

Progressing Together



PRAT 205

Be a Witness for Christ



Test Version

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Syllabus for PRAT 205 – Be a Witness for Christ

Certificate Level

Course Objective:

To assist Christians to understand how to live a life of faith as a witness for Christ in their family, community, workplace or school.

Course Description:

This course lays the foundations for a life of faith that is lived intentionally as a witness for Christ. To begin the student will explore what it means to be a witness as well as the source of grace to live as such. The student will then examine, in biblical and practical terms, what it means to live as a witness in his or her family, community, work place or school. In latter lessons the student will prepare to tell his or her own personal testimony of encounter and relationship with God through Christ as well as basic responses to common objections to the Christian faith raised by Muslims. In the final lesson the student will process how to live as a faithful witness in the face of persecution.

Learning Outcomes:

Content: By the end of the course, the student will be able:

1. To explain the biblical concept of “a witness” for Christ, and be able to cite and discuss two biblical examples.
2. To describe how a relationship with God brings motivation and confidence to a life lived as a witness for Christ
3. To identify the various elements (events, people, ideas, etc..) that contributed to their conversion and growth in faith in God through Jesus Christ
4. To be able to provide a basic answer to three common Muslim objections to the Christian faith –
 - That Jesus is not the Son of God
 - That Jesus did not die on the cross nor was he resurrected from the dead
 - That the Bible has been changed and is therefore unreliable

Character: By the end of the course, the student will demonstrate:

1. Confidence in God that will enable him/her to live a bold and faithful life of faith as an intentional witness for Christ in his/her family, community, work place or school
2. Patience and joy in persecution as a result of his/her life of witness for Christ
3. Integrity so that his/her witness will not be compromised by sin and other behaviour that is not consistent with a life of faith in Christ
4. Love and compassion for other believers who are struggling with their witness

Competency: By the end of the course, the student will be able:

1. To take specific steps to establish his or her witness for Christ in their family, community, work place or school
2. To know how to encourage and pray for other believers who are struggling with their witness or are suffering persecution

3. To clearly and briefly explain the Gospel of Jesus Christ, complete with supporting Scriptural texts
4. To give his or her personal testimony of encounter (salvation) and relationship with God

Course Requirements:

Certificate Level:

To demonstrate knowledge of course material through

- answering questions at the end of each section
- completion of the final exam
- To attend 18 of 20 instructor-led sessions (27 contact hours minimum)
- To participate in discussions by listening, contributing as appropriate, and responding when asked a specific question
- To present his or her testimony to the class
- To report on readings assigned or approved by the instructor
- To complete the application activities

Credits Earnable:

2 hours of credit towards a Certificate in Christian Studies

Prerequisites:

(Completion of Progressing Together level 1, or equivalent)

Textbook and Related Materials:

Required - Progressing Together Manual for this course, PRAT 205, Be a Witness for Christ

Additional readings may be required at the instructor's discretion

Course Methodology:

The student will work inductively, reading texts, answering questions concerning knowledge, application and analysis, and drawing conclusions which will be applicable to their local context. After answering the questions in each lesson, students will gather to discuss answers and practical application. When possible, the course leader will provide additional information and examples to reinforce what the students are learning through the lessons.

Course Schedule:

To be announced

Evaluation Methodology and Scale:

Student performance and mastery will be assessed according to the following scale:

- 20% on completion of reading and answering lesson assignments before class
- 20% on student attendance, participation and attitude in discussions
- 25% on the application activities
- 10% on report of readings
- 25% on the final written, or oral, exam.

The evaluation scale is as follows

passing grade - 70-79%

good grade – 80-89%

excellent grade – 90-100%

Policies:

Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated, since they are deemed contrary to Christian teaching and academic integrity.

Absences in excess of 3 class hours will lead to a reduced grade; no student missing more than 6 class hours will receive credit for the course. Students who show little or no interest in completing course work will first be warned, then asked to leave the course if they do not change their conduct.

Bibliography:

Daniel, Robin, *This Holy Seed: Faith, Hope and Love in the Early Churches of North Africa*, Tamarisk Publications, Chester UK, 2010 [esp. Chapters 5, 6, 11]

Marsch, Charles, *Le Musulman Mon Prochain*, Publications Farel, Paris, 2002

Hawatmeh, Abdallah and Muller, Roland, *The Man from Gadara: A True Story of Muslims Transformed*

Lesson 1: What does it mean to be a witness for Christ?

Introduction

According to *Le Dictionnaire Robert*, the word “witness” has two primary meanings. First, a witness is someone who can certify something, or who, being in the presence of some deed accomplished, is called upon to attest to what was seen to have happened. Simply put, a witness is someone who accurately reports what he or she has seen or heard. Second, a witness is someone who by his or her presence and existence, serves to verify the reality of someone or something. With regard to the Christian life, it is this role of giving an account of or verifying the reality of the life and identity of Jesus to which all believers in Christ are called.

The idea of being a witness for Jesus Christ is first explicitly mentioned in Acts 1 (Luke 24:48) immediately following the resurrection of Jesus. Here Luke describes the scene in which Jesus appears to the disciples who were congregating in Jerusalem pondering what would become of them. “And so when they had come together, they were asking Him (Jesus), ‘Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?’ He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and **you shall by My witnesses** both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.’” (Acts 1:6-8). And so the believer in Christ is called upon to be a witness of Jesus Christ – that is, someone who by his words and his life testifies to what he has seen or heard of the life, work and person of Jesus Christ.

In this course, we will look together at 5 aspects of being a witness for Christ.

Firstly, the character and identity of a witness – who the witness is and to whom he belongs (Lessons 1 and 2).

Secondly, the context of witness – being a witness in contexts that are hostile to the Gospel: in religiously hostile cultures, in the public square and in religious majority families of the Arab world (Lessons 3-6)

Thirdly, the message of the witness, especially in religious majority contexts – the essence of the Gospel and an appropriate apologetic for this context (Lessons 7 and 8)

Fourthly, witness in the context of persecution and martyrdom (Lesson 9)

Fifthly, woven throughout this course is an intentional emphasis on the character of the believer as a result of a personal, intentional relationship with Christ which serves as the source and validation of his/her witness. The intent of this course is to emphasize that appropriate behavior as a witness for Christ flows from character. It is not sufficient to know facts about the Bible and the faith, being a witness demands a life anchored to Christ, a heart that feasts on the Word, and a will inclined to obedience.

We will first investigate what a witness is and does followed by a look at how a witness gets the courage to do so before an audience that may be unwilling to listen or even hostile. Next we will look in-depth at what it means to be a witness in one’s family, at work or at school and in society in general. Then we will look at the message of the witness, in an effort to summarize the most important aspects of what should be communicated. With this we

will look at how to respond to common objections to basic elements of our message that are often held by Muslims. And finally, we will look at how to respond to persecution in response to our witness for Christ.

A. Why are we witnesses?

Read Acts 1:3-11.

1. Describe the scene. What is happening?

2. Where has Jesus gone?

3. With Jesus gone, how is the message of the Gospel supposed to continue to advance? (cf. Matthew 28:18-20)

4. Conclusion – Complete the sentence: Believers in Christ are called to be witnesses because _____ so that _____.

B. What is the difference between being a witness and evangelism?

In Matthew chapters 5-7, the author records Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount which lays out a new moral code and way of life for those who follow Him. With regard to being a witness, the entire Sermon could be cited as an explanation and description of what being a witness is all about. Though a thorough study of these chapters is beyond the scope of this lesson, the student is encouraged to complete such a study for his or her own personal edification, by making use of the skills obtained from the study of Bible Study Methods – BIBL 201, for instance. Nevertheless, several key components of Jesus' Sermon are worth considering here.

1. Read Matthew 5:13-16

a. In verse 13, believers in Christ are described as "salt". In what ways are believers like salt?

b. In verses 14-16, believers in Christ are described as "light". In what ways are believers like light?

c. How does being “salt and light” relate to our being a witness?

d. How does the community of believers acting as salt and light affect the witness of the Church as a whole?

2. Read Matthew 5:43-48.

a. Describe how believers in Christ are called to act differently than those who are not?

b. How does this kind of different behavior contribute to our being a witness?

3. Read Matthew 6: 5-7 and 16-18

a. Explain how prayer and fasting for the believers in Christ should differ from that of the “hypocrites”?

b. What does prayer and fasting have to do with being a witness?

The term “evangelize” is the translation of the Greek word “evangelizo” which is most often translated in the New Testament as “to preach the Good News” (the Evangel).

4. Use your Bibles to complete the table below:

Passage	What is taking place?	Who is evangelizing?
Luke 4:16 - 19	<i>Jesus is reading an excerpt from the book of Isaiah in the temple in Jerusalem.</i>	<i>Jesus</i>
Luke 4:42 - 44		
Acts 5:40 - 42		
Acts 14:11 - 15		
Acts 16:6 - 10		
Rom 1:13 -15		

Rom 15:18 - 20		
1 Cor 1:17		
1 Cor 9:16-18		
2 Cor 10:13 - 16		
Gal 1:8 -9,15 - 16		
Eph 3:8		
Rev 14:6		

5. Describe the activity of the evangelists from the passages above.

a. Who are the people identified as evangelists in these passages?

b. What do these people have in common with one another? (cf. Eph 4:11)

c. How would you describe the activity of the evangelists mentioned in these passages?

d. What is the message that the evangelists deliver?

6. Based on your study of the passages above dealing with aspects of “witness” and “evangelism” how would you describe the difference between the two terms?

C. Some notable examples of witnesses

From the New Testament:

1. Stephen - Acts 6:9 – 7:60

a. According to Acts 6:9-14, what got Stephen into trouble?

- b. What happened next (6:15 – 7:1 – 2)?

- c. What was the response to Stephen’s “witness”? (7:54 -60)

- 2. Suffering saints - Heb 10:32-36
 - a. What happened to the believers to whom the author is writing? (vs. 32-34)

 - b. How did their response to hardships serve as a witness to those in their community?

- 3. The Christians of Thessalonica - 1Thes 1:6-10
 - a. What did the Christians in Thessalonica do that served as a witness?

 - b. Who was encouraged by the witness of the Thessalonian Christians?

From history: History is full of stories of men and women who lived exemplary lives, performed self-sacrificing acts and inspired others to follow in their footsteps even as they followed Christ.

- 4. Augustine (see Appendix 1 for story of Augustine)
 - a. How would you describe Augustine before his conversion?

 - b. How did his life change following his conversion?

 - c. What impact did this changed life have on his witness?

- 5. Martin Luther (see Appendix 2 for story of Martin Luther)
 - a. How did Martin Luther serve as a witness for Christ?

b. What are the things that God used in Martin Luther's life that enabled him to be a witness for Christ in this way?

6. John of Damascus (see Appendix 3 for story of John of Damascus)

a. Briefly summarize who John of Damascus was.

b. Describe the central conflict which defined his ministry.

c. What did John of Damascus do and say as a witness for Christ in his generation?

d. What were the risks that he undertook in being a witness in this way?

7. Timothy I of Baghdad (see Appendix 4 for story of Timothy I of Baghdad)\

a. Briefly describe who Timothy I of Baghdad was.

b. Describe the position that Timothy held in the Church?

c. What did Timothy do and say that served as an effective witness to the Caliph Al-Mahdi?

D. What should I expect as a witness for Christ?

One of the patterns that we observe in Scripture is that God uses the skills, experiences and life history of a person as part of their witness. In this way, Moses, who was raised in Pharaoh's household, trained no-doubt in military strategy and statesmanship, and then later wandered in the desert for 40 years, was used of God to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt and into the Promised Land. The Apostle Paul, a roman citizen, fluent in Hebrew and Greek, and who was trained as a Pharisee was called by God to take the Gospel to much

of the Roman Empire, write a large part of the New Testament, and provide instruction to the 1st Century Church.

1. Take some time to consider your own life.

a. Describe briefly your family (parents, siblings, origins, etc.)

b. Describe your current level of education and any particular skills or talents that you have.

c. Describe any “life-changing” experiences that have marked your life up to now. (Note: in the case of Moses it was the fact that though he was a Hebrew, he was raised in Pharaoh’s household)

d. Share these details (family, education/skills, life-changing experience) with another person and ask them to pray with you that God would use these things in your life as part of your particular context and means of being a witness for Christ.

2. Take some time to review your current life.

a. In what ways are you currently living as an intentional witness for Jesus Christ?

b. What are some ways in which your life needs to change so that your witness is consistent with what you really believe?

c. To what extent are you connected to a community of believers as a visible witness of your faith in Jesus Christ?

d. What could this community of believers do to make your witness more intentional and visible?

Lesson 2: How knowing God enables us to be a witness for Christ

Introduction

Being a witness for Christ is intimately linked to our relationship that we have with Him. In the same way that it is easier to talk about someone and the things they have done or said the better you know him or her, so it is easier to be a witness for Christ the more intimately you know Him and what He has said and done. The Bible is full of examples of this. One of the most dramatic is found in Mark 5:1-20.

1. Read Mark 5:1-20 .

a. Describe what happens in this story.

b. What instruction does Jesus give the man in verse 19?

c. Imagine that you were the man in this story. What would you tell the people of your village?

d. How did the man's experience with Jesus affect what he told his fellow-villagers about Him? (In other words, how did his encounter with Jesus change what he could say about Him?)

In Acts 21, the Apostle Paul is dragged from the Temple in Jerusalem and accused of desecrating it and speaking against the Law of Moses. In the midst of the uproar, Roman authorities arrive and "rescue" Paul from the crowd in an effort to put an end to the violence and discover why the people are so agitated. In his defense, Paul asks to speak to the crowd.

2. Read Acts 22:1-21.

a. How does Paul present himself before his encounter with Christ?

b. How does Paul describe what happened to him on the road to Damascus?

c. What does Paul say is the result of his encounter with Jesus? (In other words, how did his life change?)

A. Knowing God provides the content of my witness

1. Using your Bible, select and read any 5 of the following passages and complete the table. The first response is provided as an example.

Passage	The “heart” of the message
<i>Acts 2:22-36</i>	<i>Jesus died and rose again according to the plan of God</i>
Acts 3:13-26	
Acts 4:8-12	
Acts 5:27-32	
Acts 8:26-35	
Acts 10:34-43	
Acts 13:26-39	
Acts 16:25-34	
Acts 17:22-31	
Acts 22:6-16	
Acts 26:12-23	

2. Summarize what you understand to be the “heart” of the message that was the basis for the spoken witness given in these incidents in the book of Acts.

1Pet 3:15 says, “But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.” Think for a moment about what Peter refers to here as “the hope that you have.”

3. How would you describe the hope that you have? (cf...Rom 8:23-25, Col 1:3-6, Tit 1:1-3)

4. Imagine that 5 minutes from now, your mother or father is going to call you on your phone and (politely and graciously!) ask you to explain why you have hope. Outline below what you would say as to why you have this hope. (Use the following beginning phrase if helpful...)

- I have hope because.....
- I have hope because.....
- I have hope because.....

As noted in Lesson 1, the dictionary definition of the word “witness” is someone who accurately reports what he or she has seen or heard. In lesson 7, you will have an opportunity to write out and tell others your personal story of how you encountered Jesus Christ and began to follow Him as Savior. But for this lesson, think about your journey of faith in Christ – from the moment you first began to wonder about God to the present day.

5. Make a list of the things about God or what He did for you that drew you to Him.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

6. How does your list compare to the “heart” of the message that emerges from the witness incidents in the book of Acts that you looked at above?

B. Knowing God informs the method of my witness

Though most historians now reject the attribution of this famous saying, “Preach Christ at all times, if necessary, use words” to St. Francis of Assisi, it nevertheless brings together the dual aspects of “word” and “deed” as the tools of the witness. Over the course of Church History notable efforts have been made by certain sectors of the Church to emphasize one or the other of them. At times, “witness” that was marked by an emphasis on deeds (sometimes referred to as the “Social Gospel”) at the expense of “word” was purported to be more culturally sensitive and “loving”. In contrast, “witness” that emphasized “word” (sometimes) to the exclusion of deeds was criticized as being condemning and insensitive to human needs. But which one is best, “word” or “deed”? Or, if both should be included, how does one know how to find the appropriate balance between the two? To try to answer this question, let’s take a look at how God structured His witness to mankind.

1. Complete the following table by reading the selected passages and filling in the columns with the appropriate response. The first two are given as an example to follow.

