

Personal Evangelism
Made Less Difficult

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INTRODUCTION

This is not just another course, book, or manual on a subject that has been worked almost to death. This course is designed to put shoe leather into our beliefs about the gospel. You might say it has to do with podiatry—“How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.”

My original choice of title was “Propagating Presbyterians.” I have discarded that in favor of the present title for at least three reasons: (1) It was too restrictive; hopefully our readership will be much wider than one species of Christians. (2) The terms *propagation* and *reproduction* (as in Dawson Trotman’s *Born to Reproduce*) are descriptive of an effect that is not in the hands of men to produce. Men by God’s grace can sow seed; only God can cause it to generate life. In this light, the original title was too man-centered. (3) The present title, unlike the original one, strikes at the heart of a major problem and at the same time offers hope.

Personal Evangelism Made Less Difficult should be good news not only for most Presbyterian and Reformed people, who have the reputation of being some of the weakest evangelists among evangelical Christians, but also for most all believers. If we are honest, the act of seeking out a fellow human being and telling him or her the gospel is a daunting experience. Even the great apostle Paul was faint of heart and of trembling knees when he first entered the city of Corinth and thought about what lay ahead in terms of preaching and personal evangelism. If, as studies show, contemporary man’s greatest fear is public speaking (not flying in an airplane), then speaking the gospel to someone who isn’t a believer has to be near the top of the contemporary evangelical’s fear list. Supporting evidence is provided by the fact that so few believers get their feet going and their lips moving with God’s message. Not many of us do personal evangelism, offering the rationalization, “I witness by my life, not by preaching to others!”

Since Scripture states that the feet of those who carry the gospel are beautiful and that “good news” is a treasure committed to every believer, I offer this course in the hope that personal evangelism will be made less difficult for all of us. May the Lord of the harvest use it to correct us and to create in us a holy zeal and a confidence to do his will. May he bless our efforts along the lines of Psalm 126:6, “He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.”

Many of the thoughts reflected in the first five lessons were gleaned at an OPC family camp almost thirty years ago. The speaker was Wallace Bell, who is today pastor of Puritan Reformed Church in San Diego. For his insights I am much indebted and most grateful.

George C. Miladin
San Diego, California
1995

OVERVIEW

Introduction: Our *goal* is to understand personal evangelism in a new and fresh way, so as to overcome the obstacles that keep us from receiving the blessings associated with bringing God's good news to others; and to actually bring the gospel to someone in need.

Objectives:

1. To work through a twelve-week outline on the subject
2. To thoroughly acquaint ourselves with an evangelistic tool: the booklet *Ultimate Questions*, by John Blanchard
3. To pray for the opportunity of using this booklet with someone who is in need of the Lord
In other words, this is applied evangelism!

Note: Selected Shorter Catechism questions and answers are employed in several lessons.

Course Outline

Lesson 1 The Definition, Imperatives, and Advantages of Personal Evangelism

Evangelism—properly defined
The imperatives of evangelism
The advantages of personal evangelism

Assignment: Review lesson 1, study lesson 2, and read all of *Ultimate Questions*.

Lesson 2 The Difficulties and Rewards of Personal Evangelism

The difficulties: ourselves, unconverted man, our message, our adversary
The rewards

Assignment: Review, study lesson 3, and read all of *Ultimate Questions*.

Lesson 3 The Qualifications of a Gospel Teller

Solid Christian character
Holy passion (zeal)
Unwavering conviction
Good understanding of: the message, people, and situations
Dependence upon the Holy Spirit and prayer
Spurgeon's list of qualifications

Assignment: Review, study lesson 4, and read all of *Ultimate Questions*.

Lesson 4 The Community of Evangelism (Acts 2:38–47)

Uniquely created through the gospel
Marked by a unique devotion to: apostolic teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, prayer

Assignment: Review, study lesson 5, and read all of *Ultimate Questions*.

Lesson 5 The Message of Evangelism

Man's enormous need: his guilt, depravity, alienation, facing judgment, and helplessness
God's gracious provision: a fount of salvation, a mediator of salvation, the application of salvation

Assignment: Read all of *Ultimate Questions*, outline the book, and study chapter 1, "Is anyone there?" and chapter 2, "Is God speaking?" (pp. 4–7).

Lesson 6 *Ultimate Questions*—A Tool of Evangelism

The various tools available (evangelistic literature)

An outline of *Ultimate Questions* (twelve chapters)
Discussion of chapter 1, "Is anyone there?" and chapter 2, "Is God speaking?" (pp. 4–7)
Assignment: Study chapter 3, "What is God like?" (pp. 8–11).

Lesson 7 *Ultimate Questions—What Is God Like?*

Discussion of chapter 3, "What is God like?" (pp. 8–11)
God is a (personal) Spirit
God is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable
A note on love
God's sovereignty
Possible uses for this book
Assignment: Study chapters 4–7 (pp. 12–19).

Lesson 8 *Ultimate Questions—Man's Enormous Problem*

Who am I: God's unique creation, originally perfect
What went wrong: sin and its consequences
Is sin serious?
The ultimate judgment—hell
Assignment: Review and pray; study chapter 8, "Can religion help?" (pp. 20–21).

Lesson 9 *Ultimate Questions—Can Religion Help?*

What is religion?
The failure of man-made religion
Assignment: Study chapter 9, "Is there an answer?" and chapter 10, "Why the cross?" (pp. 22–25).

Lesson 10 *Ultimate Questions—God's Provision*

Jesus' person and life on earth
Jesus' work of salvation on the cross
Assignment: Review chapters 1–10; study chapter 11, "How can I be saved?" (pp. 26–27).

Lesson 11 *Ultimate Questions—How Can I Be Saved?*

Repentance
Faith
God's solid promise
The benefits of salvation
Assignment: Read all of *Ultimate Questions*; study chapter 12, "Which way now?" (pp. 28–30).
Also, consider inviting a needy friend to join you in studying this book.

Lesson 12 *Ultimate Questions—Which Way Now?*

Prayer
Bible reading
Fellowship
Service
Application and Conclusion

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LESSON 1

THE DEFINITION, IMPERATIVES, AND ADVANTAGES OF PERSONAL EVANGELISM

Introduction: Our *goal* is (1) to understand personal evangelism in a new and fresh way, so as to overcome the obstacles that keep us from receiving the blessings associated with bringing God's good news to others, and (2) to actually bring the gospel to someone in need.

I. Evangelism—Properly Defined

Evangelism is a glorious essential of the Christian life.

A. Etymology: $\epsilon\nu$ + $\alpha\gamma\gamma\epsilon\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ = *well/good* + *angel* or *messenger*. To evangelize is to bring a good message or to tell glad tidings.

B. Specific definition: "To evangelize is so to present Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit that men shall come to put their trust in God through Him, to accept Him as their Saviour, and to serve Him as their King in the fellowship of His Church"—Anglican Archbishop's Committee of 1918.

C. Harvie Conn's definition: "Evangelism is when we say 'Come on in and take a look.' " Place C on top of B and you have a porch leading into the front room.

II. The Imperatives of Evangelism

A. Indebtedness: Romans 1:14; 14:7.

B. Commandment: (1) Matthew 28:18–20; (2) Acts 1:8. The words "to the very end of the age" and "to the ends of the earth" extend the responsibility of evangelizing the nations beyond the life and times of the apostles. Clearly the task is ours!

C. Personal example: (1) Acts 8:1, 4; (2) Acts 11:19–21. Who stayed put? Who was scattered? What did the scattered ones do? (Note: The verb in 8:4 and 11:20 isn't the usual word for preaching, but more like "gossiping the gospel.") Did it work? See Acts 11:19–21.

