



94. It's a beautiful park with a playground, walking paths, and piers which stretch out over the Tennessee River where you can witness stunning sunsets. They had gone there many, many times. So, they were standing there on the pier enjoying the wonderful evening, when all of sudden, David dropped to one knee and said, "*Marquita, I love you. I want to spend my life with you. Would you marry me?*" And she said "*Yes!!!*"



95. Do you think it would've been a good idea for David to go ahead and rent a hall, set a date for the wedding, and send out invitations before he ever asked her to marry him? Would that be a good idea? Probably not. You ought to ask the person first. It's the same with Jesus. I must ask Him to be my Savior. Except with Jesus, we already know what the answer is. He already wants to be my Savior—but I've got to invite him in. In fact, in 1st John 1:9, He gives us this promise.

1 JOHN 1:9

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."



96. The Bible says,
"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Think about this promise. Jesus is guaranteeing us that if we ask Him to be our Savior—if we confess that we are a sinner who needs forgiveness—it says He is faithful. He will wipe our slate clean.

1 JOHN 1:9

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."



- 97.** He will cleanse us from all unrighteousness, because He takes the unrighteousness away from our record book and gives us His righteousness. It's not like when you were in high school and you were afraid to ask that girl out because you didn't know what he answer would be. Jesus already tells us His answer. It's yes!

1 JOHN 1:9

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."



- 98.** (Optional Story. Skip it if you're running short on time)— Now some people may wander, "Why do I have to confess my sins to God if He already knows what I've done?"



- 99.** Let's illustrate it in this way. I'm going to use Mark as an example since he's sitting on the front row. Let's suppose, after the meeting tonight, I'm standing out there in the lobby just shaking hands and greeting people. As Mark walks by, the devil puts an evil thought in my mind, and I decide to stick out my foot and trip him.



- 100.** He falls to the ground, flat on his face. I laugh at him and say, "Oh, Mark is such a dunce. He's so clumsy he can't even stay on his feet. Ha. Ha. Ha." And Mark— being the good Christian that he is—is just going to get up and dust himself off and walk away.



101. Later that night, before I go to bed, my wife (or spouse) gets hold of me and she says, *“David, why did you do that to Mark? You tripped him. You made fun of him. You embarrassed him. That was an awful thing for you to do.”* And now I’m feeling what? Guilty. And I say, *“Oh honey, you’re right. I can’t believe I did that in front of all those people. What kind of an example am I? Oh, what a horrible thing I did.”*



102. That night, I can’t sleep. The next morning, I can’t eat my breakfast. My stomach is churning. I can’t wait to go to the meeting that night and go to Mark. As soon as I see Mark, I go up to him and say, *“Mark, I’m so sorry. The other night, I tripped you up and you fell on your face. I laughed at you and I made fun of you. Mark, would you please forgive me?”*

Now, let me ask you a question. When I go to Mark and I tell him that I tripped him and I made him fall on his face, am I telling Mark something he doesn't already know?

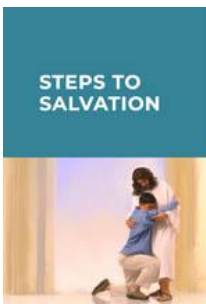


103. If anybody knows what I did, it’s Mark! But I’m confessing it because it’s restoring my relationship with Mark, and it’s relieving me of my load of guilt.

That’s why we confess our sins to God. It’s restoring our relationship with Him and it’s allowing Jesus to take that load of guilt off our backs. That’s why confession is important. It’s not telling God what He doesn’t know. Confession allows us to reconnect with God. And God tells me I can go directly to Jesus to confess my sins.

104. But then there’s a third step-- conversion.

This is where the Holy Spirit now begins to change me. The Holy Spirit wants to take out the bad that is in my life and replace it with something good. He wants to change the way I think and speak. And truthfully, that doesn’t happen in a day, does it? Now, we can be saved in a moment. We can accept Jesus as our Savior in an instant. But being changed and converted happens over time.



STEP 3: CONVERSION
Letting God change me.

STEPS TO SALVATION

STEP 3: CONVERSION

Letting God change me.



105. You see, when I give my life over to Jesus, does that automatically mean that right away my nature is changed or that I'll never be tempted or that I will never fall again? Of course not.

Now the Holy Spirit wants to do a work of conversion and transformation. That's why Jesus said in Matthew 26:41 these eternally important words.

MATTHEW 26:41

"Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."



106. He said, *"Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."*

Do you know what those two words, "watch" and "pray", really mean? Simply translated, it's basically talking about spending time with Jesus—in Bible study and prayer. It means paying attention to one's spiritual life.