Passage	“word” or “deed”	Description
<i>Ex 3:4-9</i>	<i>word</i>	<i>God declared Himself trustworthy by recalling the promises He made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob</i>
<i>Deut 6:20-25</i>	<i>deed</i>	<i>God showed His lovingkindness to Israel by delivering them from Pharaoh</i>
Job 38: 1-11		
Ps 19:1-6		
Isa 52:13-15		
Mat 7:28,29 – 8:1		
Luke 9:12-20		
John 1:1-14		
Acts 2:1-13		

2. Based on this selection of passages, what can you conclude about what God uses to reveal Himself and His plan for His creation?

3. What can you discern with regards to a distinction between how God uses “word” from how God uses “deeds” when He seeks to witness to Himself?

C. Knowing God removes the fear of being a witness

Since the Fall, man has fought against submitting to God and His will. Part of man's rebellion also involves opposing those who are His witnesses. Realizing that the World is against you may cause you to fear and withdraw from being a witness. Both Old and New Testaments record instances of how men and women of God responded to opposition to their witness. Consider the following accounts and answer the questions below.

- David before Saul and Goliath (I Sam 17:31-37; 45-47)
- Nehemiah before King Artaxerxes (Neh 1:4-11; 2:1-7)
- Paul before Herod Agrippa (Acts 25:23-26:23)

1. How are David, Nehemiah and Paul's situations similar?
2. What did these 3 men understand about God that helped them when it came time for them to speak up about God, His plan and their role in God's plan?
3. Think about one situation in which you are seeking to be a witness (or one in which it is particularly difficult for you to be a witness):
 - a. What is keeping you from being a bold witness for Christ in this context?
 - b. What does God say about Himself in the Bible that could help you in your situation?
 - c. How can the fact that you are part of the body of Christ (the Church) give you courage and encouragement to be a witness in this context? (see Heb 12:1-3)
 - d. Take time to memorize the following verse and to share this with a brother or sister in Christ as a word of encouragement for them (call them, write them, visit with them face to face and share this verse with them).

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, of love and of a sound mind."
2 Tim 1:7
4. Describe Peter's response to those who sought to link him to Jesus following the arrest of Jesus (Mat 26:69-75).

5. Why do you think Peter responds here differently than David, Nehemiah or Paul (as you noted above)?

6. In John 21:15-17, Jesus, following his resurrection, appears and speaks with Peter. Summarize their discussion.

7. Despite Peter's denial of Jesus (3 times!), Jesus appears to welcome and restore Peter, and give him an important responsibility with regards to other believers in Christ. How does this example of (apparent) forgiveness and restoration of Peter give you courage to be a witness – despite your fear of rejection or persecution?

D. Knowing God helps me understand why I should be a witness for Christ.

When it comes to answering the question of “why” I should be a witness for Christ, the question can be understood in two ways. First, “why” can be understood with reference to me as in, “Why should *I* be a witness? Is this role of being a witness (Acts 1:8) something that is an obligation for *me* because *I* am a “Christian”? Another way to ask this question looks rather at the purpose or the hoped for results and asks, “What is the point of me (or of anyone for that matter) being a witness?” Or to ask it in another way, “Does God “need” me to accomplish His purposes?” The “why” in this case is wondering about the need for witness with regard to its impact on the outcome.

Once again the place to look for an answer to this question is in the Bible and here we find that the idea of “being a witness” is not optional for the Christian. It is in fact, primarily a question of our identity.

1. Complete the following table. Read the passage and note how our identity is related to our witness.

Passage	How our identity is related to our witness
John 13:34-35	<i>Others will know that I am a disciple of Christ (identity) by the love that I show to other believers in Christ (witness)</i>
Ja 2:17-18	
John 8:39	

Eph 5:1-10	
Phil 2:14-16	

From these passages (and many others) it can be shown that our identity and witness go together such that to accept one idea (witness or relationship: child of God) is to accept the other and likewise, to deny one is to deny the other. Witness is therefore directly linked to my relationship with God, and as I grow in my faith, the reality of this relationship becomes increasingly a part of my identity (who am I and to whom do I belong) and affects how I describe myself.

Secondly, our witness as a believer in Christ is inseparably linked to God’s plan of salvation for the world. For reasons ultimately only known by God Himself, the message of salvation is to be carried and displayed and preached by fallen yet redeemed men and women. Though God could have (theoretically) made use of angels or miraculous signs or other means to communicate the Gospel message, He chose to use people.

2. Read Rom 10: 11-14 and explain the link between the preaching of the Gospel and the believer in Christ.

3. Take a moment to remember your own conversion story. Briefly describe the key people involved in announcing to you the Good News. Describe how (their words and their deeds) they did so.

4. Get together with a brother or sister in Christ and pray together for each other about your witness to your family, friends and work/school colleagues. Ask God for wisdom to know what to say/what to do, how to say/do it and when. Ask God for courage to both do and say the right things.

Lesson 3: An Introduction to the context of my witness for Christ

Note: This lesson deals with the general questions associated with being a witness in your family, at work or school and in society at large. Due to the complex nature of these domains, each of these specific contexts will be treated separately later in separate lessons, each one dealing with one aspect of our witness: in the family, at work or school, and in society in general. We hope that as you take the time to consider what the Bible says about being a witness in each of these contexts that you will be encouraged and find practical help to be a more faithful and equipped witness.

Introduction

To be a witness, as we have seen so far, is to show and tell what you have come to learn about God and His saving and transforming power in your life. The act of “being a witness” or “giving witness” involves both word and deeds. It can happen virtually anywhere and at any time, and can be directed towards virtually anyone willing to observe and or listen. It is important to realize however, that though the basic message of the witness – who God is and what He has done for me – is essentially common to all who have put their faith in Christ as Savior, the context of our witness varies greatly and is affected by such things as culture, history, and politics. That is to say though the message of our witness remains the same, the means of our witness depends upon the context of our witness.

Robin Daniel’s book, *This Holy Seed*, provides a historical view of the rise and fall of the Church in North Africa from the first few centuries up to the late 1900’s. This account reminds us how those who served as witnesses in several distinct eras (before Islam until the 7th century), under Islam (from the 7th to the 18th century) and under colonialism (mid-18th century until mid-20th century) did so, with various degrees of responsiveness on the part of the North African population¹. *This Holy Seed* reminds us as well that as history progresses, people and societies change and, with that change, comes the necessity to adapt our witness.

A. Witness and culture

The term “culture”, by definition, is the combination of all of the elements that make up a distinct group of people. Culture includes such things as language, traditions, roles of men and women, education, styles of dress, work and play and the means of exchange (money). Culture also includes such things as life cycle and rites of passage rituals (i.e. birth, marriage, death), some forms of religious behavior, social institutions and concepts of right and wrong. In short, a given culture is the sum of all that a certain group of people knows and does that make them distinct from everyone else.

The term “society” is sometimes used interchangeably with “culture” but refers rather to the group of people who share common traditions, language and institutions. Finally, “nation” refers to the geo-political identity of a given group of people that are considered citizens (or members) of a particular country and reside together. Nations (such as Algeria or

¹ *This Holy Seed* is a highly recommended resource for those with North African origins.

Egypt) though they represent a common people (their citizens) may be (and often are) home to multiple, distinct cultures and societies.

Cultures, societies and nations are the natural result of human development. Following the creation of Adam and Eve, the Bible tells how men and women learned skills, established laws (or, as in the case of Abraham and his descendents, received the Law of God that was prescribed to them), and developed religious beliefs (see Gen 11: 1- 9). Generally speaking, cultures are morally neutral and adequate to “carry” the content and functions necessary to sustain the life of a given people and pass that on to successive generations. Nevertheless, because people that populate cultures are fallen and sinful, all cultures are infected with sin that result in knowledge and behavior that are contrary to God’s intent for His creation. As a result, no culture is either wholly good or wholly bad and all are in need of redemption.

1. Read Daniel chapter 1 (the entire chapter).

a. List as many items as you can from the text that “define” the culture of the Babylonians.

b. Describe how the Babylonian culture differed from that of the Hebrew captives (Daniel, Mishael, Hananiah and Azariah).

c. How did the cultural differences between the Babylonians and the Hebrews limit the witness of Daniel and his friends?

d. How did Daniel and his friends use the cultural differences to enhance their witness?

2. Think for a moment about your own culture. Make a list of ten specific items that define your culture and set you apart from someone else of a different culture. A couple of examples are given below.

e.g. My mother tongue is Kabyle.

e.g. I was named on the 8th day after my birth.

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

f.

g.

h.

i.
j.

It is obvious that when we become Christians that we begin to embrace beliefs and behaviors that are different in many cases from that which is predominant in our own culture. As such, it can be said that a Christian “sub-culture” emerges in every culture in which the Gospel witness has resulted in a sufficient number of conversions so that a body of believers – otherwise known as the Church – has been formed.

3. Consider the Christian sub-culture of which you are a part. List five aspects of this sub-culture which differ from that of the prevailing culture in which you live.

e.g. We sometimes pray sitting in chairs with our heads bowed and eyes closed.

a.
b.
c.
d.
e.

It is in these areas of cultural differences where much if not most of the conflict and persecution between members of the prevailing culture and those of the Christian sub-culture occurs.

4. Select any one of the five aspects that you mentioned in question 3 above.

a. How does this difference limit (or negatively affect) your witness and that of the Church in general?

b. What do you think you could do to make use of this cultural difference to enhance your witness?

5. Think again about your own culture (not your Christian sub-culture, but the larger prevailing culture of which you are a part).

a. What elements of your culture are compatible with the Gospel and could be an asset to your witness and that of the Church in general?

b. How would these cultural elements contribute to enhance your witness?

B. Witness and politics

Whereas politics of a given nation can be considered part of the culture of a given people, it is distinct from culture in the sense that it stands “above” culture and governs it. From the point of view of nation-states which likely contain multiple, varied cultures, politics imposes (in theory) the same laws and policies on its citizenry (as well as resident aliens, temporary workers and tourists), providing a comprehensive set of behavioral guidelines (and penalties for law breakers) which enable a society to function.

Apart from the times in the Old Testament during which the Law of God was considered to be the law of the land, the People of God (whether Jews or Christians) have been a minority and forced to find a way to survive and submit to a political regime which embraced knowledge and behavior that differed from, and was often in direct conflict with, knowledge and behaviors associated with their faith. At different times throughout history the People of God have adopted varied approaches to engaging with the state and politics. When ruling regimes have systematically opposed believers, they have sometimes fled to other more tolerant nations and at other times withdraw into a self-protecting sub-culture. When regimes have been less hostile, the People of God have become involved in the 'polis' (those who rule or administrate the state).

1. Read Romans 13:1 – 7.

a. What does Paul say is the source or origin of governing authority? (v. 1)

b. Does Paul make a distinction between “godly” authorities and “non-godly” authorities? Why or why not?

c. How should those who resist such authority be considered, according to Paul? (v. 2)

d. What does Paul go on to say is the purpose of governing authority? (v. 3,4)

e. Finally, what reasons does Paul give for why we should be in subjection to the governing authorities? (v. 5-7)

Note: Paul wrote his letter to the Romans from the city of Corinth around 57-58 AD. Not much later, the Roman Empire would come under the authority of the Emperor Nero who would initiate a tremendous persecution against Christians. The historian, Tacitus, reported that "a great number" of Christians lost their lives during the Neronian persecution.

2. Read 1 Peter 2:13-17.

- a. What does Peter say that agrees with what Paul wrote in Romans 13.1-8?

- b. In verse 15, Peter adds another reason why Christians should live in subjection to the governing authorities. What additional reason does Peter give here?

- c. Finally, in verse 17, what does Peter warn his readers against with regards to their attitude and behaviour towards the governing authorities?

3. Read 1 Peter 1:1-12.

- a. What does Peter tell us here that makes it possible for Christians to submit to governing authorities – even ones like Nero?

- b. How does our confidence in God help us maintain our witness when faced with a hostile political climate?

Note: At the time of Peter's first letter (AD 65), Nero may have already been in power and, as he points out in the first part of chapter 1 (see v. 6-7), persecution may have been spreading. Nevertheless, he calls Christians to submission to the governing authorities.

4. Considering what you have read from Romans and 1 Peter, how does your attitude and behavior towards governing authorities affect your witness?

5. Think about the political situation in your country.

- a. In what ways does the current government oppose your Christian witness and that of the Church?

- b. How does your attitude and behavior towards the current government differ from that which Paul and Peter demand?

6. Read Acts 4:1-22.

a. For what reason were Peter and John arrested? (v. 1-3)

b. What did the authorities demand of Peter and John? (v. 18)

c. How did Peter and John respond? (v. 19-20)

d. On what basis did Peter and John defy the governing authorities?

e. Is this not in conflict with what Peter (and Paul) wrote in 1 Peter and Romans respectively? Why or why not?

C. Let's be practical.

1. Summarize the biblical principles relating to political authorities from the above passages.

2. Which of these principles do you still need to adopt in your own attitude and actions?

3. What steps will you take to implement them and when?

For Further Study

Recommended Reading:

- *Christ and Culture*, Richard Niebuhr, 1951
- *Christ and Culture Revisited*, D. A. Carson, 2012

Lesson 4: Being a witness in my family

Introduction

The nuclear family, consisting of husband, wife and children is, by God's design, the primary relational structure that is intended to provide the necessary nurture and training to successive generations to ensure their survival and prosperity. Though cultures define differently the roles and behaviors for each member of the family, the Bible lays out very specific guidelines and expectations for how each one is supposed to think of him or herself and behave towards the others.

Because of the intense nature of relationships in a family, religious faith can a helpful guide to defining roles and responsibilities within the family. But often families are divided over which faith represents "true" faith or in their commitment to, and practice of, their faith. For this reason being a witness in one's family is difficult and may lead to conflict. But what is the believer supposed to do?

I. Relationships, roles and respect**A. Husbands and wives**

The key relationship in any family unit is that of husband and wife. The husband and wife bring new children into the World, care for and educate them (in some form or fashion) and then launch them into the larger society where they, normally, find (or are "given") a mate and repeat the process. Every culture lays out expectations for how the husband and wife are to function in the family. As we noted earlier, though we can agree in principle that there is no morally perfect way for a husband and wife to relate to each other, each culture is sufficiently damaged by sin that the husband and wife relationship in every culture is in need of correction. As we consider how to be a witness in our families, it is appropriate that we begin with what the Bible has to say about husbands and wives.

1. Read Genesis 2:8. From this passage, why did God make men and women?

2. Read Genesis 1:27. What does this passage tell us about how God views men and women? How are they equal and how are they different?

3. Read Genesis 2:24. What happens to a man and a woman when they marry?

4. Read Ephesians 5:22-33
 - a. Summarize how the woman is to treat her husband.

b. Give one example of what this would look like in your culture.

c. Summarize how the husband is to treat his wife.

d. Give one example of what this would look like in your culture.

In the first century, with the growth of the Christian faith across the Roman Empire, it was not uncommon for husbands and wives to find themselves on different sides with regard to faith in Christ. Many new believers came from a pagan background where sexual expression was unrestrained, and many were entangled in regrettable relationships. Because religious faith was (and remains) so important to daily life, the question of the necessity or desirability of remaining married to someone who does not share the Christian faith is still raised.

5. Read 1 Corinthians 7:10-16.

a. Summarize Paul's teaching here in your own words.

b. What does Paul say about marital separation (divorce) here?

c. How does Paul's command concerning "staying married" contribute to the witness of the believing spouse towards the unbelieving spouse?

6. Read 1 Peter 3:1-4.

a. Summarize Peter's teaching here in your own words.

b. What does Peter suggest here to be the means by which the unbelieving husband can be "won' to faith?

7. Read 1 Peter 3:7.

- a. Summarize Peter's teaching here in your own words.

- b. How is the husband supposed to consider and treat his wife? (note: from the context Peter makes no distinction between a believing and unbelieving wife in terms of how the husband is supposed to treat her.)

8. What principles emerge from Paul and Peter's teaching with regard to witness between husband and wife?

Think about your own parents. Do they share a common faith in Christ? If neither of them follows Christ, pray that God would reveal Himself to them so that they can be saved. If yes, they both share a common faith in Christ, thank God! and pray for them that God would bless their lives together so that they can be an ongoing blessing to their families. If only one believes in Christ, pray that God would give the believing spouse the wisdom and grace to behave as a faithful witness as Paul and Peter describe.

Think about your own marriage (if you are married). Do you and your spouse share a common in faith in Christ? If yes, thank God ! and ask Him for the ongoing grace to build a marriage that honors Him and is a blessing to your children (if you have any). If only one of you follow Christ, ask God for the grace to fulfill your role as husband or wife as Paul and Peter describe in the passages you read. Pray also for your not-yet believing spouse that God would reveal Himself to him or her so that he or she can be saved.