D. Love (the mightiest imperative of all): (1) 2 Corinthians 5:11, 14, 20. (2) 2 Timothy 2:10. (3) "The love of Christ compelled me"—words on David Livingstone's tombstone. (4) It was love that constrained the Lord Jesus Christ to leave heaven's courts in order to seek and save us. Is it any wonder that Jesus said to his disciples, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21)?

III. The Advantages of Personal Evangelism

In contrast to radio, TV, literature, etc., personal evangelism has these advantages:

A. Everyone can do it: 1 Peter 3:15–16. “Bill/Tracy, what is it that gives you such hope and keeps you going in the midst of hard times?” Out of a heart filled with Jesus Christ you can “tell them how much the Lord has done for you” (Mark 5:19–20).

B. Opportunities abound: There are ties that draw people heavenward. How would you describe the following ties?

1. John 1:35–37
2. John 1:40–42
3. John 1:45–46

Discuss: Who, what, and where are your ties?

C. It enables you to deal with the foundational problems of individuals. People are “hurting” and broken in a thousand different ways. We know what the root problem is (sin), and we have the remedy (the gospel). We don’t need to be expert lawyers or debaters, just witnesses (those who truthfully tell what they know).

D. It gets us away from the professional idea.

1. Contrast a product being sold by a door-to-door salesman with it being recommended by a trusted friend.
2. Church-growth research reveals that of all the people attending an evangelical church, more than 90% are there as a result of a friend-to-friend contact (i.e., a friend inviting and oftentimes bringing them).

Summary, Application, and Conclusion

Personal evangelism! We’ve defined it and looked at some imperatives and the advantages of it. Is it for us? Believing that it is, let’s resolve to be faithful in mastering the material in this course. In addition, let’s renew our resolve to pray for people—all kinds of people—asking God to soften their hearts toward the gospel. And let us pray that Christ will increasingly dwell in our own hearts by faith (Ephesians 3:17), so that a holy zeal for reaching the lost will flow out from us. To God be the glory!

Assignment: Review this lesson, study lesson 2, and read all of *Ultimate Questions*.

LESSON 2

THE DIFFICULTIES AND REWARDS OF PERSONAL EVANGELISM

I. The Difficulties of Personal Evangelism

A. Ourselves: It is difficult to do personal evangelism for several reasons, including (1) the fallen, rebellious nature of the person we're trying to evangelize, (2) our message, which goes against the grain of what the world believes, and (3) our adversary—the Devil. But no difficulty outside of ourselves is greater than those within us. Here are some things within us to be overcome:

1. **Lukewarmness:** Revelation 3:15–16. This goes totally against what we are commanded in Romans 12:11.

2. **Variableness of disposition and temper:** Hot today, cold tomorrow. The norm is 1 Corinthians 15:58.

3. **Unpreparedness of heart and mind through lack of study and prayer:**
a. Such was the problem of the Hebrew Christians in Rome—Hebrews 5:11–14.

b. The importance of feeding on the Word is seen in 2 Timothy 3:14–17 and 2 Peter 2:2.

c. With respect to prayer—a primary means of grace:
Martin Luther said, “He who prays well studies well.”
Robert Murray McCheyne said, “Without this [prayer] I can do no good to those who come and seek for me.”

4. **Fear**

a. What are we afraid of? Discuss.

b. Remedial verses for fear: Philippians 4:6–7; Isaiah 43:1–3; 1 John 4:18.

5. **Dislike of extremism:** We don't want to be “Bible bangers” or foot-in-the-door, high-pressure evangelists who can make personal evangelism impersonal.

6. **That great American quality of optimism and fair play:** It leads us to be sinfully charitable concerning the spiritual state of our friends and loved ones, and concerning what God ultimately will or won't do with them.

7. **Unbalanced theology:** Skewed Calvinism—“Why lose sleep over lost sinners; God has his elect and will call them to himself regardless of what we do.” (Note: The term *Hyper-Calvinism* properly applies to a group of seventeenth-century English Puritans who denied the free offer of the gospel. They restricted the gospel proclamation to those who gave some evidence of desiring it.)

Application: “Take heed to ourselves!”

B. Unconverted man:

1. His human nature is spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1–2) and blind (John 3:3).

2. He has a natural enmity towards God (Colossians 1:21; Romans 8:7).
3. His mind is in opposition to God (1 Corinthians 2:14; John 3:19; Romans 1:18; 8:7).

Because of this, the minds of men and women (young and old) are filled with thoughts that go against the truth of the gospel (e.g., evolution; nature supplanting God; the inherent goodness of man; the reduction of man's being and worth to the level of animals; a loving God devoid of holy wrath—"God wouldn't send anyone to hell"; no absolute moral standards—"everything is negotiable"; the legality and morality of abortion, etc.). Such thoughts are not easily dislodged. Human beings are not "reasonable."

C. Our message (the gospel): What that message is will be developed in detail; it will be presented as the only answer (the solution) to meet the desperate need of unconverted man. As inherently and intrinsically glorious as the gospel is, unconverted man (left to himself) is repelled by it. He fights against a message that declares the entire world to be under condemnation, worthy of death, and under God's wrath—and that not only rules out all human works as contributing to man's salvation, but also represents man as totally incapable of responding to God's offer of salvation apart from God's enabling and amazing grace.

He may lustily sing "Amazing Grace," but when confronted by the truth contained in that song, he will reject it (even when dressed in his Sunday best).

D. Our adversary: The Devil and his army of evil (demons and specially endowed men)—Ephesians 6:12; 1 Peter 5:8; 2 Corinthians 2:11; 11:13–15.

Application: The above difficulties are real, not imaginary. They will not go away by denial or wishful thinking. However, they can be overcome by prayer, the power of God, and the Word of God, which assures us that "the one who is in [us] is greater than the one who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

II. The Rewards of Personal Evangelism

While several rewards can be mentioned (e.g., being collaborators with God, the development of Christian character, the making of everlasting friends), two need to be emphasized:

A. The promise of a harvest: Psalm 126:5–6; John 15:16.

B. The Lord's commendation: Matthew 25:23.

Application: There are difficulties in evangelism, which sometimes seem to be unconquerable mountains. However, these difficulties don't erase or weaken the four-fold biblical imperative of indebtedness, commandment, personal example, and love. With the reward in view, we must face these difficulties head on, and take them to the throne of grace, confident that our God is able to help us surmount them!

Assignment: Review, study lesson 3, and read all of *Ultimate Questions*.

LESSON 3

THE QUALIFICATIONS OF A GOSPEL TELLER

Introduction (and Review): Up to this point, we have looked at the definition, imperatives, and advantages of personal evangelism (lesson 1). We have also considered the difficulties and rewards of personal evangelism (lesson 2), recognizing that we ourselves represent a rather large difficulty (especially our fears and lukewarmness). In this lesson, there is more about ourselves; later on we'll come to our message. This order is biblical, for we are commanded in 1 Timothy 4:16, "Watch your life and doctrine closely."

There are *qualifications* for being a gospel teller. That should not surprise us, since most jobs and "offices" have them (e.g., police, firefighters, schoolteachers, doctors, elders, and deacons—see 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1). When we examine the qualifications listed below, we will discover that they describe a healthy, growing Christian whose chief end is to glorify and enjoy God.

I. Solid Christian Character

Among other things, this involves the development of a Christian mind—the ability to think Christianly. It also assumes a measure of suffering with a good attitude (see Romans 5:2–4).

II. Holy Passion (Zeal)

The Christian should have an earnest desire to see sinners saved and saints sanctified (growing in holiness). See Paul's example in Romans 9:1–3, Galatians 4:19, and 2 Timothy 2:10.