MATTHEW 26:41

"Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."



107. The best way I can open my heart to the Holy Spirit to do this work of transformation is by spending time in the Bible every single day. Setting aside 30 minutes where I read God's love letter to me. I let His principles be immersed into my heart to the point where it begins to change who I am.

“

Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend."

STEPS TO CHRIST
P. 93

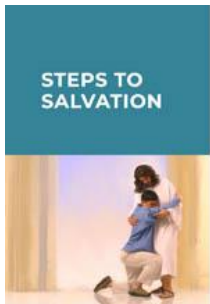


108. Then through prayer, I share my life with Christ. One Christian writer said, *"Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend."*

It's not about fancy and special words, it's just being who you are and speaking to God. If He cares about the sparrow that falls to the ground, then He cares about you and me. I can talk to Him about the things I talk to a friend about, because Christ is my best friend. Through the Bible, God speaks to me. Through prayer, I can speak to God.



109. And as I spend that time in the presence of Jesus every day, the change that I could never make in myself, the Holy Spirit begins to make in me. That's why the daily devotional life is absolutely essential in experiencing a new life. You may be thinking, "I don't know how to have a daily devotional life. I don't know how to spend meaningful time with Jesus." How many of you would be interested in a 30-minute class on how to have a daily devotional life? Let me see your hands. Maybe we will do that as a special class later in the seminar.



1. REPENTANCE
2. CONFESSION
3. CONVERSION

110. Those are the three steps to accepting Jesus as your Savior. Repentance. Confession. Conversion. If you desire something better in your life, if you desire to go on a different path, if you confess that you are a sinner, if you want Christ to come into your life and change you, then I invite you to accept Jesus as your Savior.

Jesus invites you to come to Him. In fact, He gives us this promise:

JOHN 6:37

"The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out."



111. *"The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out"* (John 6:37b). Maybe there's someone here tonight and you're thinking, "I need to accept Jesus Christ as my Savior. I've never actually prayed that prayer confessing my sin and inviting Him to come into my life." There may be others here tonight who want to say, "I've already accepted Christ, but I need to rededicate my life to Him. I need revival in my heart." I want to do something special this evening.

JOHN 6:37

"The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out."



112. There's a special response card that you were given when you came in tonight. [If they weren't given in the beginning, they need to be distributed now]. I want to invite you to take out that response card just now. You'll notice that this is different from the ones that we have been using night by night. Now, if you do not have this card, I'd invite you to raise your hand, and one of the ushers will be happy to get you that card. I'm going to briefly go over it with you and give you an opportunity to respond to Jesus tonight.



- I believe that Jesus loves me and died on the cross for my sins.
- Today I am accepting Jesus as my personal Savior for the first time.
- I would like to re-dedicate my life to Jesus.
- I would like someone to study the Bible with me.
- I'd like to talk with a pastor.

113. The first box says, “I believe that Jesus loves me and died on the cross for my sins.”

If you can say, “Pastor, I know that God loves me. I know I’m not perfect, but I know that He loves me, and He has died for my sins.” If you have that assurance, I’d like to invite you to check that box tonight.



- I believe that Jesus loves me and died on the cross for my sins.
- Today I am accepting Jesus as my personal Savior for the first time.
- I would like to re-dedicate my life to Jesus.
- I would like someone to study the Bible with me.
- I'd like to talk with a pastor.

114. The second box says, “Today I am accepting Jesus as my personal Savior for the first time.”

Maybe you’ve never actually taken that step and invited Him into your life. If you’d like to do that for the first time tonight, I’d like you to check that box. By checking that box you are giving Jesus permission to come in to your life. Then, later this week, I have a special gift to give to you privately, to just help you remember this special time when you gave your heart to Jesus.



- I believe that Jesus loves me and died on the cross for my sins.
- Today I am accepting Jesus as my personal Savior for the first time.
- I would like to re-dedicate my life to Jesus.
- I would like someone to study the Bible with me.
- I'd like to talk with a pastor.

115. Box number three says, “I would like to re-dedicate my life to Jesus.”

Maybe you’ve already accepted Jesus as your Savior. But you feel the need to re-commit your life to Him. You sense the need to draw closer to Jesus– and you want Him to bring spiritual revival into your life. If that’s the desire of your heart, I invite you to mark that box.



- I believe that Jesus loves me and died on the cross for my sins.
- Today I am accepting Jesus as my personal Savior for the first time.
- I would like to re-dedicate my life to Jesus.
- I would like someone to study the Bible with me.
- I'd like to talk with a pastor.