B. Parents and children

If the husband-wife relationship is the foundation upon which the family is built, the parental relationship is the superstructure that gives shape and expression to the family unit. Due to the complex nature of parent-child relationships which are marked by such things as authority and obedience, nurture and dependence, and the eventual departure of the child from the home, the question of witness between parents and children is a delicate one.

1. Read Ephesians 6:1.

- a. What does Paul say is the child's appropriate response to his or her parents?

- b. In verse 3, what reason does he give for this command?

- c. When should a believing son or daughter not be expected to obey his/her parents ?

 - d. How does appropriate behaviour of children towards their parents serve as a witness to them?

 - e. What does “honor your father and mother” look like in your culture?
 - i. What cultural expectations does your family have with regard to honoring parents?

 - ii. Which of these cultural expectations should a disciple of Christ seek to fulfil toward his parents?

 - iii. What other unexpected ways as a disciple of Christ might you specially honor them?

 - f. What can you do now to show honor to your father and mother as a witness to them?
2. Read Ephesians 6:4.
- a. What instructions does Paul give to fathers with regard to their children?

 - b. How does proper parenting (as described here) serve as a witness to one’s children?
3. Consider your own parents (if one or both are not followers of Christ) and your attitude and behavior towards them. How could you adopt Paul’s words from Ephesians 6:1-3 in your life to improve your witness to them? (What needs to change? What do you need to start or stop doing?)

4. Consider your relationship with your children (if you have any). How can you adopt the instructions from Ephesians 6:4 to improve your witness to them? (What needs to change? What do you need to start or stop doing?)

C. Elders

In most non-western cultures, as in the case of North Africa and the Middle East, elders retain an important role in society. Though each of the cultures present in North Africa and the Middle East may define differently the exact role and responsibility of the elders and the expected attitude and response that is due them, in general elders are to be respected, honored and given a place of preference over others.

Because elders are likely to be the chief decision-maker for the family (or at least in a position to exercise significant influence over decisions undertaken by members of the family for which they are responsible) matters of faith – and in particular the situation in which faith in Christ is not shared with the elders – can be highly conflictual. In light of this, how should we adapt our witness to our elders?

1. Read 1 Timothy 5:1-2*.

a. What instruction does Paul give to Timothy (and us) here with regards to older and younger men? (v. 1)

b. What instruction does he give Timothy (and us) here with regards to older and younger women? (v. 2)

2. Think about the elders in your family or community.

a. How would you describe your current attitude towards them?

b. What should you do to adopt the attitudes and behavior that Paul describes here in 1 Timothy?

c. How does appropriate attitudes and behavior towards elders (as pointed out here by Paul) enhance our witness?

*Note that Paul writes to Timothy in chapter 5 about relationships primarily in the context of the church community. As you answer the above questions, consider how these instructions apply toward unbelieving elders in the village community.

II. Traditions, celebrations and religious practices

The exercise of family traditions, celebrations and religious practices are the vehicles by which families nurture a sense of belonging and pass on to future generations the family story and important values. It is in these family rituals that the core beliefs reside. To participate in these rituals is a sign of agreement. Likewise, refusal to participate can be understood as a sign of rejection. But what is the follower of Christ to do if the family rituals are based on and perpetuate beliefs and values in conflict with the Christian faith?

There are many traditions, celebrations and religious practices that families make use of to define themselves and use to pass on their story and values to the succeeding generation. It is not possible to treat all of them in this course. The goal is to give you a few biblical principles that you can draw on to help make decisions with regard to how to be an effective witness to your family.

Principle 1: Cultural elements have both a “form” (that is, “what” is done or said) and “function” (the “why” or meaning of something that is done or said). In most cases it is possible to separate the “form” from the “function”. Example: special clothes worn by the bride and groom at a wedding. The form in this case is the wearing of special clothes (in the West – the bride wears a white dress, in North Africa the emphasis is on the gold accessories worn by the bride). The function of the special clothes (the meaning) can vary from an indication of purity to the wealth of the parents. In any case, the form – what is done--can be separated from why it is done.

Principle 2: Those cultural elements that do not oppose God in their “form” can often be retained by the Christian and given a new “function” or meaning. Example: Singing of folk songs. In this case the form is the particular style of music (and language of the music) used in folk songs of the local region. The function (original) is that of retelling the tales of the region, of local heroes or of traditional themes (love, sacrifice, etc...). In this case the style (and language) of the music can be adopted and given new words that speak of Christian themes.

Principle 3: Those cultural elements that oppose God in their “form” must, in most cases, be rejected by the Christian. Example: child sacrifice. In this case the form – whatever it is – is clearly in opposition to biblical principles for treatment of children and acceptable worship of God. Because the form must be rejected it is not possible to adapt this practice and fill it with Christian function (meaning).

Principle 4: Those cultural elements which in both their form and function correspond to appropriate biblical patterns and practices can often be adopted with little need for change. Example: Opening one’s home to others in hospitality. In this case the form is that of inviting

someone(s) into your home for refreshment (food and whatever else is needed) and perhaps overnight. The function or meaning of such hospitality can range from kindness to strangers, friends or family to efforts gain merit from God. Because hospitality is a practice encouraged in both Old and New Testaments and compatible with the biblical injunction to love others, hospitality (in whatever cultural form you are accustomed) can be adopted by the Christian with little change necessary.

A. Ramadan

1. Describe how your family practices Ramadan. Who participates? How faithful are those who participate?
2. Describe what happens in your family if someone refuses to fast?
3. Read Matt 6:16-18. What are Jesus' instructions for fasting?
4. Based on observation of the lives of men and women from the Bible, what would you say is the biblical purpose of fasting? (see Neh 1:4, 2 Sam 12:15-16, Matt 4:1-2)
5. Based on what you know of your family traditions concerning fasting and comparing them to the biblical model described in the passages noted above, which of the cultural principles (Principles 1-4) described above would you say applies to Ramadan? In other words do your family traditions with regard to fasting conform to the biblical model and so can they be kept intact, do they represent forms that can be kept but the function modified, or must the traditions be rejected entirely as unbiblical? Explain why.
6. How could your participation in the Ramadan traditions of your family be seen as an opportunity for witness?
7. What kind of adjustments to the Ramadan traditions of your family would you make in order for your witness to be clear and understood?

B. Birth and circumcision

1. Describe your family traditions surrounding birth and circumcision.

2. What happens to those in the family who do not keep the traditions?

3. Read Gen 17:9-14
 - a. To whom was the practice of circumcision given?

 - b. What was the purpose of this symbol?

 - c. Based on what you know of your family traditions concerning birth and circumcision, compared to the biblical pattern described above, which cultural principle (Principles 1-4) mentioned above do you think applies to the practice of circumcision? In other words do your family traditions for birth and circumcision represent a form that can be kept but the function modified to conform to the biblical pattern, must the traditions be rejected entirely, or can they be kept as is? Explain why.

4. How can your participation in the family traditions surrounding birth and circumcision be seen as an opportunity for witness?

5. What kind of adjustments to the circumcision traditions of your family would you make in order for your witness to be clear and understood?

C. Marriage

1. Briefly describe your family traditions surrounding marriage.

2. What happens to someone in the family who does not keep the traditions?

3. Read Eph 5: 22 – 33

a. What does this passage say is the biblical form of marriage?

b. What does this passage say that the newly married couple is supposed to do with regard to their parents?

c. How are husbands and wives supposed to treat each other?

4. Based on what you know of your family traditions concerning marriage compared to the biblical pattern from Ephesians, which of the cultural principles (Principles 1-4) mentioned above appears to apply to marriage? In other words, do your family traditions for marriage represent forms that can be kept but the function modified to conform to biblical patterns; must the traditions be rejected entirely, or can then they be kept as they are? Explain why.

D. Finances and inheritance issues

The love of money, the Bible says, is the root of all evil (1Tim 6:10). The Bible also says that you cannot “serve two masters; for either you will hate the one and love the other or you will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and riches.” (Mat 6:24) Interestingly Jesus spoke more about money than he did about heaven and hell! Clearly the issue of money is important.

1. Read Mat 6:19 – 21 and 25 - 34

a. What is the source of all our resources (money, health, relationships)?

b. To whom does all that we possess (ultimately) belong?

c. What then should be our attitude towards our possessions and money?

2. Read the following passages.

a. Complete the table. The first response is provided as an example.

Passage	What should we do with our money?
<i>Phil 4:15-17</i>	<i>We should share our money with those in need</i>
Ja 2:14-17	
ITim 6:17-19	

b. Based on these passages, what should we do with our possessions and money?

3. Think about your own possessions (money, talents, and resources).

a. In what ways do you use your resources that conform to the biblical patterns noted above?

b. What attitudes and behaviors concerning your resources do you need to adopt?

4. If, as we have stated throughout this lesson, our witness is linked to our character out of which flows our behavior, then how does proper attitudes and actions with regards to our finances affect our witness? Think about the following scenarios and describe briefly what you should do or say so that your witness for Christ is clear.

a. Your father has just died and left an estate that includes a family home, some money and a car. There are 5 children in the family (including you). The youngest son and the 2nd son have begun arguing over the distribution of the estate. The eldest sister suggests that despite the fact that you are the eldest son, you should be “cut out” of the estate because you are a Christian. What should you do and/or say?

b. Yesterday you learned that you were laid-off from your job. Your rent is due at the end of the week and you do not have enough cash on hand to pay it. Over tea that afternoon you mention this to your younger brother who mentions that one of your cousins has left behind a houseful of things – including his car – while he is in Europe for the summer. The brother suggests that he help you sell the cousin’s car to pay the rent. The next day the younger brother shows up with the rent money. What should you do and/or say?

c. Too late you realize that the medicine that your mother takes has nearly run out. To get more you will have to borrow some money from a friend – who happens to be American. When you ask him, he gladly loans you the money. On the way to the pharmacy, you meet a friend who says he has been threatened with death if he cannot repay a loan by this evening. What should you do and/or say to your friend? (or to your American friend or mother?)

E. Conclusion

As can be seen from the exercises included in this lesson, the question of our witness affects virtually every aspect of our life. The challenge for the Christian is that often the Bible does not specifically dictate what must be done or said in order to maintain a clear witness for Christ. And so, the Christian must work to develop habits of reflection that will help him understand how to respond. Such principles include:

- Prayer – Jam 1: 5 says that if anyone lacks wisdom, that he should ask God who gives (it) freely.
- Study the Bible – 2Tim 3:16 and 17 tell us that all of Scripture is profitable to equip us for good works
- Consult other Christians – Prov 1:5 says that a wise man will hear and increase in learning, and a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel.

F. Application Activity #1

Review the conclusions and commitments you made above. Write an action plan to implement your decided changes, including what action you will take and by when you will take it. Record when actions were taken including a brief summary of any outcomes.

Lesson 5. Being a witness at work or at school

Introduction

As we have seen from our study so far, being a witness for Christ is something that affects all areas of our life. It affects not only what we do but more importantly, who we are. So far we have looked at what it means (in part at least) to be a witness in our family. With this lesson we will look at what it means to be a witness at work or school. Then in lesson 6, we will consider what it means to be a witness in society in general. As in our study of what it meant to be a witness in our family, when we consider the context of work and school, the question of integrity and relationships are very important.

So, what does the Bible have to say? How does a Christian live according to biblical principles while at the same time fulfilling professors' assignments or demands of one's employer? Are the biblical expectations of a Christian "in ministry" different from those for a Christian in the workplace? What should the believer do if he or she finds himself or herself asked to compromise his or her convictions? The larger question which looms behind these questions is simply this, what does it mean to be a witness at work and at school?

A. The Biblical view of work.

The idea of "work" goes back to the Garden of Eden. According to Genesis 2:15, "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." Despite the fact that "work" has sometimes been considered to be a consequence of the Fall, God gave to Adam and Eve the work of caring for the Garden prior to it (Gen 2:15). It was only after Adam and Eve sinned that work and its outcomes became difficult, tiresome and frustrating (Gen 3:17-19a).

1. Before we take a look at what the Bible has to say about work, take some time to think about how work is understood in your community and family. Take some time to first reflect on the questions below and then get with a friend and discuss them. Once you have discussed each of your points of view, record your personal "best" answer to each question.

a. What is "work" according to your community/family?

b. Is the effort involved in caring for children or preparing meals for the family to be considered work? Why or why not?

c. Which "work" tasks are considered to be for men and which are considered to be for women? Why is this the case?

d. Why (according to your community/family) should someone work? (What is the purpose of work?)

e. Which people in your community/family have the right to not work? Why? Who gave them this right/privilege?

f. What do honesty and integrity have to do with work? (What does it mean to be honest and full of integrity at work?) Is this a problem in your community/family with regards to work? Is this easy to do? Why or why not?

g. Would you say people in your community/family enjoy work? Why or why not?

h. What is the worst part of work?

2. The Bible has much to say about work and it teaches us that both the “way” in which we work as well as “what” we work for display both our character and our faith in God.

a. Complete the table on the next page by reading the following passages associated with each of the work-related themes from Scripture and place an “X” under the biblical principal to which it applies.

b. Based on these passages of Scripture, what would you say is God’s view of work?

Biblical Principles Related to Work

Passage	Our capacity to work is a reflection of our being created in the image of God. He worked – we work.	Our capacity to work enables us to live together in community. Those who work can help provide for those in need.	God equips us with special skills to be used in our work.	Work is an expected role for those who are able.	The fruit of our work will be judged by God. Hard work is blessed by God.	The apostles and church leaders are to be an example of those who work hard.
1Cor 3:10-15					X	
Eph 4:11-12						
1Thes 4:11						
1Cor 15:58						
Gen 2:15						
Neh 3:1-2, 4:6						
2Thes 3:7-8						
2Thes 3:10						
Ex 35:34-35						
Prov 14:23						
Eph 2:10						
Acts 2:44-45						

3. How does God's view of work differ from the view of work held by the people in your community?

4. What does integrity and honesty have to do with God's view of work? (cf. 2Thes 3:7-10)

5. What changes in your own attitudes and behaviors do you need to make concerning work so that you more fully reflect God's view of work?

6. In what ways do appropriate attitudes and behavior in my work life affect my witness?

B. The biblical view of learning and education.

As with the idea of work, biblical exhortation associated with learning and education can be traced to the Old Testament. The first direct call for education is found in Exodus 18. Here Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, lays out a plan without which Moses will not be able to effectively rule the people of Israel. In his plan, Jethro affirms Moses' role as leader and challenges him to be *"the people's representative before God and [to] bring the disputes to God, then teach [the people of Israel] the statutes and the laws and make known to them the way in which they are to walk, and the work they are to do."* (Ex 18:19b-20) As far as Jethro was concerned the wellbeing of the people of Israel depended on their knowledge of the law (which can be understood here as the whole counsel of God – and not just the Law of Moses), something that they needed to learn. This idea of teaching the whole counsel of God to the believing community continues to surface throughout both Old and New Testaments, showing itself to be instrumental to both the preservation and propagation of the faith.

In the historical development of faith in the God of the Bible, early emphasis was placed on knowing and keeping the Law of God (primarily as expressed in the Law of Moses, which has as its foundation, the 10-commandments). In order for the people of Israel to maintain a sufficient knowledge and practice of the Law, the job of teaching the Law was assigned to national leaders (the King as well as religious specialists such as prophets, Levites and priests) and to parents.

1. Read the following passages and fill in the table as indicated.

Passage	Teacher	Special Instructions
<i>Lev 10:8-11</i>	<i>Aaron and his sons</i>	<i>Do not consume alcohol so that you can teach the Israelites well</i>

Deut 4:9,10		
Deut 11:16-20		
Ps 78:1-6		
Pr 1:7-9		
Ez 44:15 -16, 23		
Mal 2:7-8		

The Bible emphasizes the value and primacy of teaching and learning the “things” of God (not just his Law, but also His “ways” as well as His acts with regard to mankind – both as judge for sin and as benefactor for righteousness). As Solomon makes clear in Proverbs, the knowledge of God, what he refers to as wisdom, is the path or key to blessing (Prov 3:1-8; cf. Eccl 7:12). But Solomon and other biblical writers realized that there was more to life than just what was directly included in the “things” of God. Things related to caring for home (shelter, finances), family marriage, children, etc...), and “business” (whether caring for animals, managing people or property, construction, government, military or commerce) that required learning (Daniel 1:3-5, 17). Relative to the acquisition of this body of knowledge, the Bible lays out very specific guidelines as to how one should approach the matter of learning as well as the appropriate attitude of a godly learner.