The elements in this passion are:

1. **Love for Christ:** both for who he is and what he has done for me.
2. **A concern for souls.** See Paul's example in Philippians 1:12-14; 2 Corinthians 5:11–15.
3. **A sense of urgency.** "Now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). That means *today!*

George Whitefield was known as a "now preacher." When he preached, people left knowing that the issue was heaven or hell.

4. **A sense of commission.** Minimally, every believer is to have Christ set apart in his heart and be able to give a reason or a defense of the hope he has to everyone who asks (1 Peter 3:15). Maximally, some are called to be evangelists (fishers of men). Hopefully, the promise of John 15:16 applies at both ends of the spectrum—to the apostles and to every believer.

III. Unwavering Conviction concerning:

- A. The condition of unrepentant sinners—*lost!*
- B. The truth, power, sufficiency, and free offer of the gospel (cf. 2 Peter 1:16; Romans 1:16; John 3:16; Acts 17:30).
- C. God’s acceptance of all who come to him through faith in Jesus (John 6:37).

IV. Good Understanding of:

A. The message, i.e., the gospel. A mastery of the booklet *Ultimate Questions*, which will occupy our attention from lesson five to the end of this course, will go a long way towards meeting this critically important requirement.

B. People—i.e., human nature. Satan understands how to deceive them. As Christ’s messengers, we must be wise in our approaches and dealings with others, in the hope that God will use us in “undeceiving” them.

C. Situations. We must be alert to recognize and seize the opportunities before us. A good example of this is Dr. C. John Miller’s experience with diaconal evangelism in his early days in Uganda. Piles of garbage became an open door for the gospel. All that was needed was a big truck, upon which Dr. Miller and his associates piled the garbage, and on top of which he stood and proclaimed the gospel to an amazed and appreciative crowd.

V. Dependence upon the Holy Spirit’s Power and upon Prayer

A. Zechariah 4:6, “ ‘Not by might nor by power [of man], but by my Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty.”

B. Our Lord Jesus Christ, in his perfect humanity, embodied this dependence (see Luke 4:1; Acts 10:38).

C. The early church (in Jerusalem) prayed on the strength of God’s sovereignty; according to Acts 4:31, supernatural results followed.

VI. Spurgeon’s List of Qualifications As Found in *The Soul-Winner*: (1) toward God: holiness of character, humility, earnestness, simplicity of heart, and surrender; (2) toward man: sincerity, love, unselfishness, and kindness.

Application: After evaluating ourselves in light of the above qualifications, let’s pray for solid Christian character, a holy passion, unwavering conviction, good understanding, dependence upon the Holy Spirit, and greater reliance upon prayer. Let’s also get serious about our evangelism prayer list. Who is going on yours? What or who are some possibilities? What specifically are we going to ask for (e.g., an opportunity to bring them to a church service, or to direct a conversation to the big questions of life, so we can give them the booklet; or an opportunity to invite them to a discussion group that uses our booklet; or a one-on-one study using the booklet)? *Discuss this at length!*

Assignment: Review, study lesson 4, and read all of *Ultimate Questions*.

LESSON 4

THE COMMUNITY OF EVANGELISM (ACTS 2:36–47)

Introduction: By God’s grace, the evangel—the gospel—has brought into existence a community that is like no other organization, group, or enterprise on the face of the earth.

I. This Unique Community Came into Being and Continues to Grow as a Result of the Gospel.

A. Through Peter’s preaching, as recorded in Acts 2:36–41, the New Testament community expanded from one hundred and twenty people in the upper room to more than three thousand.

B. In response to Peter’s second recorded sermon—Acts 3:11–26—the number of male believers swelled to about five thousand (4:4). With women and children converts added, the church was now a sizable body.

Application: The book of Acts demonstrates the power of the gospel as it moves across the known world, beginning in Jerusalem and reaching to “the ends of the earth” (1:8). Since Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever, we believers who live near the end of the twentieth century should have the utmost confidence in the ability of the gospel to conquer the hearts of twentieth-century men and women. The Christian congregations in the midst of which we live and work serve as a living testimony to the power of our message and its ability, when accompanied by Christ’s Spirit, to continue deepening and enlarging that community.

II. This God-Created Community Is Marked by a Unique Devotion.

A. **The word “devoted”:** The verb “devoted themselves to” in verse 42 (NIV) translates two Greek words that literally mean “were giving constant attention to.” Is this not a characteristic of a devoted person (whether the object of devotion is sports, music, work, family, church, etc.)?

B. Devoted to four things (verse 42):

1. **The teaching of the apostles:** to God’s Word, in other words. The first-century believers came to faith and into the Christian community as a result of the preaching of the Word. Now, in fulfillment of our Savior’s high-priestly prayer, they are delivered to the Word to live by it and grow because of it (see John 17:17; Romans 6:17). A good Old Testament example of a man devoted to the Word, its study and its teaching, is Ezra. According to Ezra 7:9–10, there was a significant relationship between his devotion and the good hand of God resting upon him.

2. **The fellowship:** This involves far more than coffee and donuts and pot-providence suppers. “The fellowship” was the community of believers whose focus

and fellowship was with the Father and the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit. In short, those first-century believers were devoted to “one another” and to “one anothering” (i.e., caring for one another—shepherding). The outworking of this is seen in verses 44–46:

- a. Togetherness around a common pot (verse 44).
- b. Willingness to give up some possessions so that the basic needs of spiritual brothers and sisters can be met (verse 45).
- c. Daily, loving fellowship that goes considerably beyond a “Sunday smile” or a pat on the back (verse 46). There is no lone ranger Christianity here.

A long time ago this pastor learned that the elders can’t do all of the shepherding of the flock. The truth is, God doesn’t intend for them to do it all. A careful reading of Hebrews 12:15 makes this plain. Verse 15 begins with a participle from the Greek verb *επισκοπεω*, which should be translated “overseeing in such a way.” Who is to do this overseeing of the flock? The context indicates that every Christian is to do it. Surely this demands some kind of small group structure in our fellowships, where people can learn how to minister to each other, even carrying each other’s burdens.

3. The breaking of bread: Mostly this is a reference to the sacramental meal. For the first two centuries, it was celebrated in private homes and other places, because church buildings were outlawed. A love supper often accompanied the Lord’s Supper. The believers devoted to each other made much of these meals; they were devoted to that supper, which is a communion in Christ’s body and blood as well as a memorial of his death (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:16). We should not be surprised to find the early believers occupied in such a way with meals—both common and sacramental—since Scripture informs us that heaven’s opening act will be “the wedding supper of the Lamb” (Rev. 19:9). Also, it should be noted that the few regulations that came out of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15), which was the first truly ecumenical council, were largely for the purpose of encouraging table fellowship between Jewish and Gentile Christians.

4. Prayer: The early Christians gave constant attention to prayer. The book of Acts is a history of the acts of the risen and reigning Lord Jesus through his people on earth by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is also a history of prayer in the early church. The prayer meeting was the definitive meeting in the book of Acts. The church moved forward on the wings of prayer. (See Acts 2; 4:23–31; 6; 9:11; 12:12–17; 13:1–3, etc.)

Application: This is first-love Christianity! Surely a more mature faith isn’t supposed to diminish this fourfold devotion. It has implications for evangelism, for this is the community where new converts will grow and thrive in their faith. That’s why the Holy Spirit is pleased to add more members to it (Acts 2:47). Is this a picture of your church? If not, why not?

Prayer: Pray for fifteen minutes for our church life and for individuals and families on your personal evangelism lists.

Assignment: Review, study lesson 5, and read all of *Ultimate Questions*.