116. Box number four says, “I would like someone to study the Bible with me.”

Maybe you desire to know Jesus better. Perhaps you want to grow closer to Him by having a better understanding of His Word. Maybe you are thirsty for truth and you want someone to study the Bible with you and answer your questions. This church has a wonderful Bible study ministry. They have Bible teachers who would be happy to study the Bible with you. It could be a personal, one-on-one Bible study. Or it could be a small group Bible study in your home with friends and family. If that is something you are interested in, please check that box.



117. Lastly, box number five says: "I'd like to talk to a member of the pastoral team."

Maybe something I said tonight just convicted your heart and soul. Maybe the Holy Spirit is speaking to you about something and you need a few minutes to speak with me or one of the leaders in this church.

- I believe that Jesus loves me and died on the cross for my sins.
- Today I am accepting Jesus as my personal Savior for the first time.
- I would like to re-dedicate my life to Jesus.
- I would like someone to study the Bible with me.
- I'd like to talk with a pastor.



118. If that would be helpful to you, you are more than welcome to check that box. We will contact you and set up a time where we can meet together and pray. You can share whatever is on your heart and mind. I have truly found that sometimes just spending 10-15 minutes with a person one-on-one can be more effective than even a 60-minute sermon.

- I believe that Jesus loves me and died on the cross for my sins.
- Today I am accepting Jesus as my personal Savior for the first time.
- I would like to re-dedicate my life to Jesus.
- I would like someone to study the Bible with me.
- I'd like to talk with a pastor.



119. You might even be thinking about being baptized. If that is the desire of your heart, then I invite you to write me a note on the back of the card. Let me know that you are thinking of being baptized and we will seek to make that possible for you.

- I believe that Jesus loves me and died on the cross for my sins.
- Today I am accepting Jesus as my personal Savior for the first time.
- I would like to re-dedicate my life to Jesus.
- I would like someone to study the Bible with me.
- I'd like to talk with a pastor.



120. If you have a special prayer request that you'd like our prayer team to pray for, you can write your request on the back of the card. We have a prayer team who gathers nightly and specifically prays for your requests. It would be their privilege to lift up your concern to the throne of Heaven. *[By the way, this is also a chance for you as the speaker to call people on the phone and take a few minutes to specifically pray with them over the phone the next day. It's a great way to build relationships with guests.]*

- I believe that Jesus loves me and died on the cross for my sins.
- Today I am accepting Jesus as my personal Savior for the first time.
- I would like to re-dedicate my life to Jesus.
- I would like someone to study the Bible with me.
- I'd like to talk with a pastor.



121. *(Be sure to explain what the people are supposed to do with the cards. If you decide to collect them in a way different from what it is described here, please be sure to explain it clearly).*

- I believe that Jesus loves me and died on the cross for my sins.
- Today I am accepting Jesus as my personal Savior for the first time.
- I would like to re-dedicate my life to Jesus.
- I would like someone to study the Bible with me.
- I'd like to talk with a pastor.



122. I invite you to write your name and phone number on that card and turn it in. In just a moment the ushers will pass around a bucket and you can place your card in that bucket. Then they will bring the buckets to me and we will have a special prayer of dedication over the cards as we close. I take these cards seriously because they represent real people and real families. It gives me joy to be able to lift them up in prayer. Ushers, would you pass the bucket down each aisle and collect the cards, please? Then bring me the buckets so we can have a special prayer over them.

- I believe that Jesus loves me and died on the cross for my sins.
- Today I am accepting Jesus as my personal Savior for the first time.
- I would like to re-dedicate my life to Jesus.
- I would like someone to study the Bible with me.
- I'd like to talk with a pastor.



123. *(At this point, soft music can be playing for 1-2 minutes while the ushers collect the cards. Or someone can lead out in a congregational song or a special music. When the cards are brought to you, then pray).*

- I believe that Jesus loves me and died on the cross for my sins.
- Today I am accepting Jesus as my personal Savior for the first time.
- I would like to re-dedicate my life to Jesus.
- I would like someone to study the Bible with me.
- I'd like to talk with a pastor.



124. Heavenly Father, I thank you for the presence of your Holy Spirit tonight. I also thank you for each person and each family represented here. Each one of them is precious to You. Some of them are wrestling with decisions. Some of them are dealing with problems in their life. Many have chosen to follow You. I ask that you bless their homes and fill them with Your Spirit. Give them peace and draw them close to You. You said we should bring all our requests to You. Give them the assurance of eternal life. I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

- I believe that Jesus loves me and died on the cross for my sins.
- Today I am accepting Jesus as my personal Savior for the first time.
- I would like to re-dedicate my life to Jesus.
- I would like someone to study the Bible with me.
- I'd like to talk with a pastor.



125.