2. Before we look at what the Bible has to say about these matters, take some time to first reflect on the questions below and then get with a friend and discuss them. Once you have discussed each of your points of view, record your personal “best” answer to each question. In your community/family how does one learn about...

- a. Marriage and family? (including appropriate roles for men and women)

- b. Personal care (physical and mental health)?

- c. Work?

- d. Religious faith and practice?

- e. The use of money?

3. Read Prov 17:27 – *“The one who has knowledge uses words with restraint, and whoever has understanding is even-tempered.”*

- a. What does it mean to “use words with restraint”?

- b. What is the opposite of “using words with restraint”?

- c. How would you describe the character quality of the man or woman who possesses knowledge and who uses words with restraint?

- d. Why is this idea of “using words with restraint” considered to be a good thing?

4. Read 1Cor 8:1

- a. What does it mean when it says, “knowledge puffs up”?

- b. What is the opposite of being “puffed up”?

- c. How does the accumulation and possession of knowledge cause one to be “puffed up”?

- d. What is the solution to being puffed up, as provided here in this passage?

5. Read 2Pet 1:5-8

- a. To what other character qualities is knowledge added – in this passage?

- b. How does self-control work with or relate to knowledge?

- c. What else is “added” to knowledge in this passage?
- d. According to this passage, what is the result of all this?
6. Summarize in your own words how God views knowledge and learning.
7. In what ways do appropriate attitudes and behavior with regards to learning affect my witness?
8. Much of what God requires of the Christian in work and education is similar: a godly character which gives priority to His ways. Read the following scenarios and think about how you would respond. Then get with a friend to discuss possible solutions. Once you have finished discussing together, write your best answer as a solution to the problem, being sure to include biblical reasons.

Scenario 1: You are recently hired to work at the Post Office sorting and delivering mail. The second week of work, your boss asks you to begin work at 5:00 am. You really don’t like working that early and it takes you nearly an hour to get to work from your house on the bus. What should you do? Circle the response that you feel best fits what should be done.

- Ignore the boss’ demands, and come in late to work at 6:30.
- Ask a friend to lie for you, by recording your arrival time as 5:00 – knowing that you will not arrive until 6:30.
- Make the adjustments to your lifestyle so that you can get to work on time at 5:00.
- Arrive on time (at 5:00) and make an appointment with the boss to discuss making a change in your schedule to a later start time
- Quit. It isn’t worth it to try to do what the boss asks.
- Other:

- a. What biblical reasons (reasons of personal character) should guide your response to your boss’ demand?
- b. What option would you choose if your boss was a friend of your fathers? How does the need to honor your father affect your choice?

Scenario 2: You are in your last year of university and in your last class. You need to get a high grade on this exam in order to pass this class and receive your diploma. The professor hands out the final exam and in your copy, you find that he has included the answers to the questions. What should you do? Circle the response that you think best fits what should be done.

- Don't say a thing and use the answer key as needed to help you pass the test. After all, if the professor gave you the answers, God must have wanted you to have them.
- Inform the professor of his mistake and give him back the answers to the exam.
- Other:

a. What biblical reasons (reasons of biblical character) should guide your response?

b. What would happen to you if the professor discovered that you had "profited" unfairly from this and told your family?

c. How would you feel?

d. How would this possibility affect your choice above?

Scenario 3: You work for Ford in their customer service department making car repairs. A friend of yours brings his car in and knowing that you work there, asks if you could do him a favor and replace the breaks "au noir". He says that he will split the difference between the TTC price and the HT price – saving him money and putting an extra 50 euros more in your own pocket. What do you do? Circle the response that you think best fits what should be done.

- Do the friend a favor; after all, relationships are worth keeping, Ford makes enough money anyway and you could really use the extra 50 euros.
- Accept to do the work, but only at the "regular" rate and explain to your friend that you cannot work "au noir".
- Other...

a. What biblical reasons (reasons of biblical character) should guide your response?

b. Last month this same friend loaned you the money you needed to pay your rent. You owe him the money still since you have not been able to pay him back. What happens now to your friendship if you tell your friend you cannot help him?

Scenario 4: The week before your final exams, you find a notebook which contains an entire year's worth of preparatory notes for the upcoming entrance exam (concours). Upon reading through the notes you find the name and contact information of the person and realize that this belongs to a classmate of yours who is preparing for the same entrance exam as yourself. You also realize that these notes are far more complete than anything you have and that if you were to keep them, you would likely pass the entrance exam – but your classmate without them would be lost. What do you do? Circle the response that you think best fits what should be done.

- Keep the notes and use them. After all you found the notes and so you should keep them.
- Make a copy of the notes and then contact the person to return them.
- Contact the person and return the notes without copying or studying them – they are not yours and yours should not profit from what is not yours.
- Other...

a. What biblical reasons (reasons of biblical character) should guide your decision?

b. What will your family think of you if you fail the class?

C. Let's be practical.

Take some time to think about the following question and then get with a fellow student or friend and discuss it. Once you have discussed each of your points of view, record your personal "best" answer to the following questions.

1. In your own words explain what it means to be a witness at work and at school.

2. With regards to work and education, what biblical attitudes should you adopt and develop to enhance your Christian witness at work and/or at school?

Lesson 6: Being a witness in society

Introduction

Christians have long struggled with their place in society and throughout history have adopted various attitudes and behaviors to respond to what has often been, between the Christian and the society, a relationship of opposition and conflict. In the Old Testament, God called Israel out from the Nations to be a people consecrated and sanctified to Himself. In this way, the question of witness was “national” in the sense that the people of Israel as a whole were instructed to live in such a way that the Nations would see the glory of God in their midst and be drawn to Him. In the 1st century, with the coming and subsequent rejection of Jesus as the Messiah, the question of witness turned to the Church and to its members. In this way, the Church was called and instructed to behave in such a way so as to be a witness. In contrast to Israel however, the Church and its members were faced with establishing their witness within a society that opposed them. It is this complex issue that the New Testament writers often address. Gratefully, when we look closely at what they taught, several very interesting things emerge which will guide our investigation into what it means to be a witness in society today.

First of all, however, it will be helpful to define some terms. To begin, what is “society”? And secondly, how is a society different from a “culture”? According to Webster’s On-line Dictionary, Society is simply “a community, nation, or broad grouping of people having common traditions, institutions, and collective activities and interests”. And culture, by contrast, is the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group; *also* : the characteristic features of everyday existence (as diversions or a way of life) shared by people in a place or time. In other words, a society is the group of people who share common ideas, traditions and institutions, and culture is comprised of the beliefs, traditions ways of doing things that are shared by, or in, a given society.

And so for the sake of this lesson, the question is, how can I live as a witness in and among the people and broad, general cultural contexts of the society in which I live?

A. Jesus’ thoughts on Society

The notion that the Christian faith is relevant to the life of the Christian in whatever society s/he lives is based on the fact that Jesus himself walked the earth and faced the temptations and physical limitations with which we are confronted on a daily basis (John 1:10-14). Furthermore, Jesus’ prayer for His disciples (current and future) in John 17 - which includes a petition to the Father to guard and sanctify the believers in their life on the Earth - reminds us that this challenge to be “in the world” but not “of the world” was understood to be so important that Jesus prayed to the Father on our behalf over it.

To understand what Jesus thought about society and the place of the Christian in it, let’s take a look at what Jesus had to say - first from his own life, and then secondly in his teaching.

1. Read Luke 2:39-40

- a. In your own words, summarize what this passage is describing.
 - b. What aspect of culture are Joseph and Mary respecting?
2. Read Luke 14:1-6
- a. In your own words, summarize what this passage is describing.
 - b. What aspect of culture is Jesus combatting? Why?
3. Read Luke 20:19-26
- a. In your own words summarize what this passage is describing.
 - b. What aspect of culture is Jesus supporting? Why?
4. Read Mark 10:1-11
- a. In your own words summarize what this passage is describing.
 - b. What aspect of culture is Jesus challenging? Why?
5. From these passages it is evident that Jesus was often confronted with choices that showed his agreement with, or opposition to, cultural aspects of his day and society. What can you discern from these passages that indicate principles of why Jesus chose to conform or challenge certain norms?

B. Paul and Peter's thoughts on Society

In addition to Jesus, the Apostles Paul and Peter left us a rich tradition of principles that applied to the question of how to live as a Christian in a society that opposes the faith. Read the following passages and answer the questions that follow.

1. Read Rom 13:1-7

- a. Describe Paul's view of governmental authorities.

- b. What does he say that a Christian should do to relate properly to these authorities?

- c. What reason(s) does Paul give for why the Christian should behave in this way?

2. Read 1Pet 2:13-17

- a. Describe Peter's view of governmental authorities.

- b. What does he say that a Christian should do to relate properly to these authorities?

- c. What reason does Peter give for why the Christian should behave in this way?

3. Read 1Pet 2:18-21

- a. In your own words summarize what Peter is describing here.

- b. How does he say that the Christian should act towards/in response to his "master" (in Peter's day, this reference to "master" was most likely understood in a slave-master context. In our day, this can be understood as an employer-employee context.)

- c. In Peter's mind, what difference does it make (as far as how the Christian is to act) whether the master is good or evil? Why or why not?

d. What reason(s) does Peter give here for why the Christian should act in this way? (cf. 1Pet 2:22-25)

4. Read 1 John 2:15-17

a. In this passage, John warns the Christian against loving three things: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. How would you describe each one?

i. The lust of the flesh

ii. The lust of the eyes

iii. The pride of life

b. What does it mean to love these things?

c. What three reasons does John give for why the Christian should not love these things?

From this survey of the selected passages from the New Testament, we learn that the Christian is often faced with choices that put him or her in opposition to the prevailing culture. At times, the Christian is called on to cooperate with and participate with what is asked of him or her. At times, the Christian is instructed to oppose or even seek to change the prevailing stance on a given question. It is at these times, that the principles laid out in lesson 4 are helpful to guide the Christian in discerning what attitude to adopt and what course of action to take. These principles can be understood as summarized below:

Principle 1: Cultural elements have both a form (what is done) and a function (why it is done).

Principle 2: Those cultural elements that do not oppose God in their “form” can often be retained by the Christian and given a new “function” or meaning.

Principle 3: Those cultural elements that oppose God in their “form” must, in most cases, be rejected by the Christian.

Principle 4: Those cultural elements which in both their form and function correspond to appropriate biblical patterns and practices can often be adopted with little need for change.

C. Final Thoughts on Being a Witness in Society

In the end, however, we know that choices are not always simple and that there may be “negative” consequences for following Christ. Choosing to oppose the ways and wisdom of our society may not be popular and may result in conflict and loss. We will deal more fully with this issue of persecution in lesson 9, but before we do, there are a few principles to note.

1. Read the passages and summarize the prevailing truth in your own words:

Passage	Summary of principle truth
2Cor 4:16-18	<i>Eternal rewards are accorded for our suffering</i>
Rev 7:9-14	
John 15:18-20	

2. Application Activity #2.

In groups of 3-4, choose together a common practice associated with any cultural or religious holiday, life event or social context to explore. Then follow these steps:

- a. Describe in detail the Form, the behaviors associated with that practice, and their Function, their expressed (official) purpose in society and the motivation behind those who engage in them.
- b. Determine to which of the four categories this practice should be classified in order to be an effective witness for Christ. Cite appropriate Scripture texts and principles which inform your decision.
- c. Suggest at least one plan of action to be applied in a particular context which will both shield the believer from religious compromise and idolatry on the one hand and express a positive witness for Christ to loved ones on the other.
- d. Implement the plan of action after much prayer.
- e. Report back the outcomes to the group, analyze together the impact and, where necessary, make adjustments or refinements to the suggested response.

Lesson 7: The Message of our verbal witness for Christ

Introduction

As we set out to explore in this course, being a witness involves two important and inter-related aspects. On the one hand a witness is someone who lives in such a way so as to give evidence of his (unique) identity. He shows with his lifestyle, the attitudes he adopts and the words he uses, that he is guided by Someone and something other than the things of this World. On the other hand, a witness is someone who gives an account of what he has seen and has learned. Just as the Gospel writers gave an account of what they saw and heard of the life of Jesus, a witness, gives an account of God's presence and work in his life. Lessons 4-6 dealt with this first aspect of being a witness and attempted to provide principles and biblical examples of what it means to live as a witness in one's family, work/school and society in general. The next two lessons deal with the question of giving a verbal account of what the Christian has "seen" and knows of God through Christ.

When it comes to giving a verbal account as a witness, it is of help to recognize just how powerful and common what we can refer to as "story-telling" really is. It is common knowledge that much of the world is illiterate – especially the poor, women and others who lack access to basic education. Additionally, even among those who are literate, many prefer oral to written instruction as a result of strong cultural patterns. This puts the "story" at the heart of learning. Furthermore, most of the Bible is narrative story. Not only did this reflect the culture of the people of the Bible from the Old Testament through the 1st Century of the New Testament, but it also reflects a pattern of communication that God felt to be important. In part this is because story is so memorable. Because story wraps history and people and events into a grand narrative, it evokes emotions and stirs passions that burn into our conscience. Finally, in learning and telling the story of one's own people – whether that of a Nation, a family or a sport's team - it reinforces a powerful sense of identity and belonging.

A. Verbal Witness: A Simple Approach

When it comes to engaging in given a verbal account, the so-called process of how this works is as follows²:

First, in conversation with another person, listen for clues about their life that indicate they are in need of a Savior, Jesus. Listen for incidents that made the person upset, sad, angry, depressed...anything that indicates that there is a need in their life that can be met by Jesus.

Second, as the occasion arises and as naturally as possible, tell your own story (as you will learn and practice according to the exercises that follow). In so doing, you want to let the other person hear the message that Jesus can bring help to people today – and your life story is an example of how He can do that.

² This story-telling approach is adapted from "S-T4T, Storying Training for Trainers", as developed by the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Church. Used with permission.

Third, tell the story of the demon-possessed man from Mark 5 (as you will learn and practice according to the exercises below). The point of this exercise is to help the person see that Jesus is able to help all kinds of people – even those with very serious problems – and that He is available today.

Finally, you want to invite the person to come to Jesus to ask for help – just as you and the demon-possessed man did.

B. To begin – Tell your own story

The first and most “natural” thing for a witness is to learn to tell his or her own story. It is true that to really tell one’s story could involve the recollection and explanation of thousands of incidents, conversations and decisions that each worked to shape and direct one’s life, though it may have been uncertain at the time as to how it would work out or what effect it would have. But when it comes to telling one’s story as a witness of God and His work in your life, the story that you should tell should only include those incidents, conversations and decisions that were directly related to your encounter with Christ and conversion to faith in Him.

1. Using a blank piece of paper, write down in simple phrases or sentences some indication of the incidents, conversations and decisions that contributed to your encounter with Christ and eventual conversion.

2. Once you have remembered all of the most important things, organize them chronologically - the way a normal story is told.

3. Take time now to write out a more full account of your story. At this point, don’t worry about grammar, or vocabulary or length. The key is to get it all down. If this writing exercise is too complex, find a believing friend who will be willing to listen to your story as you tell it. As for the written version, don’t worry at this point about vocabulary, grammar or length of your story....just practice telling it in all its detail.

4. Whether you have made a written version of your story or have an oral one, ask a friend to read over your story or, if oral, listen again to your story and to note the things that are unclear. With these comments in mind, re-work your story to make it more clear, and then re-view your corrected account with your friend. (this is where you can make corrections to grammar and vocabulary).

5. Story length and style is highly dependent on culture and the context of the story –telling event. In the Western context, people appreciate shorter stories with a bold finish (either dramatic, funny, or one in which all the problems are resolved). In the Eastern context, stories may be much longer and have as their purpose a more general moral or reinforce a worldview theme. In any case, take some time to think about who it is you might tell your story to (the culture, the context) and adjust your story length and style to fit this.

6. Once you have your “finished” story ready, take the time and share it with at least two other people.

C. Tell a story of a biblical encounter with Jesus

The next step in our verbal witness is learning to tell the story of Jesus and what he came to do. Before we get to His story, it is first helpful to learn to tell another story from the Bible that will serve as a bridge between your story and that of Jesus'. There are hundreds of possibilities from which we could choose, but the story that we want to focus on is that of the demonized man from Mark 5. Why is this story so important and helpful? First, Mark tells the story of a man who was in desperate need of help. In this way, the man in Mark's account represents a person in need today. Secondly, Mark's story highlights the power of Jesus to bring about healing, in so doing he provides an example of where to go to get help. Thirdly, Mark's story allows you, the witness, to let the story reinforce what has taken place in your life and serve as an opportunity to invite the person with whom you are speaking, to come to Jesus for help with their own life.