LESSON 5

THE MESSAGE OF EVANGELISM

Introduction: As for the contents of God’s message of good news—the gospel—there’s a lot of false fire being offered by Christians from pulpits and other places (“false fire” is an allusion to the event recorded in Leviticus 10:1–11). Many are reshaping the gospel to make it conform to the “needs” of people today. The result is a gospel that is “better” news than the old one that spoke of sin, judgment, and hell, and of the necessity for repentance and commitment. The newer form of the gospel simply calls for belief of the facts listed in 1 Corinthians 15:3–8. The ease of this gospel has contributed significantly to numerical church growth, but there is a fatal flaw in it. The reshaped message may be tailor-made for our fast-paced modern living, but it is not true to the Word of God. It is less than the true gospel message, and thus falls under the censure of Leviticus 10:1–11.

It is of critical importance that every Christian understand God’s message of salvation. That gospel unfolds under two major headings: man’s enormous need, and God’s gracious provision.

I. Man’s Enormous Need

Here we are speaking of real needs, not merely felt needs. The great preachers of the past (as well as outstanding ones of today) stressed need, portraying fallen man as sick, drowning, and dead. “You need to be saved” was their great cry. We can analyze that need under five headings:

A. Guilt: Sins are not mistakes; they are culpable infractions of God’s law and carry the stigma of guilt and shame. There is only one plea that we can make in the court of the Almighty, as those who are laden with guilt and shame.

B. Depravity: This painful term characterizes our fallen human nature that produces sin, or from which our sin flows. According to God’s analysis, we sin because we are sinners—not the other way around. In his letter to the Romans, Paul first catalogues various sins in chapter 1, and then explains the source of sin in 3:9–20—specifically, our hearts. Our Lord Jesus also spoke about the human heart in Matthew 15:16–20. And where does that sinful heart come from? The apostle answers in Romans 5:12–19 that it is inherited from Adam.

From our mother’s womb we are sinners (Psalm 51:5) and turn to sin instinctively. What child did we ever have to teach to pout, whine, lie, throw a temper tantrum, refuse to share a toy, etc.?

C. Alienation: By nature we are enemies of God, no different from rebellious Adam in the Garden. We’ve all turned away from God and are set on going it alone and doing our own thing—we call this freedom. If the nonbeliever argues that he is no enemy of God, just kindly show him his obligation towards God—even the first and great commandment (Matthew 22:34–40); let God invade his personal liberties and the belligerent

spirit will show itself.

D. Facing judgment: We face God's judgment not only in the future (Acts 17:31; 2 Thessalonians 1:5–10; Matthew 25:31–46), but also in the present (John 3:36; Romans 1:18).

E. Helplessness: A mind that is darkened, a will that is enslaved, a heart of stone, and eyes that are blind—this adds up to spiritual helplessness and total inability. This is what we all are by nature, as fallen sons and daughters of Adam. Ironically, this bottom-line assessment is especially repugnant to modern man, who sees himself as autonomous man very much in control of his environment.

For an outstanding summary of the above five points, Shorter Catechism Questions 18 and 19 are without peer:

Q. 18. Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell?

A. 18. The sinfulness of that estate ... consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called original sin; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.

Q. 19. What is the misery of that estate whereinto man fell?

A. 19. All mankind by their fall lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever.

Application: For fallen man to see the enormity of his need requires the supernatural grace of God. It is somewhat analogous to seeing and entering the kingdom of God, which requires a supernatural birth. Apart from God's grace, the magnitude of what God so freely offers to rescue us from our desperate plight will be met with the receptivity and enthusiasm of a multimillionaire being offered a ten-dollar bill—rather than the receptivity and enthusiasm of a homeless, impoverished beggar being offered a rich inheritance.

II. God's Gracious Provision

Here each person of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is intimately involved.

A. The fount of salvation is the Father's electing love (see John 6:37; 17:1–3; Acts 13:47–48; Ephesians 1:3–4).

B. The mediator of salvation is Jesus, God's Son (John 3:16). It is of crucial importance that we can "tell the story of Jesus," including: his preexistence and eternity as the Son dwelling with the Father; his entrance into the stream of humanity through a virgin birth; his sinless, perfect life, which becomes our righteousness; his substitutionary death on the cross, which redeems, reconciles, propitiates, and saves (not just making salvation possible); his resurrection from the dead and his ascension (forty days later) to the place of rule, authority, and power; and his final coming to judge mankind and usher in a new heaven and a new earth. For a one-sentence summary of who Jesus Christ is, it is difficult to improve upon the answer to Question 21 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism: "The only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the

eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continueth to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and one person, forever.”

C. The Holy Spirit’s application of salvation to man’s enormous need:

1. Guilt is met by divine forgiveness (Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38; 13:38; Romans 4:7–8; Ephesians 1:7; 4:32; Revelation 1:5).
2. Depravity and inability are met by the Holy Spirit’s work of regeneration (John 3:3, 5; Ephesians 2:1–2, 4–5; Titus 3:4–6).
3. Alienation is met by God’s gracious reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:17–20).
4. Judgment is met by God’s pronouncement and gift of eternal life (John 3:16; 5:24; Romans 8:1; 1 John 5:12).

Application: The above points summarize the basic facts of the gospel. The Christian message of salvation, placed against the backdrop of man’s desperate plight, is many-faceted, like an exquisite diamond. Because of this, it is worthy of much study. We cannot get too much of the gospel, so long as we approach the Scriptures with humility and dependence upon the Spirit. By God’s grace, let us become experts in digesting the material of this lesson as a preparation for getting into and using our booklet of choice—Blanchard’s *Ultimate Questions*.

Prayer: Set aside fifteen minutes for prayer and praise.

Assignment: Read *Ultimate Questions* in its entirety and attempt to outline it briefly. Then study chapters 1 and 2: “Is anyone there?” (pp. 4–5) and “Is God speaking?” (pp. 6–7).

LESSON 6

ULTIMATE QUESTIONS—A TOOL OF EVANGELISM

Introduction: A tool is a means to an end. Often that end is to *build* or *repair* something. Since the gospel of Jesus Christ is the consummate means of repairing and re-creating human nature, we would do well to find and use suitable written statements of our message. Gospel presentations in various shapes and forms abound (e.g., the *Bridge of the Navigators*, the *Four Spiritual Laws* of Campus Crusade, Child Evangelism's *The Wordless Book*, etc.). Frankly, one of the best and time-tested is the entire Gospel of John, which was written with the goal of leading its readers to faith in Jesus Christ (John 20:31) (see the assignment for lesson 11). We have chosen *Ultimate Questions*, by John Blanchard.

I. Suggested Outline

How does this outline of *Ultimate Questions* compare with yours?

A. God (chapters 1–3, pp. 4–11)

1. “Is anyone there?”—God’s existence (pp. 4–5)
2. “Is God speaking?”—God’s revelation (pp. 6–7)
3. “What is God like?”—God’s attributes (pp. 8–11)

B. Man (chapters 4–8, pp. 12–21)

1. “Who am I?”—the creation of man (pp. 12–13)
2. “What went wrong?”—sin and the corruption of human nature (pp. 14–15)
3. “Is sin serious?”—debased, defiled, and defiant man (pp. 16–17)
4. “Where do I go from here?”—terrible truths about hell (pp. 18–19)
5. “Can religion help?”—man’s attempt to reach God (pp. 20–21)

C. Jesus Christ—God’s provision (chapters 9–10, pp. 22–25)

1. “Is there an answer?”—the person and life of Jesus Christ (pp. 22–23)
2. “Why the cross?”—the work of Jesus as substitute, sin-bearer, and Savior (pp. 24–25)

D. Repentance and faith (chapter 11, pp. 26–27): “How can I be saved?”—repenting of sin, confessing faith in Christ

E. The new life in Christ (chapter 12, pp. 28–30): “Which way now?”—prayer, Bible reading, fellowship, service

Before we begin studying the first two chapters of the booklet, which you have now read and reread, it should be noted that *Ultimate Questions* is enjoying great success as an evangelistic tool, having gone through many printings. It is also being translated into several languages, including most recently Slavic Macedonian. God is obviously using this little tool in a big way!