1. Read Mark 5:1-20 enough times so that you begin to get a feel for the story. Answer the following questions, so that you are certain what this story is telling.

- a. What is the man's problem? (v2-7)
- b. Why is this a problem? (v3-5)
- c. What does Jesus do first? (v1-2, 8-9)
- d. What did Jesus do to set the man free? (v11-13)
- e. What was the result of Jesus' intervention? (v15)
- f. What did the healed man do at the end of the story? (v18-20)
- g. What are the most important parts of this story? Why do you think so?

h. What does this story teach us about Jesus?

i. What does this suggest to us (in other words, if Jesus can do this, what does this tell us about who He is?)

2. Get with a friend (who has also worked to learn the story) and take turns telling the story until you have it ready and accurate to the biblical account. As you practice, allow each person to give helpful ideas after each round of telling.

D. Explain the Gospel Message

The final step in preparing ourselves to give a verbal account, is to learn the basic message of the Gospel – the Good News of Jesus’ coming. There are many possible approaches to explaining the Good News and many related theological issues that could be part of an explanation of what God did in sending Jesus, what he accomplished in doing so, and what our responsibility is (as men and women) before God in terms of our sin. Much of this material is covered in other courses (see for example: The Doctrine of Salvation: DOCT 206; Book Study – Romans: BIBL 207; and New Identity and New Life in the Spirit: PRAT 202), and so will not be repeated here. Instead we will simply look at three passages that emphasize some very critical elements.

1. But first, based on your previous study of the Gospel, whether through the above courses or studies elsewhere on your own, identify the essential elements of the Gospel message below.

Now see what elements are highlighted in the Gospel message as presented in the three following passages.

2. Read Luke 2:8-14

a. In your own words, summarize what Luke is describing here.

b. In the announcement given here by the angels, they state that they are bringing Good News of great joy. What two reasons do you see in verses 10 and 11 that indicate why

the news that they bring is such Good News? (Hints: To whom is this Good News destined? And how do the angels describe the One who was born?)

c. The angels announce that God has sent a Savior (v. 11). Why do we need a Savior? What does this imply about our spiritual condition?

d. Based on your answers to the previous questions, explain why this is good news for people today?

3. Read 1Cor 15:1-5.

a. Summarize in your own words what Paul says in verses 3-5 is the essence of the Gospel – the Good News that he received from God Himself.

b. What is Paul's focus in verses 3-5?

c. How does what Paul focuses on relate to what we learned from the story of the demonized man from Mark 5?

4. Read Rom 10:9 – 13

a. From verse 11 - 13, who can be saved?

b. From verses 9-10, what does one have to do to be saved?

c. What does it mean to be saved? From what are we saved? (refer to your answer to question 2.c. above regarding Luke 2:11)

5. Now match your initial Gospel elements from question 1. with your answers to the questions asked of Luke 2, 1Cor 15 and Rom 10. Then summarize briefly in your own words what the story of Jesus' coming is all about.

Once you have learned to give verbal witness by telling your own story and that of Jesus, one additional challenge remains: understanding the context of the person with whom you are sharing. As noted in the introduction to this lesson, we begin verbalizing the message only after having taken the time to listen to the person with whom we are talking; hearing them describe their fears, anxieties, and concerns and listening for the needs that they recognize that can be met by a relationship with Christ.

6. Think for a moment about someone that you know who does not yet follow Jesus and respond to the following questions:

- a. How would you describe his/her religious faith?

- b. To what extent do you know what he/she knows about Jesus and His plan of salvation?

- c. How would you describe his/her family situation? (Ex.: They are: parents, children, married, unmarried; the family is Muslim, practicing/non-practicing, Christian, atheist, other; stable/unstable, etc...)

- d. What particular issues/anxieties/questions is this person wrestling with now?

- e. Think again about your own story of meeting and following Christ. What elements from your story could you emphasize when telling it to your friend that would connect with their own situation?

- f. Think about the demon-possessed man from Mark 5. What elements from that story (or another Bible story event you might choose) should you emphasize when telling it so that they "connect" with the situation of your friend?

7. Let's start practicing. The time has come for you to begin to give a verbal witness of what you have seen and know of God through Christ.

- a. Take some time with a fellow student or a friend to pray about opportunities to do so. Make a list of those with whom you would like to have such a conversation. Pray that God would make the time and opportunity available to you with each person.
- b. Record the dates and observations as you have opportunity to share with each one.
- c. Share your experience(s) with your partner and with the class.

Lesson 8: How does a witness respond to objections to the Christian faith?

Introduction

When it comes to relating what we have seen and know of God through Jesus Christ, it will quickly become evident that most of the World will not agree with our point of view, reasoning or conclusions. Clearly it is not possible in such a course to deal with the host of issues and disagreements that can and do arise. However, this lesson will introduce responses to three common objections raised by Muslims concerning the Christian faith.

These three objections include:

- 1) the question of whether Jesus is the Son of God
- 2) the question of whether Jesus died and rose from the dead
- 3) the question of the integrity of the Bible – and in particular, was the Bible changed

Due to the nature of this course, the answers provided to these questions will be limited, but for those who would like to pursue them further, a list of pertinent references is provided at the end of the lesson.

A. Our Response to Common Muslim Objections to the Christian Faith

Before we begin to deal with any of the particular objections, it is necessary to take a moment and reflect upon the manner of our response. As is evident to any student of the Bible, and as has been noted throughout this lesson as well, God is as much concerned with what we do and say as with how we do so.

1. Read the following passages and summarize what they say regarding how we should answer someone who opposes us.

Passage	Summary of Principle Truth
Prov 15:1-2	<i>A wise man answers "gently" and speaks with wisdom</i>
Rom 12:17-21	
Luke 6:27-28	

2. Based on the passages above, how should a Christian respond to someone who opposes his or her Christian faith?

3. What kinds of things (behavior, attitudes) should be avoided? Why?

B. Objection 1: Jesus is the Son of God

The first objection that we will deal with revolves around the biblical presentation of Jesus as the Son of God. In responding to this objection, we will first look briefly why many of the majority religious background object to this idea, then we will briefly overview what the Bible says about it, and then offer a basic response to those who object.

Muslims have a particular problem with this reference to Jesus. Their difficulty with this idea – that Jesus is the Son of God - is shown in several Quran’ic passages in which this truth – as they understand it - is denied.

“And exalted is the majesty of our Lord; He has taken neither a wife nor a son.” (Sura 72:3)

“He begetteth not, nor is he begotten.” (Sura 112:3)

“No son did God beget, nor is there any god along with Him.” (Sura 23:91)

“The Jews call Uzair a son of God, and the Christians call Christ the Son of God.... God’s curse be on them; how they are deluded away from the truth!” (Sura 9:30)

“...So believe in God and His apostles...(Far exalted is He) above having a son...” (Sura 4:171)

Furthermore, Yusuf Ali, in his notes on the Qur’an adds:

“...the Christian attitude is condemned, which...attributes a physical son to God... The doctrines of Trinity, equality with God, and sonship are repudiated as blasphemies. God is independent of all needs and has no need of a son to manage His affairs...”

Objections to this truth are mainly based on the conception (false as we will maintain) that Jesus was born as a result of a physical act between God and Mary and the conclusion that follows (if the first assertion is granted, which we do not), that this would threaten (and in fact nullify) the unity and sufficiency of God.

On the one hand, we can agree with Muslims to the extent that we would also object to this understanding of the Son of God, if that is indeed what we meant. On the other hand, we thoroughly reject their assertions. What they think we mean by Son of God is not what the Bible teaches nor what we mean when we refer to Jesus in this way. So, what is the meaning of “Son of God”? What does the Bible tell us about the “Son of God”?

1. Read the following passages and complete the table by indicating to whom the reference “son of God” refers.

Passage	To whom does “son of God” refer to?
Luke 2:38	Man created by God
Mat 2:15	

Job 1:6	
2Sam 7:14	
Ex 4:22	
Rom 8:22	
Rev 21:7	

2. From the passages above, what can you conclude about the idea of “son of God” as used in the Bible?

3. Read the following passages and complete the table by indicating what the passage says about Jesus.

Passage	What does the passage say about Jesus?
<i>Acts 9:20</i>	<i>He is the Son of God</i>
1John 5:1, 5	
Mat 11:25-30	
Mat 17:5	
Heb 1:1-3, 5, 8	
John 1:14, 18, 34	
John 3:16	

4. Based on your answers added to the table above, what can you say about Jesus?

5. How does the reference to Jesus as the Son of God (in the above table) differ from the use of “son of God” that is used to describe others? (In what ways is Jesus different?)

“When you beget, you beget something of the same kind as yourself. A man begets human babies, a beaver begets little beavers, and a bird begets eggs which turn into little birds. But when you make (or create), you make something of a different kind from yourself. A bird makes a nest, a beaver builds a dam, and man makes a wireless set (or a computer).” C.S Lewis

“In that culture, a dignitary's adult son was deemed equal in stature and privilege with his father. The same deference demanded by a king was afforded to his adult son. The son was, after all, of the very same essence as his father, heir to all the father's rights and privileges--and therefore equal in every significant regard.” (John MacArthur)

So how do we explain this concept?

I. Strongly object to Jesus being the physical son of God

- The Bible does not teach that God the Father got married and had a baby! That is blasphemy! (استغفر الله!)
- Almighty God is not a man or a physical being, so such a thing is unthinkable! The term, “Son of God” is used in a spiritual sense.

II. Explain the symbolic language. When the Bible speaks of Jesus as the Son, it is using metaphysical or spiritual language (مجازي, روعي). Provide examples taken from other sources (in other words to show that we do this all the time in everyday language):

- Son of the road (ابن السبيل) = a traveller
- Son of the Nile (ابن النيل) = an Egyptian
- Son of the country (ابن الوطن/البلد) = a citizen of the country
- Son of the lock (ابن قفل) = a key
- Daughter of the lips (بنت الشفاه) = a person's words

III. Explain the meaning of the term that was developed from the review of the biblical passages in the tables above.

- When the Bible refers to Jesus as the Son of God it shows a special relationship between Him and God the Father.
 - He is God's *unique* son (Jn 3:16)
 - He is different than the prophets (Matt 21:33-46; Luke 20:9-19)
 - His is like the Father (Jn 1:18; Heb 1:3; Jn 5:19-21, 26; Jn 10:36-38, Col 1:5)
- He shows us what the Father is like
 - He came from the Father (John 1:14; 8:23, 42, 16:28; 6:38,51)
 - He was conceived by God through the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:34, 35)

IV. Go to the Bible

- Christianity and Islam are both revealed religions. Let them see that what you believe is grounded in your holy book.
- Explain that you refer to Jesus as the Son of God because the Bible calls him the Son of God. Explain that you have no right to deny he is the Son of God when God Himself says he is! Find two passages from the Bible that affirm this.
 - A.
 - B.

V. Appeal to the sovereign power of God to reveal Himself as He wishes

- Q. Is anything too hard for God (Gen 18:14a, Jer 32:27, Matt 19:26, Mark 10:27)?
A. No
- Q. Is it therefore possible that God could reveal Himself in human form?
A. Yes, of course. Because nothing is impossible for God.

C. Objection 2 – The Bible is Unreliable

The second objection to the Christian faith we will look at is the question of the integrity of the Bible. In responding to this objection, we will first look briefly at why many from the majority religion believe the Bible is not trustworthy. Then we will look at biblical and extra-biblical arguments to respond to this objection.

Many are quick to criticize the Bible as the Christian faith's reference primarily due to the fact that the Qur'an and the Bible do not agree – especially with regard to the person and work of Jesus Christ. According to Islamic doctrine, God gave messages to certain of his prophets which served to complete and replace the message of the previous ones. In keeping with this view of religious history then, the message of Mohammad, the Qur'an, came to complete that of Jesus, the Injil. However, the conflict arises when the Injil and Qur'an are compared on a number of matters upon which they disagree. Many from the majority religion answer this disagreement with the claim that the Bible has been changed, and the Christian (and to a lesser degree, Jewish) faith has been built upon this "corrupted" reading.

"In the first four centuries after Muhammad (600 - 1000 AD) no Muslim theologian seriously contended that the Gospel texts were not authentic. They might accuse Christians of giving a wrong interpretation to the words; [but] they would not dispute the words themselves. As studies of Muslim apologetics have shown it was only with Ibn-Khazem who died at Cordoba in 1064, that the charge of falsification was born."
(Hans Wijngaards)

The Qur'an itself raises this concept of corruption in the following passages:

“There is among them a section who distort the Book with their tongues (as they read). You would think it is a part of the Book, but it is no part of the Book; and they say, ‘That is from God,’ but it is not from God. It is they who tell a lie against God, and (well) they know it!” (Sura 3:78)

“God did aforetime take a covenant with the children of Israel...But because of their breach of their covenant, we cursed them, and made their hearts grow hard. They change the words from their (right) places and forget a good part of the message that was sent them...the Jews – men who will listen to any lie, - will listen even to others who have never so much as come to thee. They change the words from their (right) times and places...” (Sura 5:13,14,44)

“And remember God took a covenant from the People of the Book, to make it known and clear to mankind, and not to hide it. But they threw it away behind their backs, and purchased with it some miserable gain! And vile was the bargain they made!” (Sura 3:187)

“And when there came to them an apostle from God, confirming what was with them, a part of the people of the Book threw away the Book of God behind their backs, as if (it had been something) they did not know.” (Sura 2:101)

A second reason why Muslims contend that the Bible has been changed can be related to the reality that the Bible exists in many different translations and languages – an effort to bring the Word of God into the World of as many people as possible. However, many see this as a manipulation of the text as it stands in stark contrast to the Islamic commitment to retain the Qur’an in its “original” Arabic form.

A third reason that many from the majority religion claim that the Bible is no longer credible is reflected in a special literary device commonly known as the “Law of Abrogation” by which new revelation would be adopted to cancel previous revelation. Reference to this idea can be found in the following passages of the Qur’an.

“None of our revelations do we abrogate or cause to be forgotten, but we substitute something better or similar; knowest thou not that Allah hath power over all things?” (Sura 2:106)

“When we substitute one revelation for another, and Allah knows what he reveals (in stages); They say, ‘Thou are but a forger’, but most of them know not.” (Sura 16:101)

The existence of this doctrine in Islam is wrongly projected onto the Christian faith as well. And so, later revelation (ie...Islam) can not only serve to complete, but also to replace and correct, previous revelation.

A fourth reason for this conclusion that the Bible cannot be trusted lies in the fact that much of what is published under the guise of modern criticism of the Bible by so-called “Christians” reflects efforts to de-mystify and redefine the biblical text. Muslims are amazed by the range of criticism and interpretation that so-called biblical scholars offer in

explanation of biblical texts and doctrines. And many conclude that if Christians can't agree on their own Bible, it must not be trustworthy for anyone else either.

Our response to this objection.

First, let's look at what the Bible says about itself.

1. Read the following passages and complete the table by indicating what the Bible says about itself

Passage	What does the Bible say about itself?
<i>Mat 24:35</i>	<i>The word of Jesus will never pass away</i>
Ps 119: 89, 152	
Ecc 3:14	
Isa 40:8	
1Pet 3:23-25	

2. Based on these passages, what can you say about the Bible?

3. If the Bible affirms the fact that it is from God and preserved by God, what must one conclude about God then if the Bible has been found to be changed?

4. How is this conclusion about God incompatible with the Christian faith?

A second response can seek to engage your Muslim friend in reading the Bible for himself; especially the words and works of Jesus.

5. Read the following passages and complete the table by answering the questions which follow.

Passage	Who does Jesus say He is?
<i>John 4:24-26</i>	<i>Jesus declares Himself to be the Messiah – the anointed one of God</i>

John 6:35-40	
John 8:12-18	
John 10:7-10	
John 11:24-26	
John 14:6,7	

6. Based on your answers from the passages listed in the table, in your own words summarize who Jesus says that He is.

7. One of the measures of a prophet (for both Christianity and Islam) is his integrity. In other words prophets do not lie. If Jesus, as prophet, said these things about Himself, what does this suggest about who he is?

A third response can seek to probe the basis for the accusation that the Bible has been changed. This can be done in two ways, first by asking for evidence, and secondly by arguing from the historical record.

I. We can first ask for evidence for the claims against the Bible by asking the following questions.

- What did the original text say?
- What precisely was changed?
- Who made the changes?
- When were these changes made?
- How were these changes made?
- Where were these changes made?
- For what reason was this passage changed?
- Does Islam have access to the original Bible so that we may compare it to what we have today to verify the changes?
- Do you have proof for this accusation?

II. We can also appeal to the historical record by asking our Muslim friend to consider this.

- The Qu'ran says that the previous books (which includes the Torah, the Psalms and the Injil) were God's words:

"...And He sent down the Law (of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus) before this as a guide to mankind..." (Sura 3:3)

"But why do they come to thee for decision, when they have (their own) Law before them? Therein is the (plain) command of God; yet even after that, they would turn away, for they are not (really) people of faith. It was We who revealed the Law (to Moses). Therein was [all other translators use "is"!] guidance and light... Say: 'O People of the Book! Ye have no ground to stand upon unless ye stand fast by the Law, the Gospel, and all the revelation that has come to you from your Lord.'" (Sura 5:46, 47, 71, 68) [see also 5:48-50; 4:47,136]

- The Qu'ran says that God's words cannot be changed:

"No one can alter the words of God" (Sura 6:34)

"No one change the words of God" (Sura 10:64)

"To thee We sent the Scripture in truth, confirming the scripture that came before it, and guarding it in safety..." (Sura 5:48)

"The Word of thy Lord doth find its fulfillment in truth and in justice; None can change His words..." (Sura 6:115)

- Muhammad told his followers that if they had doubts to consult the people who read the book before them. (*"If thou were in doubt as to what We have revealed unto thee, then ask those who have been reading the Book from before thee..."* Sura 10:94). Why would he recommend this, if the people who read the Book (the Old and New Testaments – and so, the Jews and Christians) if he thought that their book was no longer reliable?
- Finally, lead them through this logic:
 1. Ask them if the Bible was corrupted before or after Muhammad
 2. If they say, it was changed before Muhammad, then appeal to the verses in the Qur'an which say the Taurat and Injil were the Word of Allah in the time of Muhammad (see above) – which was preserved by Allah and could not be changed. And so if the Bible was changed before the time of Mohammad and the Qur'an, why does the Qu'ran not say this?
 3. If they say, it was changed after Muhammad, then mention that we have many ancient copies of the Bible in the original Hebrew and Greek which pre-date Muhammad. Also the Bible was translated into various ancient languages before Muhammad, such as: Greek Septuagint in the 2nd century B.C., Latin Vulgate 382-390 A.D., Armenian 400 A.D. and Syrian 500 A.D. When we compare all these with modern copies of the Bible, we find the message is unchanged.

4. If it was changed after the Qu'ran and Mohammad then where is the evidence? For if this were the case then this is what would have had to happen... all the known scriptures (already existing in many languages by the 7th century [including Arabic], would have had to be identified, the passages in question, changed [in all the copies and all the existing languages in every location] and the "corrupt texts [the unchanged texts]" destroyed. The problem is nowhere in the extant historical literature, neither in Christian, Jewish nor Islamic sources is such a campaign ever described or documented! So if the Bible was changed, who did it and where is the process described?

D. Objection 3 – Jesus did not die on the Cross.

The third and final objection to the Christian faith that we will look at here is the issue of the death and resurrection of Jesus. There is real conflict with the idea the Jesus ever died on the cross. For some, the question of the resurrection poses the greater problem. To answer this objection, we will first review why Muslims object to this idea of Jesus death on the cross as well as some of the alternative scenarios to Jesus' end of life that they propose. Second we will review what the Bible says about this. To conclude we will propose a response to the objection.

Muslims oppose this idea that Jesus died on the cross for several reasons that are related to Islamic convictions regarding the sovereignty of God and the depravity of man. In short, the Islamic doctrine of sovereignty is based upon the idea of the all powerful nature of Allah. *"Say, who then can do aught against Allah, if He had willed to destroy the Messiah son of Mary, and his mother and everyone on Earth? Allah's is the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them. He createth what He will: And Allah is able to do all things."* (Sura 5:17). In light of this text, because the sovereign Allah has control over all things, he would not have allowed Jesus, His servant, to undergo such a death. Such a scenario would call into question His sovereignty. A related objection to Jesus death suggests that death by crucifixion is such a humiliating and agonizing one, that it is beyond the dignity of Allah to have allowed such a thing; it is equally beyond the realm of possibility that a prophet of Allah would die in this way.

With regards to the Christian concept of the substitutionary atonement of Christ's death for sin, Islam is categorically opposed to the idea of original sin or that sin somehow separates man from Allah. Islam teaches that children are born innocent and that each one is shaped by family, culture and society to become what he will become. Those who depart from the right path (that is, the path of Islam) do so as a result of imperfect education. And so, in the eyes of Muslims, the Christian claim that Jesus' death was both real and necessary as the only suitable response to sin, finds no support. For them, if Jesus was indeed crucified, he was no prophet.

However, with regard to the rest of the story of Jesus' life, the Qur'an does acknowledge that:

- Jesus would die: *“Behold! Allah said: ‘O Jesus! I will take thee and raise thee to myself and clear thee of falsehoods of those who blaspheme; I will make those who follow thee superior to those who reject faith. To the Day of Resurrection: Then shall ye all return to me, and I will judge between you of the matters wherein ye dispute.”* (Sura 3:55)
- Jesus would one day rise from the dead: *“So peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day that I shall be raised up to life again!”* (Sura 19:33)

In response to the Christian insistence that Jesus died on the cross, Muslims (and some others as well) have proposed several alternative solutions, commonly known as substitution theories. The two most popular substitution theories suggest that Simon Iscariot, the one who betrayed Jesus, was crucified in Jesus place and that several hours later Allah took Jesus up into Heaven to Himself.

According to theory A, Jesus was with His disciples prior to the confrontation with the religious authorities. Upon exiting the place where they were meeting, the form and image of Jesus came upon Judas who was mistakenly arrested and subsequently crucified. (a similar theory suggests that the form and image of Jesus came upon all the disciples, and it so happened that Judas was arrested)

According to theory B, upon exiting the place where they were meeting, there was a mix-up in the dark, and the authorities, instead of arresting Jesus, arrested Judas, who was subsequently crucified. Jesus was then taken up into Heaven by Allah.

Our response to this objection.

To respond to this objection to the Christian faith, we will look first at what the Bible says about Jesus death and resurrection. Then we will compare this against the Muslim basis for objecting. To begin lets look at the evidence that the Bible offers with regard to Jesus’ death on the cross. In addition to the actual crucifixion accounts the following additional facts must be taken into account.

1. First it must be acknowledged that certain Old Testament prophets predicted the death of the Messiah.

- a. Read the following passages and complete the table by indicating what they tell us about the death of the Messiah.

Passage	What does the passage tell us about the death of the Messiah?
<i>Ps 22:16-18</i>	<i>The Messiah will have hands and feet pierced, his body uncovered and his clothes divided by lot</i>
<i>Isa 53:5-10</i>	
<i>Dan 9:26</i>	

Zech 12:10	
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b. Based on your answers to the question as recorded above, summarize what the Old Testament prophets tell us about the death of the Messiah.

2. Next it must be noted that Jesus Himself predicted his own death on some 21 separate occasions.

a. Read the following passages and complete the table by noting what they tell us about Jesus prediction of his own death.

Passage	What does Jesus say about his death?
Mat 12:39-40	<i>The Son of Man will be three days and three nights buried in the earth</i>
Mat 17:12	
Mark 10:45	
Luke 12:50	
Luke 13:34, 35	
Luke 17:25	
John 3:14	
John 10:15-18	

b. Based on your answers to the question as recorded above, summarize what Jesus tells us about His own death.

3. In addition to the testimony of the Old Testament prophets and Jesus himself, other non-followers were involved and observed what took place on that day.

a. Read John 19:31-34.

i. Who is involved in verifying Jesus' death?

ii. What are they intending to do to bodies to accelerate and “guarantee” death?

iii. What did they do, and not do, to Jesus? Why or why not?

b. Read Mark 15:29 – 32.

i. Who is involved here in observing the crucifixion of Jesus?

ii. What do they do with regards to Jesus?

c. Read Mark 15:42-45

i. Summarize what Mark is describing here in your own words.

ii. What proof does Pilate get that Jesus is already dead?

iii. Based on this information, what does Pilate do?

d. Based on the information collected from John 19 and Mark 15, what can be said about how the Roman and Jewish authorities knew that Jesus had been crucified?

From the biblical accounts, there seems to be more than ample evidence that indeed Jesus did die on the cross in keeping with prophets and Jesus own prediction. For our Muslim friends who struggle to accept the testimony of the Bible, being convinced that it is no longer reliable, this evidence may not suffice. If this is the case, another line of reasoning can be adopted which argues that:

- If Jesus did not die as He predicted then this would make him a liar. As noted above, on 21 separate occasions Jesus predicted his own death. If he did not die, then he

was sorely mistaken (which would reduce his stature) or he lied (which would negate his prophethood).

- If Jesus did not die as predicted then this would make the Old Testament prophets also unreliable. For as we noted, David, Daniel, Isaiah, Zechariah all spoke distinctly of the death of the Messiah. In some cases, the details are strikingly evident in the New Testament accounts of the event.
- If Jesus did not die as predicted, and instead Judas died in his place in some sort of mix up or transferred identity, what does this convey of God the Father who orchestrated the events? Does not this scenario make God out to be a conniving, manipulative agent, who resorted to trickery to rescue His Son?
- Jesus' death and resurrection do not display any weakness in God but rather His divine power to overcome and defeat death in behalf of a lost and helpless humanity. (John 10:18; Rom 1.4)

E. Application Activity #3

1. Make a list of at least five objections or significant misunderstandings about biblical faith in Christ that are commonly held by nonbelievers you come in contact with.

2. Choose one of these objections and write a response in 2-3 paragraphs:

a. In the first paragraph, identify the underlying problem or the reasoning behind the objection.

b. Then in the following 1-2 paragraphs, write your response to the objection, addressing the underlying problem with a biblical answer. Make sure you cite biblical passages to support your answer.

Lesson 9: Being a faithful witness for Christ in the face of persecution

Introduction

As we approach the end of this course, we want to take some time to consider the reality that, in many instances, being a witness will be met with opposition, even persecution. Peter in his first letter says, *“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed.”* (1Pet 4:12-13). Paul admits a similar idea when in his second letter to Timothy he says, *“Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”* (2Tim 3:12) But as we noted earlier, this is nothing different than what Jesus already said, *“If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.”* (John 15:20)

The threat of persecution varies from place to place and over time throughout history as the place of the Christian faith in a given society evolves. When we consider this reality for us as witnesses, two primary questions are raised. First of all, how open should we be about our faith, knowing that at some point we will draw attention to ourselves, and perhaps with that attention, be persecuted? And secondly, what should we do and say when faced with persecution?

Before we take time to look more closely at this reality, let us take a minute to look again at a definition of the word. What is *persecution*? According to the Webster’s On-line Dictionary, persecution is “the act of harassing or punishing in a manner designed to injure, grieve, or afflict; *specifically* : to cause to suffer because of belief”. From this definition we see clearly that the so-called “cause” or “reason” for persecution, is the belief (which could be religious or political or other).

From Scripture, and especially the New Testament, we can compile a similar definition and at the same time, we can identify what persecution is not. 1 Peter 4:12-16 says, *“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.”*

From this passage we can see that persecution is what Peter describes here as “suffering as a Christian” (v.11). It is worth noting as well that Peter goes on to warn his readers that Christians should not confuse persecution – for which he notes, the Christian is blessed – with poor behaviour - which he describes here as murder, thievery, evildoing, or troublesome meddling – which deserve appropriate sanction.

In the end, the Christian who suffers because of his faith is to glorify God. But though the “logic” of this may be evident from this text, how can a Christian find joy in suffering? What

does the Christian have to know and do so that when faced with persecution, God is indeed glorified?

A. Learn to face persecution from the example of Jesus

In an effort to respond to these and other related questions, we want to first look to Jesus, his life and ministry, and to learn from how he responded to persecution and what he taught about it. Since the persecution that marked Jesus' life ended it as well, let us start first by looking at what He taught on the subject.

I. What did Jesus say?

1. Among other things essential to the Christian life, Jesus spoke candidly about persecution.

a. Read the following passages and complete the table by noting what Jesus said about persecution.

Passage	What did Jesus say about Persecution?
Mat 5:10	<i>Those who are persecuted will be blessed - the Kingdom of Heaven is given or prepared for them</i>
Mat 5:11-12	
Mat 5:44	
Mat 10:16-18	
Mat 10:19-20	
Mat 10:21-22	
Mark 13:9-11	

b. In your own words, summarize what Jesus taught about persecution.

c. How does Jesus say the Christian should treat the one(s) who is(are) persecuting him?

II. What did Jesus do?

It makes sense, given the central role that these events played in Jesus' life and that of salvation history, that each of the Gospel writers devoted a significant portion of their Gospel to the persecution of Jesus which led ultimately to his death on the cross. By taking a look at some of the details related to this period in Jesus' life, we can learn several important things about persecution and how to respond to it.

2. Read Mat 26:57-62.

a. Describe the scene in your own words.

b. What kinds of evidence and accusations are being brought against Jesus?

3. Read Mat 26:63-68

a. What new accusation/question does the High Priest bring against Jesus?

b. How does Jesus respond?

c. How does the High Priest react to Jesus' response?

d. What happens next to Jesus?

A careful reading of the Matthew and Luke's gospel will indicate that following this encounter with Caiaphas, the High Priest, Jesus would stand trial before Pontius Pilate, the Governor of Judea (Mat 27:1-2, 11-25), Herod Antipas, the ruler (tetrarch) of Galilee (Luke 23:6-12) and then again before Pilate (Luke 23:11, 13-25, before finally being flogged and crucified by Roman executioners.

4. Read Mat 27: 11-14 and 22-25. What is the reason given in these passages that Jesus is delivered to be crucified?

5. Read Luke 23:1-6. What are the reasons given in this passage that compels Pilate to hand Jesus over to Herod?

The evidence given against Jesus in these passages is of two kinds; either false accusations based upon misunderstood or exaggerated claims (he misleads our nation, he forbids us to pay taxes to Caesar) or, affirmations that He is the Son of God and King of the Jews. The first group of accusations should have been (and likely) was rejected as insufficient evidence (Matthew 26: 59 says that the Chief Priests and Sanhedrin were trying to find people willing to falsely accuse Jesus.) The second group of accusations, concerning Jesus' role and

authority could have shown him to be in rebellion against Caesar—a charge, which if true, would have been worthy of death.

6. Read Mat 27: 11-14. How did Jesus reply to the accusations that were leveled against him?

7. Read Luke 23:13-16. What does Pilate (and Herod, cf. v. 15) conclude about Jesus' guilt or innocence of all charges brought against him?

8. Read Luke 23:17-25. Why does Pilate surrender Jesus to be crucified?

9. Based on these passages, explain why you think Jesus persecution (arrest, trials and crucifixion) was or was not "legitimate"?

10. Take some time to think about this question, then discuss it with a friend before recording your best answer. What did Jesus know that made it possible for him to endure the evil treatment and crucifixion that marked the last days of his life?

B. Learn to face persecution from the example of the Apostle Paul

The Apostle Paul in a very well-known passage in 2 Corinthians describes what his life of ministry had cost him. In response to those who questioned the legitimacy of his apostleship, he replied, *"Are they servants of Christ?—I speak as if insane—I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure."* (2Corinthians 11:23-27)

Persecution for Paul was not just theoretical, it was real, if not a near-daily experience for him, and likely resulted in his death under the Emperor Nero. Providentially, God used persecution, in terms of time spent in jail, to give Paul time and undistracted attention, to

write several important epistles of the New Testament (Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon).

Let's begin by looking at some of Paul's experiences with persecution to see what we can learn.

1. Read Acts 16:16-26.

a. In your own words, briefly describe what happened to Paul and Silas.

b. Why had they been arrested?

c. What was their response?

2. Read Acts 9:19b-25

a. In your own words, briefly describe what happened to Paul.

b. Why were the Jews against him?

c. What did Paul do, with the help of certain disciples?

3. Read Acts 16:25-30,35-39

a. We have already seen how earlier in this chapter, Paul and Silas were found singing praise to God despite their imprisonment. Now, faced with release, Paul reacts. What does Paul say to the police sent by the magistrates to set them free?

b. Why did Paul do this?

From these examples taken from Paul's life, we can see at least three different reactions to persecution: accept it, flee and confront it. Take some time to think about these three

responses, then find a friend to discuss your thoughts before finally recoding your best answer to the question.