II. Discussion of Chapters 1 and 2

A. Chapter 1—“Is anyone there?” (pp. 4–5)

Specifically, is God there? Indeed, God is there! And what evidence does Blanchard offer in support of the existence of God? First, he observes that the world exists. This is the traditional cosmological argument: the cosmos implies an eternal Creator. Second, he points out that this universe exhibits amazing order and design, which calls for a personal designer—the teleological argument. Third, he makes the anthropological argument: man himself (male and female), with all of his unique characteristics, chief among them personality, points to a Creator. Most importantly, Blanchard uses the straightforward affirmations of Scripture (his book is loaded with Bible verses, all listed on p. 32) to support the statement that *God is*.

B. Chapter 2—“Is God speaking?” (pp. 6–7)

The most profound way we know that God is the powerful Creator, is that he says so in the Bible—his unique, authoritative, and perfect Word. Blanchard makes a strong case in just a few short paragraphs for the Bible’s unique position and character among the books in the world—after using Scripture itself to make the point that “the heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands” (Psalm 19:1).

In augmentation of Blanchard, it might be helpful to point out the amazing unity of Scripture. Essentially one theme runs throughout the sixty-six books, that of salvation through faith in the God-appointed Lamb of God (e.g., the Passover lamb slain, Exodus 12; the Lamb-Messiah prophesied, Isaiah 53; the Lamb identified as Jesus, John 1; the Lamb crucified, Acts 8:32–35; the Lamb crucified and foreordained, 1 Peter 1:19–20; the Lamb alive and reigning, Revelation 5:6; 14:1). Most amazing, these sixty-six books were written by thirty-six different authors over a span of sixteen centuries, on three different continents, all without contradiction or confusion. With respect to predictive prophecy, mentioned by Blanchard, on the day Jesus Christ died upon the cross, thirty-three distinct Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled to the letter. These are just some of the hundreds of Old Testament prophecies that have been fulfilled.

As someone has said, “Truly the Bible is a book that man could not write if he would and would not write if he could”—the latter being true because of the Bible’s unvarnished, honest account of man’s weaknesses, sins, and failures. Man’s natural bent is to gloss over his weaknesses and sins while exaggerating his accomplishments, as evidenced in the extrabiblical writings contemporary with the biblical books. Clearly there is nothing more reasonable, God-honoring, and lifesaving than to embrace the proposition that the Bible is the Word of God. Millions have, among them professor B. B. Warfield of the old Princeton Seminary, who wrote of the Bible: “We must receive its statements of fact, bow before its enunciations of duty, tremble before its warnings, and rest upon its promises.”

Application: Discuss how we might introduce friends, neighbors, and other acquaintances to the Bible. Discuss reasons why the Gospel of John might be good to use (cf. John 20:30–31).

Prayer: Set aside fifteen minutes for prayer and praise. Report on how the Lord is moving people to seek him, in answer to prayer.

Assignment: Study chapter 3, “What is God like?” (pp. 8–11).

LESSON 7

ULTIMATE QUESTIONS—WHAT IS GOD LIKE?

Introduction: Let's review a little bit! Chapters 1 and 2 address the question of revelation. Chapter 1 asks, "Is anyone there?" The answer—"God is!"—is screamed by the entire universe of animate and inanimate objects, who have their places because the Creator put them there. That unique creature called man, who is capable of dialoguing with himself and making things happen, and who possesses conscience—that sense of oughtness—is a special pointer to the truth that God is. Thus, the message that creation screams for all to hear is that God exists and that he is powerful, personal, and moral. As the Creator, he is the owner of everything, which makes everything accountable and responsible to him. Another name for all of this (given by theologians) is "general revelation." Chapter 2, "Is God Speaking?" makes the point that God profoundly speaks in his Word, the Holy Bible—and indeed he speaks a lot. Sixty-six books of revelation provide us with "all things that pertain to life and godliness." Theologians refer to this verbal revelation as "special revelation."

Now, chapter three—"What is God like?" (pp. 8–11). Blanchard develops this topic under the following ten headings (one paragraph for each):

1. God is personal.
2. God is one (yet three).
3. God is spirit.
4. God is eternal.
5. God is independent.
6. God is holy.
7. God is just.
8. God is perfect.
9. God is sovereign.
10. God is omnipotent.

Because there is nothing more sublime and no higher privilege and duty than to know God, we would do well to study and meditate upon each one of the above attributes. To facilitate, augment, and deepen our study and meditation, the order of God's attributes given in answer Question 4 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism is offered here, followed by commentary:

Q. 4. What is God?

A. 4. God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

I. God is a (Personal) Spirit.

See Blanchard's paragraph for an understanding of "personal." Since God is a Spirit, in essence God is neither male nor female, but partakes of both feminine and masculine characteristics. This is underscored by the fact that both men and women were created in

the image of God. To affirm that God is not male in essence is not to be construed as supporting in any way the feminist theology professor who allegedly affirmed: “Of course I believe in Christ’s second coming; the first time he came as a man; he must come the second time as a woman.” Surely we must distance ourselves from such nonsense, even while seeking to bring biblical insights and balance to the highly emotional gender debate. It is most important to understand what it means for God to be a personal Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, with respect to each of the attributes listed by the catechism.

II. God Is Infinite, Eternal, and Unchangeable.

These three adjectives set apart and in a sense distance God from his image bearer, man. These are God’s incommunicable attributes, as only God is these things “in himself.” Man (male and female), while privileged to image God in terms of personality, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness (inclusive of love), and truth, does not inherently possess infinity, eternity, or unchangeability (i.e., a fixed relationship).

III. Some Fascinating Combinations of Adjectives and Nouns

With respect to the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—the following attributes form interesting combinations:

1. Infinite in power = omnipotence.
2. Infinite in knowledge = omniscience.
3. Unchangeable in truth = God is wholly trustworthy.

IV. A Note on Love

Love is not mentioned in Blanchard or the Shorter Catechism as a divine attribute. Its omission in Blanchard may reflect its omission by the framers of the catechism. It may also be a reaction to the contemporary preoccupation with a redefined and debased notion of the love of God which borders on permissive, sappy sentimentality. Whatever the reason, in this author’s judgment the omission of love as an attribute of God cannot be justified. In fact, the authors of the catechism didn’t altogether omit love, but understood it to be subsumed under God’s goodness. (Goodness includes mercy as well as love.)

It is better to give love its own place, which thankfully many modern translations of the Bible have done, especially by translating that most profound Hebrew word *hesed* as “love” or “covenant love,” rather than as “mercies” or “tender mercies” (KJV). If love is “the greatest” quality (1 Corinthians 13:13) and “God is love”—a personification (1 John 4:16)—then surely that “volitional, intense, and involved concern for others, to be with others, even die for others”—is worthy of being included in a list of God’s attributes.

V. God’s Sovereignty

God’s sovereignty is his absolute control and kingship. It carries the strongest predestinarian implications. It should not be viewed as an attribute, but rather as a prerogative. This is to say, if God is all those things listed in Blanchard and the Shorter Catechism (and rooted in Scripture), then it follows that God is the King—no questions asked. His is the kingdom, power, and glory with all those other ascriptions of worship and praise recorded in Revelation 4 and 5.

Application: Since man's chief end (goal) is to glorify God and enjoy him forever (Shorter Catechism, Q. 1; 1 Corinthians 10:31), we need to meditate more on who God is. According to Scripture, a mark of spiritual maturity possessed by "fathers" is to know him who is from the beginning (1 John 2:13–14). A recommended aid to assist us in this noble pursuit is the book *Knowing God*, by J. I. Packer.

Possible Uses for This Book: The following possibilities are far from being exhaustive. The author has personally implemented some of them, and prays for greater boldness and creativity, so that more and more persons will "take and read" unto their salvation:

1. Leave or plant the book in carefully selected places (e.g., reading racks, doctors' / dentists' waiting rooms, stair-stepping or life-cycle reading racks). This is the indirect, sometimes surreptitious approach.
2. Sponsor a discussion group among neighbors or work associates.
3. Invite a friend to read it after you have given some measure of testimony concerning the big questions of life.
4. Closely related to #3, ask a friend if he/she has given any thought to the big (ultimate) questions of life, and then offer the book.
5. What other suggestions do you have?

Prayer: Take fifteen minutes for prayer and praise.

Assignment: Study chapters 4–7 (pp. 12–19).

LESSON 8

ULTIMATE QUESTIONS—MAN'S ENORMOUS PROBLEM

Introduction: So far we have focused on God—his existence, his revelation (general and special), and his attributes. In this and our next lesson, we will look at God's crowning creation—man (chapters 4–8, pp. 12–21).

I. Who Am I? (chapter 4, pp. 12–13)

The psalmist David began Psalm 8 with the words “What is man,” as an expression of awe and wonderment. Modern man asks the question in frustration, wondering if he is angel, devil, animal, machine, yellow dirt, or dust blowing in the wind.

A. Man is God's unique creation, given glory and dominion. (See Psalm 8 and Shorter Catechism, Q. 10.)

B. Man was originally a perfect being in harmony with God and man.

There was no identify crisis as Adam (man) was bonded to God in a loving, dependent relationship. Adam walked and talked with God in the Garden of Eden. Adam was in perfect covenant with God (his best friend) and also with his wife (his second-best friend).

II. What Went Wrong? (chapter 5, pp. 14–15)

We must allow God to diagnose the problem, as well as provide the remedy. (Review lesson 5, section I.)

A. Sin entered the world through the disobedient act of Adam. He broke covenant with God, believing that a totally dependent relationship with his Maker wasn't really in his best interests (see Genesis 3).

B. That disobedient act had serious consequences. The answer to Shorter Catechism Q. 17 states, “The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery.” In this chapter, Blanchard emphasizes the misery of mankind. And, oh, what misery:

1. Man is terrified of God—ashamed, guilty, and afraid.
2. Man faces death: immediate spiritual death and eventual physical death, with its common precursors of weakness, debilitation, sickness, and pain.
3. The world seems to be increasingly unraveling, with the frustrations associated with it and man's inability to solve its problems. Words that begin with *dis-* help to focus on this reality (e.g., *discontent, disorientation, disease, dismay, disappointment, discord*, etc.).

According to Galatians 5:19, “The acts of the sinful nature are obvious,” and the apostle goes on to list many of them. He then contrasts them with a list of virtues called

“the fruit of the Spirit” (verses 22–23). (Note: The pastor-evangelist C. John Miller has often used these verses as an opening to present the gospel to a person: “Recognize these things called the lusts of the flesh? Would you like to see these other things [the fruit of the Spirit] dominant in your life?”)

“What went wrong?” Those were the words whispered on a lonely porch in a Russian village during the Communist oppression. One peasant woman whispered, “What went wrong with Mother Russia?” The other woman looked around and then answered, “Mother Russia has forgotten God.” (Quoted by A. Solzhenitsyn in his Templeton lecture.) America has forgotten God as well. But even more basic, our first parents rebelled against God with disastrous consequences.

III. Is Sin Serious? (chapter 6, pp. 16–17)

The obvious answer is yes. But why? Blanchard sets forth three answers: you are debased; you are defiled; you are defiant. A point that needs emphasis is that sin is an affront to God. It hurts and grieves God, and is of such weight that only the death of the Son of God is sufficient to remove its consequences. God had to give up his unique Son in order to counteract the poison of our sin!

Application: This matter of sin being serious because it is an affront to God, is of pivotal importance. Of course, it is naturally and readily denied by the unbeliever. Denial of the poison flowing in one’s veins will only result in rejection of the medicine being offered. This situation can be remedied by God’s grace, which most often works through the prayers of God’s people.

IV. The Ultimate Judgment—Hell (chapter 7, pp. 18–19)

Hell is not a pleasant reality. It is commonly rejected by the masses and is infrequently mentioned or preached upon by Bible-believing people and pastors. Nonetheless, it is affirmed in God’s Word. As Blanchard points out, hell is factual, fearful, final, and fair. It is the answer to the unbeliever’s question, “Where do I go after I die?” In response to the frequently expressed objection that “an eternity of suffering just isn’t fair as retribution for only a lifetime of misdeeds and sins,” we must emphasize that sin is extremely serious to a perfectly holy God and that eternal punishment is a just sentence from a perfectly just God.

Application: In light of the enormity and seriousness of man’s sin (our sin) and its consequences, we must pray that our friends will see this and cry out those words spoken by a jailer in the Macedonian city of Philippi—“What must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30).

Prayer: Take fifteen minutes for prayer and praise.

Assignment: Review, review, review—pray, pray, pray!!! Study chapter 8, “Can religion help?” (pp. 20–21).

LESSON 9

ULTIMATE QUESTIONS —CAN RELIGION HELP?

I. What Is Religion?

If religion (from the Latin *religare*, “to bind”) is that complex of beliefs, attitudes, and practices that bind men to what they believe is of utmost importance—Tillich’s “Ultimate Concern”—then man is incurably religious. When a person asks, “What must I do to be saved?” his natural inclination is to answer it himself. And his answer goes in the direction of religion—“Here is what I’ll do; this is what I will bind myself to!”

To test out the strength and pervasiveness of this religious answer, apply diagnostic question #2 of Evangelism Explosion and note the response. The question: “If you were to die this day and find yourself standing before God, and he puts the question to you, ‘Why should I allow you to enter my perfect heaven?’ how would you answer?” The common response is, “Well I know I’m not perfect, but I did try to do good and live a good life. I wasn’t religious, but I did follow many of the rules and probably did better than most of the people around me, many of whom were churchgoers.” As someone has said, “All men seek to justify themselves—make themselves right with God—either through religion or by comparison.”

II. The Failure of Man-made Religion

But back to the question, “What must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30). It is certainly the right question to ask. However, we must accept God’s answer to it, rather than fabricate our own. Why? Because man-made religion cannot adequately meet the enormity and seriousness of our sin and its consequences.

Blanchard offers three biblical reasons why this is the case:

1. Religion can never satisfy God—even if our good works heavily outweigh our bad works on God’s scale.
2. Religion can never remove sin.
3. Religion can never change man’s sinful heart.

Another way of looking at this to understand that man-made religion can do nothing to remove:

1. Man’s bad record (Psalm 130:3).
2. Man’s bad heart (Jeremiah 17:9).
3. Man’s bad end—death and hell.

Note: In lesson 5, “The Message of Evangelism,” we developed man’s enormous need by means of five subpoints: guilt, depravity, alienation, judgment, and helplessness. Whether we look at man’s condition from the standpoint of that five-point scheme, or from Blanchard’s three-point scheme above, or from the alternative three-point scheme above, the conclusion is the same: man-made religion can’t help us cross the chasm that exists between sinful man and the holy God. In favor of focusing upon the second threefold scheme is its ease of memorization and presentation.

Application: Dwell on the matter of man's religion, which he either denies or clings to tenaciously. We need to show him that he is incurably religious, that he binds himself to something that he lives for, and that that something isn't the God whom we are to love with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind. No religion of man can deliver him. We need to clearly understand this, so that we can communicate it well.

Prayer: Spend fifteen minutes in prayer and praise.

Assignment: Review all previous chapters of *Ultimate Questions*. Study chapter 9, "Is there an answer?" and chapter 10, "Why the cross?" (pp. 22–25).

LESSON 10

ULTIMATE QUESTIONS—GOD’S PROVISION

Introduction: Today’s lesson takes us to the heart of the gospel—to God’s gracious answer to man’s predicament—namely, the person and work of Jesus Christ. The key verse in the Bible, John 3:16, has been described as the gospel in a nutshell, or the golden text of Scripture.

The big question is: how can a sinner be justly pardoned and accepted into God’s perfect heaven when God’s law demands punishment and God’s holiness requires perfect righteousness? (And we know that “religion” isn’t the answer.)

God’s answer is: the gracious provision of his Son. “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life”—John 3:16. This is not self-willed man reaching up to God on his own terms (i.e., religion), but God lovingly taking the initiative and condescending to man—at great cost to himself. Dr. Edmund Clowney captured something of the awesomeness of this when he declared: “That God so loved his son as to create and give worlds to him would be easily understood; but that God should so love sinners like ourselves as to surrender his son to the torments of hell for us—we can only bow in adoring silence.”

We must tell the story of Jesus in a loving manner. Blanchard tells it well, but briefly.

I. Jesus’ Person and Life on Earth (chapter 9, pp. 22–23)

These are the facts that we should be able to develop into narrative form:

A. Jesus was God incarnate. He was “God and man in two distinct natures, and one person, forever” (Shorter Catechism, Q. 21).

Note: There are a few different biblical routes that can be taken to demonstrate that Jesus is fully God other than the traditional one that begins with John 1:1–3 and amasses verses in which Christ’s deity is affirmed (e.g., John 8:58–59; 14:6, 9; 20:31; Romans 9:5; Hebrews 1:8; 1 John 5:20, etc.). One such path that this writer has used frequently with Jehovah’s Witnesses is to find verses in which Jesus receives worship, which of course can only be rendered properly to God (e.g., Matthew 28:9, 17; Mark 5:6; Luke 24:52; John 9:38).

B. Jesus was born of a virgin. See Luke 1:26–38; 2:1–7; Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18–25.

C. Jesus lived a perfect, sinless, obedient life. That was the very thing that Adam failed to do. By means of that perfect life, our Lord in effect wove a robe of righteousness designed to cover the spiritual nakedness of all who put their trust in him. The apostle Paul writes about this “righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone” (Shorter Catechism, Q. 33) in his letter to the Romans (3:21–26).

D. Jesus performed many life-giving (saving) miracles during his three-year ministry on earth. These miracles (all of which constitute tangible evidence, evoke wonder,

and require a supernatural explanation) confirm Jesus' claim to be the Son of God (i.e., God) sent from heaven. His climactic miracle, recorded in all four Gospels—namely, his resurrection from the dead (in bodily form)—is given special weight in Romans 1:1–4 as a glorious sign of his deity.

E. Jesus was unjustly sentenced to a painful and shameful death by crucifixion.

He endured six unlawful trials in all, three in the Jewish phase (before Annas, Caiaphas, and the Sanhedrin) and three in the Roman phase (before Pilate, Herod, and Pilate again).

We should not single out the Jews as “Christ-crucifiers.” Acts 4:27 emphasizes that Jews and Gentiles conspired together to kill Jesus. Furthermore, we are all responsible for Jesus' death, since he bore the sins of the whole world (John 1:29; 1 John 2:2), distributively rather than comprehensively.

Note: Shorter Catechism Q. 20–28 are very helpful in shedding light on this matter of Christ's incomparable person.

Application: We cannot get too much of “[fixing] our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2). The conviction of the apostle Paul should be that of every believer: “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21).

II. Jesus' Work of Salvation on the Cross (chapter 10, pp. 24–25)

Blanchard makes three excellent points in chapter 10 on “Why the cross”: Jesus died as (1) the substitute, (2) the sin-bearer, and (3) the Savior. To supplement this discussion, it will be helpful to refer to the material in lesson 5, section II.B, “The mediator of salvation is Jesus, God's Son.” Also, it will prove most beneficial to meditate on the words of 2 Corinthians 5:21, which set forth the twin teachings of substitution and imputation: “God made him [Jesus] who had no sin to be sin for us [who are filled with it], so that in him [Jesus] we might become the righteousness of God.”

Those words inspired the song “Ineffable Exchange” from the pen of Jacques Lefèvre (1455–1536), a forerunner of the Reformation: “The innocent one is condemned and the criminal acquitted; the blessed is cursed and the cursed is blessed; the life dies and dead live; the Glory is covered with shame, and he who was put to shame is covered with glory.” (Note: For a contemporary musical setting of these words, fit for congregational singing, contact the author of this course at 2555 Evergreen St., San Diego, CA 92106.)

Application: Is there an answer? Indeed, there is! We have a Savior who saves to the utmost, our Lord Jesus Christ, who commanded us to go to the ends of the earth and make disciples. That surely includes those relatives, friends, and various contacts who live close to us and right now are far from God. That this whole matter of personal evangelism has to be upon our Savior's heart is clear, not only from the commission he gave to his disciples, but also from the power and promises that accompanied it. Let us master and be mastered by “that old, old story of Jesus and his love” in the hope that we may have the opportunity of telling it over and over again.

Prayer: Take fifteen minutes for prayer and praise.

Assignment: Review chapters 1–10 of *Ultimate Questions*. Study chapter 11, “How can I be saved?” (pp. 26–27).

LESSON 11

ULTIMATE QUESTIONS—HOW CAN I BE SAVED?

Introduction: There's that question once again, but this time we want to listen to God's answer—there's no time for religion now! In light of our previous lesson on the person and work of Jesus Christ—the Father's incomparable gift to us sinners—how does one become savingly attached to him, so as to receive all those benefits he has secured by his death and resurrection?

Note: For a brief, but solid presentation of the benefits, look at Shorter Catechism Q. 32–36 for the benefits in this life, and Q. 37–38 for the benefits in the afterlife.

Blanchard gets right down to business on this question when he writes in his second paragraph of chapter 11 on page 26, "If God has shown you your need, and you do want to be saved, then you *must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.*" It is important to note that to do that requires the miraculous power and working of God's Holy Spirit. Thankfully, God is granting that enablement in great abundance in this New Covenant age of the Spirit!

I. Repentance

In addition to Blanchard's excellent paragraph, Shorter Catechism Q. 87 should be consulted, meditated upon, and even memorized: "Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience."

Illustrations of repentance abound in Scripture: For example, the practitioners of sorcery, when they believed in Christ, cast their occult scrolls (worth more than a few dollars) into the flames (Acts 19:18–19). Similarly, the rough-and-tumble Philippian jailer who turned to Christ turned away from his hard ways and washed the wounds of Paul and Silas (Acts 16:29–33).

II. Faith

Faith and repentance go together, as Paul declared to the Ephesian elders: "I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus" (Acts 20:21).

The Reformed explanation that faith consists of *knowledge*, *assent*, and *trust* is valid and worthy of reflection and discussion. At the same time, Blanchard's paragraph on the subject, though brief, is outstanding and should be pondered over and over.

As significant as faith is, we must remember that it is a gift to us and that greater than our faith is the object of our faith—he is perfect and constant; we are neither. We are not saved on account of our faith; rather, it is a gift of God's grace (Ephesians 2:8–9). Faith is the instrument—the empty hand—that receives the free gift.

Prayer is the first breath of new life in Christ. Blanchard's suggestions are most helpful (see p. 27). Keep in mind that a relationship with a living person—and God is that—

requires communication. Prayer is that communication.

III. God's Solid Promise

Romans 10:9–10 says, “If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.”

Note: The common twentieth-century practice of placing in the hand of someone who has merely raised a hand or gone forward or received a piece of paper or card with the words of 1 John 5:13 written on it, is highly suspect on three grounds. First, this “decisional regeneration” simply isn’t true—Christ requires more, even repentance and faith, which of course has to be expressed. But, unfortunately, a large percentage of people who raise their hands and go forward are neither properly informed nor converted by the Holy Spirit. Second, 1 John 5:13 was never intended to be used as a magical source of assurance of salvation. The words “these things” in the verse refer to John’s entire letter, not to the verse itself. In other words, if biblical assurance is to be gained on God’s terms, let the “convert” be given the entire book to read, hopefully with some loving assistance. Third, the practice is simply not in accord with that found in the book of Acts, where new converts are met with gladness and at the same time encouraged to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts (Acts 11:23; 13:43; 14:22). For an outstanding, heart-gripping treatment of the subject of assurance, I strongly recommend the chapter entitled “Sons of God” in J. I. Packer’s *Knowing God*.

IV. The Benefits of Salvation

A. The believer is given a new record. The guilt is erased; in its place, Christ’s righteousness is “imputed ... and received by faith alone” (Shorter Catechism, Q. 33).

B. He is given a new heart. This is called regeneration. It counteracts depravity and inability.

C. He is given eternal life. There is no more condemnation or judgment. Eternal life, as presented in Scripture, is both qualitative and quantitative. In quantity, it never ends—death itself has its “stinger” pulled for the Christian (1 Corinthians 15:55–58). With respect to quality, it is a life of new intimacy—most of all, the fellowship and communion enjoyed with God and the people of God (1 John 1:2–4). This begins at the moment of conversion.

Application: There are many doctrinal abuses in the area of personal evangelism (e.g., offering eternal life to the sinner, apart from the need for repentance; accepting Jesus as Savior, apart from bowing before him as Lord—called easy believism; misusing 1 John 5:13 in a zeal to give assurance). Nonetheless, we should not be reluctant to share freely the benefits that flow to the believing sinner who comes to Christ as the Lord invites and commands. To be able to speak about a new record, a new heart, and eternal life is a great privilege and a joyous experience when sitting face-to-face with a new brother or sister in Jesus Christ. May our gracious God grant us that experience increasingly in the days to come, as our love deepens for the gospel, for our Lord who has committed this treasure to these broken vessels, and for those who yet wander in darkness and are in

such desperate need.

Prayer: Spend fifteen minutes in prayer and praise.

Assignment: Read the entire *Ultimate Questions*, focusing on chapter 12, “Which way now?” (pp. 28–30). Also, consider the possibility of inviting some needy friend to join you in studying or discussing this book together. Another possibility has been suggested to me by OP minister Cal Malcor. It’s based on the fact that all kinds of people are talking about “spirituality.” With this in mind, we might approach a new friend (or an old one) like this: “Bob, I’m sure you will agree that ‘spirituality’ or ‘growing in spirituality’ is a hot topic, as is ‘Christ or the Christ within.’ Here is a little book [the Gospel according to John] that wonderfully addresses these subjects and is powerfully interesting. Why don’t you take it, and, after reading it, if you like, we can talk about it!”

This lead in (approach) can be attached to a number of “tools.” Obviously, this writer believes that *Ultimate Questions* is one of the best, but the principles learned in this course can be applied to all sorts of gospel presentations.

LESSON 12

ULTIMATE QUESTIONS—WHICH WAY NOW?

Introduction: Chapter 12 (pp. 28–30) has to do with living the new life in Christ, with growing in the grace and knowledge of our blessed Lord. In a real sense, it fleshes out what Barnabas had in mind when he came from Jerusalem to Antioch, saw the new believers, was glad, and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their heart (Acts 11:23; similarly, 13:43). In setting forth the basic disciplines of the Christian life, this final chapter shows us what it means to remain true to the Lord and continue in the grace of God. Blanchard discusses four features of the Christian life: prayer, Bible reading, fellowship, and service.

I. Prayer

One of the largest and liveliest churches in the world today is the one in Korea. This church has been tried and tested in the crucible of suffering—and not found wanting. It believes in prayer, as evidenced by its many well-attended early morning prayer meetings. Conversions are frequent in Korean congregations. And one of the first things taught to new converts is how to pray. They are expected to pray, and they do! May God give us the same kind of heart for prayer! (Remember, the Christians in Acts 2 were devoted to—i.e., gave constant attention to—prayer.)

II. Bible Reading

The believers in the fast-growing church in Jerusalem devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching (Acts 2:42). For us today, that translates into reading the apostolic writings in the Bible. Hopefully you have noticed all the italicized words in *Ultimate Questions*. They are passages from Scripture, and are listed on the last page of the book (p. 32). Yes, Blanchard's little book is filled with Scripture. I suspect that this is a major factor in its being so widely used and its being such a blessing to people all over the world. Let's make every effort to get our new converts into reading the Bible and into Bible studies.

III. Fellowship

Blanchard rightly sees the fellowship of believers as the church. In Acts 2:42, being devoted "to the fellowship" means being devoted to one another. Since the church is the people and not the steeple, the Christians who are devoted to one another are the same as those described in Ephesians 4:16 as "the whole body, joined and held together by each supporting ligament, [which] grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." Christians in fellowship with one another are also described as "living stones, [which] are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices ... through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5).

New converts need to be folded into a good church! Remember the definition of evangelism given in lesson 1, in which evangelism proceeds from and brings men into the church: “To evangelize is so to present Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit that men shall come to put their trust in God through Him, to accept Him as their Saviour, and to serve Him as their King in the fellowship of His Church.”

IV. Service

Service takes its cue from our Lord, who said that he “did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). He made it plain to his competitive disciples that he who would be great among them would have to become their servant (Matthew 20:26). Inasmuch as the church lives in the midst of a dying world, opportunities abound and will continue to do so until Jesus comes again: “You will always have the poor among you” (John 12:8). In the first-century church, there were plenty of poor brothers and sisters. That is why “from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them,” so that the money could be distributed to those who were in need (Acts 4:34–35).

To get our new convert involved in some particular sphere of service—shoulder to shoulder with other believers—is to place him or her close to the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Application and Conclusion

It is obvious from Scripture that the proclamation of the gospel to the ends of the earth for the salvation of the great company of the elect is something very precious to the heart of our Savior. It is a very high form of serving the poor, for who is more poverty-stricken than those who are without Christ?

The title of this course is “Personal Evangelism Made Less Difficult.” For most of us, just thinking about doing evangelism is difficult—not to mention actually doing it! Hopefully, this course has helped to convince us that it is less difficult than we may have thought.

The title question of Blanchard’s final chapter—“Which way now?”—is directed to the new convert. At the same time, it cuts in the direction of those who are concerned to do the hard work that leads to conversions—to you and me. Which way now for us? Hopefully, we will go forward—by reviewing these lessons, reading and rereading *Ultimate Questions*, and working our prayer lists and adding to them, all the while being willing, like the apostle Paul, to “endure everything for the sake of the elect” (2 Timothy 2:10). And let us never forget wisdom’s bottom-line assessment: HE WHO WINS SOULS IS WISE!

Offer some final thoughts on how we might continue to use *Ultimate Questions*. After some discussion, conclude with prayer.