4. When is it appropriate to apply the above responses of Paul to threats of persecution today?

C. And what about revenge?

It may be a normal response to consider getting revenge on those who persecute you. After all this is somewhat expected and a way to defend yourself and that of your family: to show that you are a “man” and not someone easily mistreated. But what does the Bible have to say about this?

1. Read Matthew 5:43-48.

a. What two things does Jesus say we are to do to and for those who are our enemies and persecute us? (v. 44)

b. In verses 45-48, Jesus gives four reasons in why we are supposed to act in this way. What are they?

c. Ultimately what spiritual truth should enable us to refrain from taking revenge on others? (cf. Ps 37:27-28,37-38)

2. Describe how revenge has been a part of your own life or that of your family.

3. If you were to take these words of Jesus about revenge seriously how would your choice to stop taking revenge affect your relationships with the members of your family, colleagues at work or at school?

D. Lessons from Persecution

To conclude this lesson on persecution, it is important to review some essential principles concerning the place of persecution in the scope of God’s plan for our lives. Despite the difficulties – even death – that can result from persecution, God remains the Sovereign Lord

of the Universe and our Great Shepherd. As such, nothing, regardless of how terrible or terrifying it may be, can result in our being ripped away from the love of God.

The first principle to be reminded of is that persecution is a normal part of the Christian life.

1. Read the following passages and complete the table by indicating what the passage says about persecution.

Passage	What does the Bible say about persecution?
John 15:20	<i>Because the slave is not greater than his master, because they persecuted Jesus, they will also persecute us</i>
2Tim 3:12	
1Pet 4:12 - 13	

a. From these passages above, what can you conclude about who is the likely target of persecution?

b. Why are followers of Jesus persecuted?

c. If persecution is related to our faith, what can you conclude about the “normalcy” of persecution for the Christian? Is persecution normal or not? Briefly defend your answer.

The second principle to be reminded of is that persecution is purposeful. In other words, the results of persecution can serve to build up the Body of Christ and advance the reach of the Gospel. To Tertullian, one of the Church Fathers and a North African, is credited the comment, “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church” (Apologeticus, Chapter 50), by which he suggested that in the death of the saints, the church prospers. Let’s take a look at two different ways that persecution can be purposeful.

2. Read Phil 1:12-14

a. From verse 14, what does Paul say has happened to the Christians that have been aware of his imprisonment?

b. Why do you think this is happening? What about Paul being in prison encourages the other believers? Why are they more bold?

3. Read Phil 1:12-18.

a. In addition to the encouragement and boldness that his imprisonment has given to the Christians, what else does Paul say has resulted from his time in jail?

b. How does persecution result in the spreading of the Gospel?

The third principle to be reminded of is that persecution (and the resultant suffering that comes from it) is temporary.

4. Read 2Cor 4:16-18.

a. How does Paul describe the effect of persecution?

b. In what sense can we say that persecution is temporary? Temporary as compared to what?

The fourth principle to be reminded of is that persecution produces glory for us.

5. Read 2Cor 4:16-18.

a. What does Paul say results from our sufferings (what Paul here refers to as “affliction”? (v. 17)

b. Read Rom 8:18. What does Paul say about our sufferings when compared to glory that is being prepared for us?

E. Let's be practical.

In conclusion, take some time to think about these questions then discuss them with a fellow student or friend. Once you have discussed and prayed, thanking God for His grace and help in face of persecution, record your best answer.

1. What attitude of Jesus should I adopt when faced with persecution?

2. What reasons can I give for facing persecution with a calm heart?

3. On what basis can I be confident that persecution results in the glory of God?

Appendix 1: Augustine of Hippo

Augustine of Hippo (November 13, 354 – August 28, 430), was Bishop of Hippo Regius (present-day Annaba, Algeria). He was a Latin philosopher and theologian from Roman Africa. His writings were very influential in the development of Western Christianity.

Early childhood

Augustine was born in 354 in the municipium of Thagaste (now Souk Ahras, Algeria) in Roman Africa. His father, Patricius, was a pagan, and his mother, Monica, was Christian. Scholars believe that Augustine's ancestors included Berbers, Latins and Phoenicians. Augustine's family had been Roman, from a legal standpoint, for at least a century when he was born. It is assumed that his mother, Monica, was of Berber origin, on the basis of her name, but as his family were *honestiores*, Augustine's first language is likely to have been Latin. At the age of 11, he was sent to school at Madaurus (now M'Daourouch), a small Numidian city about 19 miles south of Thagaste. There he became familiar with Latin literature, as well as pagan beliefs and practices. While at home in 369 and 370, he read Cicero's dialogue *Hortensius* (now lost), which he described as leaving a lasting impression on him and sparking his interest in philosophy.

Studying at Carthage

At age 17, through the generosity of fellow citizen Romanianus, Augustine went to Carthage to continue his education in rhetoric. Although raised as a Christian, Augustine left the church to follow the Manichaean religion, much to the despair of his mother, Monica. As a youth Augustine lived a hedonistic lifestyle for a time, associating with young men who boasted of their sexual exploits with women and urged the inexperienced boys, like Augustine, to seek out experiences or to make up stories about experiences in order to gain acceptance and avoid ridicule. It was during this period that he uttered his famous prayer, "Grant me chastity and continence, but not yet". At a young age, he began an affair with a young woman in Carthage. She was his lover for over thirteen years and gave birth to his son Adeodatus, who was said to have been extremely intelligent.

Teaching rhetoric

During the years 373 and 374, Augustine taught grammar at Thagaste. The following year he moved to Carthage to conduct a school of rhetoric, and would remain there for the next nine years. Disturbed by the unruly behavior of the students in Carthage, in 383 he moved to establish a school in Rome, where he believed the best and brightest rhetoricians practiced. However, Augustine was disappointed with the Roman schools, where he was met with apathy. Once the time came for his students to pay their fees they simply fled. Manichaean friends introduced him to the prefect of the City of Rome, Symmachus, who had been asked to provide a professor of rhetoric for the imperial court at Milan.

While he was in Milan, Augustine's life changed. While still at Carthage, he had begun to move away from Manichaeism, in part because of a disappointing meeting with the Manichean Bishop, Faustus of Mileve, a key exponent of Manichaean theology. In Rome, he

is reported to have completely turned away from Manichaeism, and instead embraced the scepticism of the New Academy movement. At Milan, his mother pressured him to become a Christian. Augustine's own studies in Neoplatonism were also leading him in this direction, and his friend Simplicianus urged him that way as well. But it was the bishop of Milan, Ambrose, who had most influence over Augustine. Ambrose was a master of rhetoric like Augustine himself, but older and more experienced.

Augustine's mother had followed him to Milan and he allowed her to arrange a society marriage, for which he abandoned his concubine. It is believed that Augustine truly loved the woman he had lived with for so long. In his "Confessions," he expressed how deeply he was hurt by ending this relationship, and also admitted that the experience eventually produced a decreased sensitivity to pain over time. However, he had to wait two years until his fiancée came of age, so despite the grief he felt over leaving "The One", as he called her, he soon took another concubine. Augustine eventually broke off his engagement to his eleven-year-old fiancée, but never renewed his relationship with "The One" and soon left his second concubine.

Christian conversion

In the summer of 386, after having heard the story of Placianus about his and his friends' first reading of the life of Saint Anthony of the Desert, which greatly inspired him, Augustine underwent a profound personal crisis, leading him to convert to catholic Christianity, abandon his career in rhetoric, quit his teaching position in Milan, give up any ideas of marriage, and devote himself entirely to serving God and to the practices of priesthood, which included celibacy. According to Augustine his conversion was prompted by a childlike voice he heard telling him in a sing-song voice, "Take up and read."

As I was saying this and weeping in the bitter agony of my heart, suddenly I heard a voice from the nearby house chanting as if it might be a boy or a girl (I do not know which), saying and repeating over and over again 'Pick up and read, pick up and read.' At once my countenance changed, and I began to think intently whether there might be some sort of children's game in which such a chant is used. But I could not remember having heard of one. I checked the flood of tears and stood up. I interpreted it solely as a divine command to me to open the book and read the first chapter I might find. For I had heard how Antony happened to be present at the gospel reading, and took it as an admonition addressed to himself when the words were read: 'Go, sell all you have, give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me'. By such an inspired utterance he was immediately 'converted to you' (Ps. 50.15). So I hurried back to the place where Alypius was sitting. There I had put down the book of the apostle when I got up. I seized it, opened it and in silence read the first passage on which my eyes lit: 'Not in riots and drunken parties, not in eroticism and indecencies, not in strife and rivalry, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in its lusts'. I neither wished nor needed to read further. At once, with the last words of this sentence, it was as if a light of relief from all anxiety flooded into my heart. All the shadows of doubt were dispelled.

— *The Confessions of Saint Augustine, Book VIII, Paragraphs 28 and 29.*^[36]

Priesthood

Upon his return to North Africa Augustine sold his patrimony and gave the money to the poor. The only thing he kept was the family house, which he converted into a monastic foundation for himself and a group of friends. In 391 he was ordained a priest in Hippo Regius (now Annaba, in Algeria). He became a famous preacher (more than 350 preserved sermons are believed to be authentic), and was noted for combating the Manichaean religion, to which he had formerly adhered.

In 395 he was made coadjutor Bishop of Hippo, and became full Bishop shortly thereafter. He remained in this position until his death in 430. Augustine worked tirelessly in trying to convince the people of Hippo to convert to Christianity. He left his monastery, but continued to lead a monastic life in the episcopal residence. He left a *regula* his monastery that has led him to be designated the "patron saint of regular clergy"

Much of Augustine's later life was recorded by his friend Possidius, bishop of Calama (present-day Guelma, Algeria), in his *Sancti Augustini Vita*. Possidius admired Augustine as a man of powerful intellect and a stirring orator who took every opportunity to defend Christianity against its detractors. Possidius also described Augustine's personal traits in detail, drawing a portrait of a man who ate sparingly, worked tirelessly, despised gossip, shunned the temptations of the flesh, and exercised prudence in the financial stewardship of his see.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustine_of_Hippo

Appendix 2: Martin Luther

Martin Luther (10 November 1483 – 18 February 1546) was a German monk, priest, professor of theology and iconic figure of the Protestant Reformation. He strongly disputed the claim that freedom from God's punishment for sin could be purchased with money. He confronted indulgence salesman Johann Tetzel with his *Ninety-Five Theses* in 1517. His refusal to retract all of his writings at the demand of Pope Leo X in 1520 and the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V at the Diet of Worms in 1521 resulted in his excommunication by the pope and condemnation as an outlaw by the Emperor.

Birth and education

Martin Luther was born to *Hans Luder* and his wife Margarethe on 10 November 1483 in Eisleben, Germany, then part of the Holy Roman Empire. He was baptized as a Catholic the next morning on the feast day of St. Martin of Tours. He had several brothers and sisters, and is known to have been close to one of them, Jacob. Hans Luther was ambitious for himself and his family, and he was determined to see Martin, his eldest son, become a lawyer. He sent Martin to Latin schools in Mansfeld, then Magdeburg in 1497, where he attended a school operated by a lay group called the Brethren of the Common Life, and Eisenach in 1498. In 1501, at the age of nineteen, he entered the University of Erfurt from which he received his master's degree in 1505.

In accordance with his father's wishes, Luther enrolled in law school at the same university that year but dropped out almost immediately, believing that law represented uncertainty. Luther sought assurances about life and was drawn to theology and philosophy, expressing particular interest in Aristotle, William of Ockham, and Gabriel Biel. Philosophy proved to be unsatisfying, offering assurance about the use of reason but none about loving God, which to Luther was more important. Reason could not lead men to God, he felt, and he thereafter developed a love-hate relationship with Aristotle over the latter's emphasis on reason. For Luther, reason could be used to question men and institutions, but not God. Human beings could learn about God only through divine revelation, he believed, and Scripture therefore became increasingly important to him.

Monastic and academic life

Luther dedicated himself to monastic life, devoting himself to fasting, long hours in prayer, pilgrimage, and frequent confession. He would later remark, "If anyone could have gained heaven as a monk, then I would indeed have been among them." Luther described this period of his life as one of deep spiritual despair.

In 1507, he was ordained to the priesthood, and in 1508 began teaching theology at the University of Wittenberg. He received a Bachelor's degree in Biblical studies on 9 March 1508, and another Bachelor's degree in the *Sentences* by Peter Lombard in 1509. On 19 October 1512, he was awarded his Doctor of Theology and, on 21 October 1512, was received into the senate of the theological faculty of the University of Wittenberg, having

been called to the position of *Doctor in Bible*. He spent the rest of his career in this position at the University of Wittenberg.

The start of the Reformation

In 1516, Johann Tetzel, a Dominican friar and papal commissioner for indulgences, was sent to Germany by the Roman Catholic Church to sell indulgences to raise money to rebuild St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Roman Catholic theology stated that faith alone, cannot justify man; justification rather depends only on such faith as is active in charity and good works can justify man. The benefits of good works could be obtained by donating money to the church.

On 31 October 1517, Luther wrote to his bishop, Albert of Mainz, protesting the sale of indulgences. He enclosed in his letter a copy of his "Disputation of Martin Luther on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences," which came to be known as *The Ninety-Five Theses*. Luther objected to a saying attributed to Johann Tetzel that "As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory [also attested as 'into heaven'] springs." He insisted that, since forgiveness was God's alone to grant, those who claimed that indulgences absolved buyers from all punishments and granted them salvation were in error. Christians, he said, must not slacken in following Christ on account of such false assurances.

It was not until January 1518 that friends of Luther translated the *95 Theses* from Latin into German, printed, and widely copied, making the controversy one of the first in history to be aided by the printing press. Within two weeks, copies of the theses had spread throughout Germany; within two months throughout Europe. Luther's writings circulated widely, reaching France, England, and Italy as early as 1519. Students thronged to Wittenberg to hear Luther speak.

Justification by faith

From 1510 to 1520, Luther lectured on the Psalms, the books of Hebrews, Romans, and Galatians. As he studied these portions of the Bible, he came to view the use of terms such as penance and righteousness by the Catholic Church in new ways. He became convinced that the church was corrupt in its ways and had lost sight of what he saw as several of the central truths of Christianity. The most important for Luther was the doctrine of justification – God's act of declaring a sinner righteous – by faith alone through God's grace. He began to teach that salvation or redemption is a gift of God's grace, attainable only through faith in Jesus as the Messiah. "This one and firm rock, which we call the doctrine of justification," he wrote, "is the chief article of the whole Christian doctrine, which comprehends the understanding of all godliness."

Luther came to understand justification as entirely the work of God. This teaching by Luther was clearly expressed in his 1525 publication *On the Bondage of the Will*, which was written in response to *On Free Will* by Desiderius Erasmus (1524). Luther based his position on Predestination on St. Paul's epistle to the Ephesians 2:8–10. Against the teaching of his day that the righteous acts of believers are performed in *cooperation* with God, Luther wrote that Christians receive such righteousness entirely from outside themselves; that

righteousness not only comes from Christ but actually *is* the righteousness of Christ, imputed to Christians (rather than infused into them) through faith. "That is why faith alone makes someone just and fulfills the law," he wrote. "Faith is that which brings the Holy Spirit through the merits of Christ." Faith, for Luther, was a gift from God; the experience of being justified by faith was "as though I had been born again." His entry into Paradise, no less, was a discovery about "the righteousness of God" – a discovery that "the just person" of whom the Bible speaks (as in Romans 1:17) lives by faith.

Breach with the papacy

Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz and Magdeburg did not reply to Luther's letter containing the 95 Theses. He had the theses checked for heresy and in December 1517 forwarded them to Rome. He needed the revenue from the indulgences to pay off a papal dispensation for his tenure of more than one bishopric. As Luther later noted, "the pope had a finger in the pie as well, because one half was to go to the building of St Peter's Church in Rome".

Pope Leo X was used to reformers and heretics, and he responded slowly, "with great care as is proper." Over the next three years he deployed a series of papal theologians and envoys against Luther, which served only to harden the reformer's anti-papal theology. First, the Dominican theologian Sylvester Mazzolini drafted a heresy case against Luther, whom Leo then summoned to Rome. The Elector Frederick persuaded the pope to have Luther examined at Augsburg, where the Imperial Diet was held. There, in October 1518, Luther informed the papal legate Cardinal Cajetan that he did not consider the papacy part of the biblical Church, and the hearings degenerated into a shouting match. More than his writing the 95 Theses, Luther's confrontation of the church cast him as an enemy of the pope. Cajetan's original instructions had been to arrest Luther if he failed to recant, but he lacked the means in Augsburg, where the Elector guaranteed Luther's security. Luther slipped out of the city at night, without leave from Cajetan.

In January 1519, at Altenburg in Saxony, the papal *nuncio* Karl von Miltitz adopted a more conciliatory approach. Luther made certain concessions to the Saxon, who was a relative of the Elector, and promised to remain silent if his opponents did. The theologian Johann Maier von Eck, however, was determined to expose Luther's doctrine in a public forum. In June and July 1519, he staged a disputation with Luther's colleague Andreas Karlstadt at Leipzig and invited Luther to speak. Luther's boldest assertion in the debate was that Matthew 16:18 does not confer on popes the exclusive right to interpret scripture, and that therefore neither popes nor church councils were infallible. For this, Eck branded Luther a new Jan Hus, referring to the Czech reformer and heretic burned at the stake in 1415. From that moment, he devoted himself to Luther's defeat.

Excommunication

On 15 June 1520, the Pope warned Luther with the papal bull (edict) that he risked excommunication unless he recanted 41 sentences drawn from his writings, including the 95 Theses, within 60 days. That autumn, Johann Eck proclaimed the bull in Meissen and other towns. Karl von Miltitz, a papal nuncio, attempted to broker a solution, but Luther, who had sent the Pope a copy of *On the Freedom of a Christian* in October, publicly set fire to the bull

and decretals at Wittenberg on 10 December 1520, an act he defended in *Why the Pope and his Recent Book are Burned and Assertions Concerning All Articles*. As a consequence, Luther was excommunicated by Pope Leo X on 3 January 1521.

Diet of Worms

The enforcement of the ban on the 95 Theses fell to the secular authorities. On 18 April 1521, Luther appeared as ordered before the Diet of Worms. This was a general assembly of the estates of the Holy Roman Empire that took place in Worms, a town on the Rhine. It was conducted from 28 January to 25 May 1521, with Emperor Charles V presiding. Prince Frederick III, Elector of Saxony, obtained a safe conduct for Luther to and from the meeting.

Johann Eck, speaking on behalf of the Empire as assistant of the Archbishop of Trier, presented Luther with copies of his writings laid out on a table and asked him if the books were his, and whether he stood by their contents. Luther confirmed he was their author, but requested time to think about the answer to the second question. He prayed, consulted friends, and gave his response the next day: "Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. May God help me. Amen."

Over the next five days, private conferences were held to determine Luther's fate. The Emperor presented the final draft of the Diet of Worms on 25 May 1521, declaring Luther an outlaw, banning his literature, and requiring his arrest: "We want him to be apprehended and punished as a notorious heretic." It also made it a crime for anyone in Germany to give Luther food or shelter. It permitted anyone to kill Luther without legal consequence.

At Wartburg Castle

Luther's disappearance during his return trip was planned. Frederick III, Elector of Saxony, had him intercepted on his way home by masked horsemen and escorted to the security of the Wartburg Castle at Eisenach. During his stay at Wartburg, which he referred to as "my Patmos", Luther translated the New Testament from Greek into German and poured out doctrinal and polemical writings. In this work, one of his most emphatic statements on faith, he argued that every good work designed to attract God's favor is a sin. All humans are sinners by nature, he explained, and God's grace, which cannot be earned, alone can make them just.

Organising the church

By 1526, Luther found himself increasingly occupied in organizing a new church. His Biblical ideal of congregations' choosing their own ministers had proved unworkable. From 1525 to 1529, he established a supervisory church body, laid down a new form of worship service, and wrote a clear summary of the new faith in the form of two catechisms.

To avoid confusing or upsetting the people, Luther avoided extreme change. He also did not wish to replace one controlling system with another. He concentrated on the church in the Electorate of Saxony, acting only as an adviser to churches in new territories, many of which followed his Saxon model. He worked closely with the new elector, John the Steadfast, to whom he turned for secular leadership and funds on behalf of a church largely shorn of its assets and income after the break with Rome.

In response to demands for a German liturgy, Luther wrote a *German Mass*, which he published in early 1526. He did not intend it as a replacement for his 1523 adaptation of the Latin Mass but as an alternative for the "simple people", a "public stimulation for people to believe and become Christians." Luther based his order on the Catholic service but omitted "everything that smacks of sacrifice"; and the Mass became a celebration where everyone received the wine as well as the bread. He retained the elevation of the host and chalice, while trappings such as the Mass vestments, altar, and candles were made optional, allowing freedom of ceremony. Luther's service included congregational singing of hymns and psalms in German, as well as of parts of the liturgy, including Luther's unison setting of the Creed. To reach the simple people and the young, Luther incorporated religious instruction into the weekday services in the form of the catechism. He also provided simplified versions of the baptism and marriage services.

Catechisms

Luther devised the catechism as a method of imparting the basics of Christianity to the congregations. In 1529, he wrote the *Large Catechism*, a manual for pastors and teachers, as well as a synopsis, the *Small Catechism*, to be memorized by the people themselves. The catechisms provided easy-to-understand instructional and devotional material on the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Luther incorporated questions and answers in the catechism so that the basics of Christian faith would not just be learned by rote, "the way monkeys do it", but understood.

Translation of the Bible

Luther had published his German translation of the New Testament in 1522, and he and his collaborators completed the translation of the Old Testament in 1534, when the whole Bible was published. He continued to work on refining the translation until the end of his life. Luther's translation used the variant of German spoken at the Saxon chancellery, intelligible to both northern and southern Germans. He intended his vigorous, direct language to make the Bible accessible to everyday Germans, "for we are removing impediments and difficulties so that other people may read it without hindrance."

Published at a time of rising demand for German-language publications, Luther's version quickly became a popular and influential Bible translation. As such, it made a significant contribution to the evolution of the German language and literature. Furnished with notes and prefaces by Luther, and with woodcuts by Lucas Cranach that contained anti-papal imagery, it played a major role in the spread of Luther's doctrine throughout Germany. The Luther Bible influenced other vernacular translations, such as William Tyndale's English Bible (1525 forward), a precursor of the King James Bible.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Luther (consulted June 1, 2012)

Appendix 3: John of Damascus

3. Saint John of Damascus (Greek: Ἰωάννης ὁ Δαμασκηνός, *Iōannēs ho Damaskēnos*; Latin: *Ioannes Damascenus*; Arabic: يوحنا الدمشقي, ALA-LC: *Yūḥannā ad-Dimashqī*), also known as **John Damascene** and as Χρυσόροαζ / *Chrysorrhōas* (literally "streaming with gold"—i.e., "the golden speaker"; c. 675 or 676 – 4 December 749) was a Syrian monk and priest. Born and raised in Damascus, he died at his monastery, Mar Saba, near Jerusalem.

A polymath whose fields of interest and contribution included law, theology, philosophy, and music, he is said by some sources to have served as a Chief Administrator to the Muslim caliph of Damascus before his ordination. He wrote works expounding the Christian faith, and composed hymns which are still used both liturgically in Eastern Christian practice throughout the world as well as in western Lutheranism at Easter. He is one of the Fathers of the Eastern Orthodox church and is best known for his strong defense of icons. The Catholic Church regards him as a Doctor of the Church, often referred to as the *Doctor of the Assumption* due to his writings on the Assumption of Mary.

The most common source of information for the life of John of Damascus is a work attributed to one John of Jerusalem, identified therein as the Patriarch of Jerusalem. This is an excerpted translation into Greek of an earlier Arabic text. The Arabic original contains a prologue not found in most other translations, and was written by an Arab monk, Michael. Michael explained that he decided to write his biography in 1084 because none was available in his day. However, the main Arabic text seems to have been written by an earlier author sometime between the early 9th and late 10th centuries AD. Written from a hagiographical point of view and prone to exaggeration and some legendary details, it is not the best historical source for his life, but is widely reproduced and considered to contain elements of some value. The hagiographic novel *Barlaam and Josaphat*, traditionally attributed to John, is in fact a work of the 10th century.

Family background

John was born into a prominent family known as Mansour (Arabic: المنصور / *al-Manṣūr*, "the victorious one") in Damascus in the 7th century AD. His full name was Yuhanna (or Yanah) ibn Mansur ibn Sarjun (Arabic: منصور بن سرجون), named for his grandfather Mansur, who had been responsible for the taxes of the region under the Emperor Heraclius. The lack of documentation attesting to his specific tribal lineage has led a number of scholars to assign him either to the Taghlib or the Kalb, two prominent Bedouin tribes in the Syrian desert. Others suggest that he may have been of Syrian non-Arab origin. Whatever the case, John of Damascus had two names: John, his Christian name, and his Arabic name, given as *Qurein* or *Yana* or *Iyanis*. He was born during the reign of Muawiyah I.

Eutychius, a 10th-century Melkite patriarch mentions a certain Arab governor of the city who surrendered the city to the Muslims, probably John's grandfather Mansur Bin Sargun. When the region came under Arab Muslim rule in the late 7th century AD, the court at Damascus retained its large complement of Christian civil servants, John's grandfather among them. John's father, Sarjun (Sergius) or Ibn Mansur, went on to serve the Umayyad

caliphs. According to John of Jerusalem and some later versions of his life, after his father's death John also served as an official to the caliphal court before leaving to become a monk. This claim, that John actually served in a Muslim court, has been questioned since he is never mentioned in Muslim sources, which however do refer to his father Sarjun (Sergius) as a secretary in the caliphal administration. In addition, John's own writings never refer to any experience in a Muslim court. It is believed that John became a monk at Mar Saba, and that he was ordained as a priest in 735.

Education

One of the *vitae* describes his father's desire for him to "learn not only the books of the Muslims, but those of the Greeks as well." From this it has been suggested that John may have grown up bilingual. John does indeed show some knowledge of the Quran, which he criticizes harshly.

Other sources describes his education in Damascus as having been conducted in accordance with the principles of Hellenic education, termed "secular" by one source and "Classical Christian" by another. One account identifies his tutor as a monk by the name of Cosmas, who had been kidnapped by Arabs from his home in Sicily, and for whom John's father paid a great price. Under the instruction of Cosmas, who also taught John's orphan friend (the future St. Cosmas of Maiuma), John is said to have made great advances in music, astronomy and theology, soon rivalling Pythagoras in arithmetic and Euclid in geometry. As a refugee from Italy, Cosmas brought with him the scholarly traditions of Western Christianity.

Career

John had at least one and possibly two careers: one (less well-documented) as a civil servant for the Caliph in Damascus, and the other (better-attested) as a priest and monk at the Mar Saba monastery near Jerusalem. One source believes John left Damascus to become a monk around 706, when al-Walid I increased the Islamicisation of the Caliphate's administration. However, Muslim sources only mention that his father Sarjun (Sergius) left the administration around this time, and fail to name John at all. During the next two decades, culminating in the Siege of Constantinople (717-718), the Umayyad Caliphate progressively occupied the borderlands of the Byzantine Empire. An editor of John's works, Father Le Quien, has shown that John was already a monk at Mar Saba before the dispute over iconoclasm, explained below.

In the early 8th century AD, iconoclasm, a movement opposed to the veneration of icons, gained acceptance in the Byzantine court. In 726, despite the protests of St. Germanus, Patriarch of Constantinople, Emperor Leo III (who had forced the emperor to abdicate and himself assumed the throne in 717 immediately before the great siege) issued his first edict against the veneration of images and their exhibition in public places.

All agree that John of Damascus undertook a spirited defence of holy images in three separate publications. The earliest of these works, his "*Apologetic Treatises against those Decrying the Holy Images*", secured his reputation. He not only attacked the Byzantine

emperor, but adopted a simplified style that allowed the controversy to be followed by the common people, stirring rebellion among those of Christian faith. Decades after his death, John's writings would play an important role during the Second Council of Nicaea (787), which convened to settle the icon dispute.

John's biography recounts at least one episode deemed improbable or legendary. Leo III reportedly sent forged documents to the caliph which implicated John in a plot to attack Damascus. The caliph then ordered John's right hand be cut off and hung up in public view. Some days afterwards, John asked for the restitution of his hand, and prayed fervently to the Theotokos before her icon: thereupon, his hand is said to have been miraculously restored.^[24] In gratitude for this miraculous healing, he attached a silver hand to the icon, which thereafter became known as the "Three-handed", or Tricheirousa.

Last days

John died in 749 as a revered Father of the Church, and is recognized as a saint. He is sometimes called the last of the Church Fathers by the Roman Catholic Church. In 1883 he was declared a Doctor of the Church by Pope Leo XIII.

John of Damascus From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Appendix 4: Timothy I of Baghdad

Timothy I (Classical Syriac: *ܩܝܡܝܘܨ ܩܕܡܝܘܬܐ*; ṭimáteaos qadmáyá) patriarch of the Church of the East from 780 to 823, is widely considered to be one of the most impressive patriarchs in the long history of the Church of the East as well as a Father of the Church. Respected both as an author, a church leader Career

Early life and succession to the patriarchate

Timothy was a native of Hazza in Adiabene. As a young man, he studied under Abraham Bar Dashandad at the school of Bashisho in Sapsapa, in the 'Aqra district. He later became bishop of the diocese of Beth Bgash, in the metropolitan province of Adiabene, winning the respect of Abu Musa ibn Mus'ab, the Moslem governor of Mosul, and his Christian secretary Abu Nuh al-Anbari. On the death of the patriarch Hnanisho' II in 778, Timothy used a judicious mixture of bribery, deceit and (probably) murder to secure his own election as patriarch. One rival for the post was the elderly Isho'yahb, the superior of the monastery of Beth 'Abe, and Timothy first frightened him by advising him that he might not be fit enough to survive the intrigues of high office, but honored him by offering him the position of metropolitan of Adiabene. A second potential rival, Giwargis, was nominated at a synod convened by the bishop Thomas of Kashkar in the monastery of Mar Pethion in Baghdad. Giwargis enjoyed the support of the caliph al-Mahdi's Christian doctor 'Isa ibn Quraysh, and might have been a serious threat to Timothy had he not died suddenly in suspicious circumstances. Timothy then secured a majority in the subsequent ballot by promising to reward his supporters handsomely. After he was elected, he did nothing of the sort. Those who complained were told, 'The priesthood is not sold for money.

These tactics were not forgotten by his opponents, and an opposition party led by the metropolitan Joseph of Merv held a synod in the monastery of Beth Hale, in which they excommunicated Timothy and replaced Isho'yahb as metropolitan of Adiabene by Rustam, bishop of Hnitha. Timothy retorted with the same weapon and deposed Joseph of Merv, who, failing to find redress from the caliph al-Mahdi, converted to Islam. Further rounds of excommunications led to rioting in the streets of Baghdad by the city's Christians. The opposition to Timothy was finally stilled by the intervention of 'Isa ibn Quraysh.

Literary achievement

Timothy was a respected writer of scientific, theological, liturgical, and canonical books. Some 59 of his letters survive, covering roughly the first half of his patriarchate. The letters discuss varied biblical and theological questions as well as revealing much about the situation of the church in his day. One letter records him ordaining bishops for the Turks of Central Asia, for Tibet, for Shiharzur, Radan, Ray, Iran, Gurgan, Balad, and several other places. The letters also show a wide familiarity with literature from across the ancient Christian world. Because he moved to Baghdad after his election as patriarch, he was familiar with the Abbasid court and assisted in the translation of works by Aristotle and others.

One of Timothy's most famous literary productions was the record of an inconclusive debate on the rival claims of Christianity and Islam, supposedly held in 782 with the third Abbasid caliph Al-Mahdi (reigned 775–85). The debate, which some argue have been a literary fiction, offers a somewhat unorganized back-and-forth that lends credence to the argument that the debate took place and was recorded by Timothy himself. It was published first in Syriac and later in Arabic. In its surviving form, in Syriac, it is noticeably respectful towards Islam, and may well have been written for the enjoyment of both Christian and Moslem readers. The debate was translated into English in 1928 by Alphonse Mingana, under the title 'Timothy's Apology for Christianity. Its theme is of perennial interest, and it can still be read today both for pleasure and profit.

Interest in missionary expansion

Timothy took a particularly keen interest in the missionary expansion of the Church of the East. He is known to have consecrated metropolitans for Damascus, for Armenia, for Dailam and Gilan in Azerbaijan, for Rai in Tabaristan, for Sarbaz in Segestan, for the Turks of Central Asia, and for China, and he also declared his intention of consecrating a metropolitan for Tibet. He also detached India from the metropolitan province of Fars and made it a separate metropolitan province. He sent the bishops Mar Sabor and Mar Proth to India who were instrumental in constructing a number of churches for the Saint Thomas Christians.

Timothy I of Baghdad, From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia