

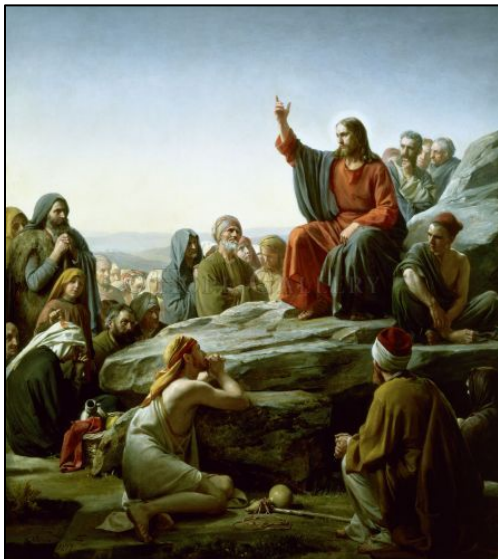


CHRISTIAN
UNION

Seven Keys to Kingdom Advancement

KEY TWO: THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS: DOCTRINAL DEFEATERS 2

May God's Kingdom Come



Matthew 6:9-10 - Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

Sermon on the Mount, 1877
Carl H. Bloch



Seven Keys to Kingdom Advancement

1. Aspiration and Desperation
2. **Theological Foundations**
3. Seeking God Wholeheartedly
4. Spiritual Practices
5. Supernatural Aspects
6. Impacting the Three Spheres
7. Leadership



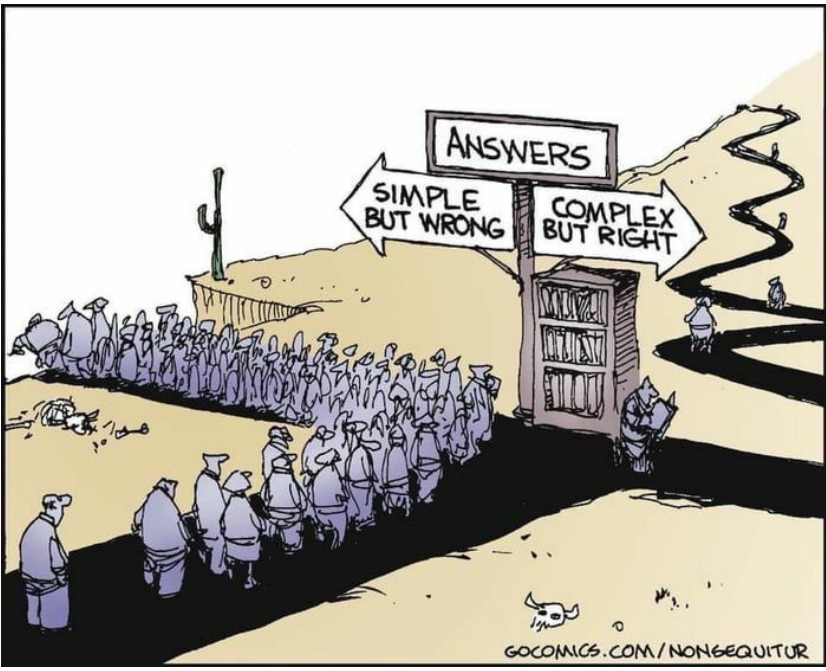
2. Theological Foundations: 2. Doctrinal Defeaters 2

We live in the church age, and it's our role to hasten the day of Christ's return by deepening and expanding the kingdom of God.

A large number of theological misunderstandings about God and how to please Him hinder modern-day Western Christians in their spiritual vibrancy and seeing revival. Knowing and believing the truth brings freedom and life.

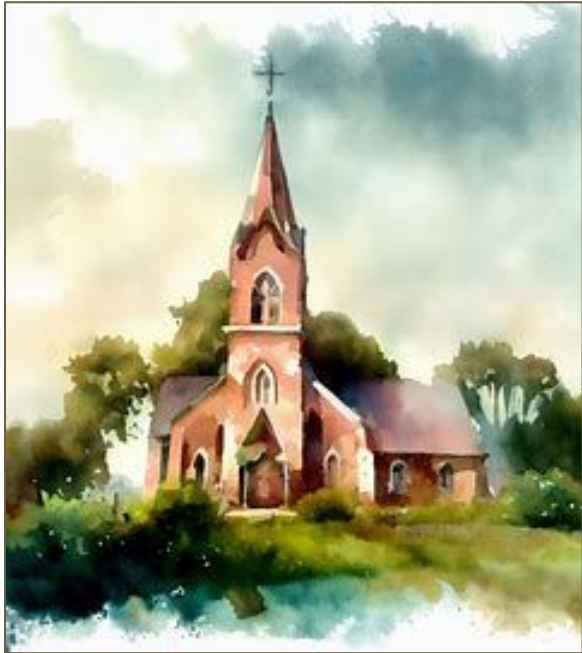
Some call these theological misunderstandings “seeking-god defeaters,” “revival defeaters” or Doctrinal Defeaters

Deep Analysis is Worth the Effort



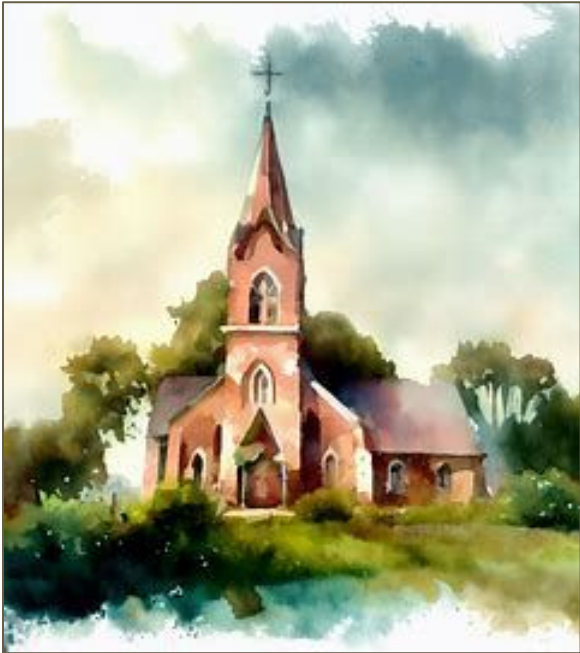
Societies with a long history of Christianity can be more difficult to analyze and call back to the Lord. But success means the salvation of millions of people.

Doctrinal Defeaters 2



11. Pleasing God
12. Striving in the Faith
13. Happiness and Abundant Life
14. Christian Duty
15. Freedom in Christ
16. Revival “Spark”
17. Prayer Changes Us Not God
18. Practicing the Presence
19. God as Therapist
20. Not My Job

Doctrinal Defeaters 2



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False Theologies Can Blind Western Christians

Are the Following True or False?

1. There's nothing a Christian can do to make God more **pleased** than He is already.
2. God doesn't get **angry** with Christians anymore because His wrath was poured out on the cross. Thank God for the “finished work of the cross.”
3. God doesn't **judge** people in the church age, that's just for the end of the end times.

God's Pleasure



In the first 20 seconds of this [video](#) by Christian radio host Todd Friel of “Wretched,” he says there’s nothing a Christian can do to have God be more pleased with a Christian than He is already.

Todd Friel
Host of *Wretched Radio Show*



Need to Please God

- **Pleasing God** - Pleasing God draws His grace, blessing and presence - this is revival.
- **Displeasing God** - Displeasing God draws His anger resulting in punishment.
- “There’s nothing you can do to make God more **pleased** with you than He is right now.”
- “There’s nothing you can do to make God **love** you more than He does right now.”



Passages That Show God's Pleasure

Matthew 25:23 - “His master said to him, **‘Well done, good and faithful servant.** You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’”

2 Timothy 4:7 - “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, **will award to me on that day**, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.”



Christians are to Please God in Attitudes and Actions

John 8:29 - “And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are **pleasing** to him.”

1 Corinthians 10:5 - Nevertheless, with most of them God was **not pleased**, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

Ephesians 5:10 - and try to discern what is **pleasing** to the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 2:4 - but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, **not to please man, but to please God** who tests our hearts.



Christians are to Please God in Attitudes and Actions

1 Thessalonians 4:1 - Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to **please** God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.

1 Timothy 2:3 - This is good, and it is **pleasing** in the sight of God our Savior,

1 Timothy 5:4 - But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is **pleasing** in the sight of God.



Christians are to Please God in Attitudes and Actions

2 Timothy 2:4 - No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to **please** the one who enlisted him.

1 John 3:22 - and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what **pleases** him.

Hebrews 11:5, 6 - By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having **pleased** God. And without faith it is impossible to **please** him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.



We Weary Yahweh by Saying He's Pleased When He's Not

Malachi 2:17 - You have wearied the LORD with your words. “How have we wearied him?” you ask. **You have wearied him by saying that all who do evil are good in the LORD's sight, and he is pleased with them.** You have wearied him by asking, “Where is the God of justice?”

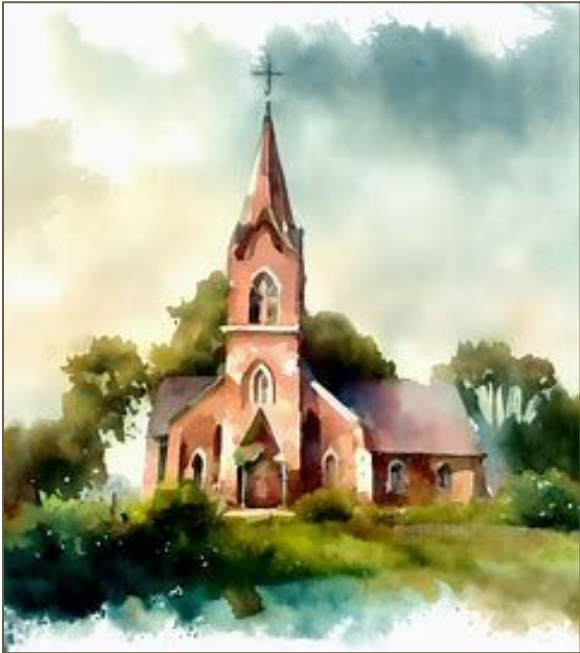


2. Theological Foundations: 2. Doctrinal Defeaters 2

Would you say you are pleasing to God in your attitudes and actions?

Would you say the American church is pleasing to God?

Doctrinal Defeaters 2



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Definition of *Strive*

Merriam-Webster Dictionary:

1 : to devote serious effort or energy : ENDEAVOR

2 : to struggle in opposition : CONTEND

Cambridge Dictionary: to try very hard to do something or to make something happen, especially for a long time or against difficulties.



Is This a Christian Mindset?

“I renounce all anger, hatred, murderous thoughts, revenge, retaliation, spiritual apathy, false religion, all unbelief, especially unbelief in the Holy Bible as God’s Word, and all compromise of God’s Word. I renounce all spiritual searching into false religions **and all striving to please God**. I rest in the knowledge that I have found my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the He has found me.”

What are Christians to make of statements like this found in popular Christian books?



Are Christians to be Passive?

Psalm 46:10 - “**Be still**, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!”

Exodus 14:13, 14 - And Moses said to the people, “Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. ¹⁴**The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.**”

Lamentations 3:25, 26 - The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. ²⁶ It is good that one should **wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.**



2. Theological Foundations: 2. Doctrinal Defeaters 2

Salvation only comes by grace through repentance and faith.

Salvation is never earned or merited.



Salvation Only Comes by Grace through Repentance and Faith

Luke 13:24 - “**Strive** to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.”

Ephesians 2:8, 9 - For by grace you have been saved **through faith**. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Romans 3:23-25 - the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be **received by faith**.



2. Theological Foundations: 2. Doctrinal Defeaters 2

Striving to Please God is To Live by Faith

Christians are Required to Strive to Please God



1 Corinthians 9:24-27 - Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But **I discipline my body** and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

Christians are Required to Strive to Please God



Romans 15:30 - I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to **strive** together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf,

1 Corinthians 14:12 - So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, **strive** to excel in building up the church.



Christians are Required to Strive to Please God

1 Corinthians 15:10 - But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, **I worked harder** than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

Philippians 1:27 - Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind **striving** side by side for the faith of the gospel,



Christians are Required to Strive to Please God

1 Timothy 4:6-10 - If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, **being trained** in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. ⁷ Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather **train yourself** for godliness; ⁸ for **while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every** way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. ⁹ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. ¹⁰ For to this end we **toil and strive**, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.



Christians are Required to Strive to Please God

2 Timothy 2:1-10 - You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus,² and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.³ **Share in suffering** as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.⁴ No **soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please** the one who enlisted him.⁵ An **athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.**⁶ It is the **hard-working farmer** who ought to have the first share of the crops.



Christians are Required to Strive to Please God

2 Timothy 2:1-10 (cont'd) - ⁷ Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. ⁸ Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, ⁹ for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound! ¹⁰ Therefore **I endure everything** for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.



Christians are Required to Strive to Please God

Colossians 4:12, 13 - Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, **always struggling on your behalf** in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. ¹³ For I bear him witness that **he has worked hard for you** and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis.

Hebrews 4:11 - Let us therefore **strive** to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

Hebrews 12:14 - **Strive** for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

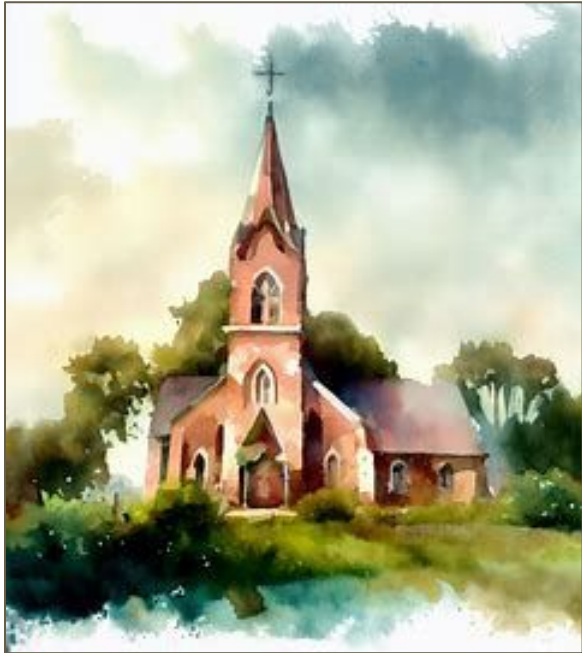


Christians are Required to Strive to Please God

2 Peter 1:5-7- For this very reason, **make every effort** to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, ⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.

2 Peter 1:12-15- Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. ¹³ I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, ¹⁴ since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. ¹⁵ And I **will make every effort** so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.

Doctrinal Defeaters 2



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2. Theological Foundations: 2. Doctrinal Defeaters 2

A misunderstanding of what Jesus means by “abundant life” has confused many Christians, tempting them to indulge the flesh instead of surrendering to God and living a life of self-denial. Some believe “God wants me happy” above all else.



The Abundant Life

John 10:7-11 - So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸ All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹ I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and **have it abundantly**. ¹¹ I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

The Abundant Life



The Good Shepherd - *Jesus' abundant life means we have a leader, a Shepherd, who lays His life down for the sheep instead of exploiting them and abusing them. He's a good leader, unlike some of Judah's wicked kings, religious leaders, and the idolatrous gods of the surrounding nations.*



The Abundant Life

- **Benefit of Blessings** - Also, there is the reward of all the benefits that come with His presence including joy, victory, peace, fruitfulness, and much more.
- **Persecutions Promised** - It's always worth remembering that the Abundant Life Jesus offers does not mean there are not difficulties. He has promised periodic suffering and persecutions (Mark 10:23-30; Acts 14:22; Philippians 1:29).
- **Costly, but Worth it** - Like other good things in life, it comes at a cost: 24 hour prayer, morning and evening devotions, reading the New Testament every week...

Broken Cisterns Cannot Give Life



Jeremiah 2:12, 13 - Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the LORD, ¹³ for my people have committed two evils: **they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.**



To Many Western Christians, the “Abundant Life” means:

- Absence of hardships, difficulties, frustration or persecution
- Abundant time to indulge hobbies and vain pursuits of all kinds including movies, Broadway shows, traveling, eating out, sports participation and viewing.
- Financial prosperity
- Self Indulgence, Lover of Self, Lover of Pleasure

Benefit of God Himself - As is seen, seeking God wholeheartedly takes more time and effort than what the typical American Christian expends. There is a reward in this, however. The reward first and foremost is God Himself. Spending time in His presence is wonderful and glorious.



Taking Up Your Cross

Matthew 10:34-39 - “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. ³⁶ And a person’s enemies will be those of his own household. ³⁷ Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸ **And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.** ³⁹ Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”



Denying Yourself and Taking Up Your Cross

Luke 9:23, 24 - And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let **him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.** ²⁴ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.

Luke 14:25-33 - Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, ²⁶ “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ **Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.**



Renouncing Everything You Have

Luke 14:25-33 (cont'd) - ²⁸ For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? ²⁹ Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, ³⁰ saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ ³¹ Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³² And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. ³³ **So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.**

Dying to Self



Matthew 16:24, 25 - Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him **deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.** ²⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.



Dying to Self

John 12:24-26 - Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat **falls into the earth and dies**, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵ Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.



Not Human Passions, But the Will of God

1 Peter 4:1, 2 - Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, ²so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh **no longer for human passions but for the will of God.**



Which Represents the Christian Life?

Self-Centered Believer



God exists to make me happy and give me an “abundant life.”

Christ-Centered Laborer



I exist to please God and fulfill His purposes.



Path to the Abundant Life

- **Family** - The path to a thriving family is through self-denial, not self indulgence.
- **Health** - The path to physical health is through self-denial, not self indulgence.
- **Christian Life** - The path to the abundant Christian life is through self-denial, not self indulgence.



2. Theological Foundations: 2. Doctrinal Defeaters 2

*The abundant Christian life comes through self-denial,
not self-indulgence.*

Fijian Villages Before “The Process”



Before the Process - church on Sunday, not many home devotionals, more time dedicated to hobbies, vain amusements, and addressing the many problems

“Benefits” - division among Christians and churches, fatherlessness, polluted streams, working all day with just enough to survive, alcoholism, drug use, rebellion of kids, demonization, resistance to salvation, untimely deaths, strife and conflict

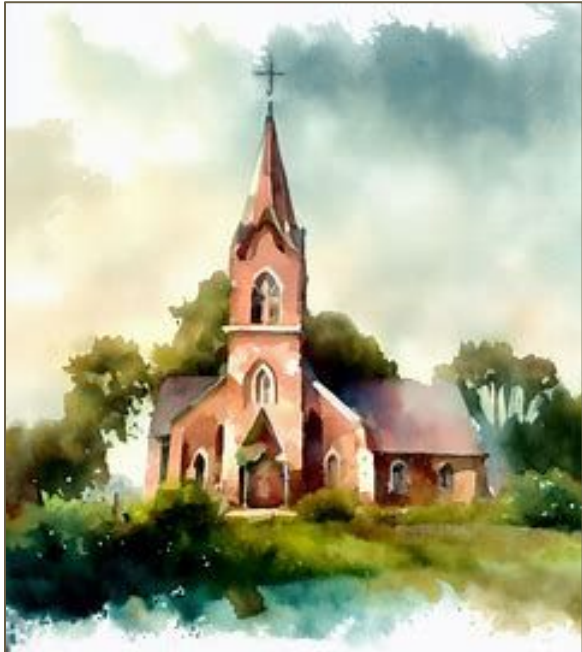
Fijian Villages After “The Process”



After - More time in church, regular home devotionals, fasting Wednesdays and praying until 3pm and then 2.5 hours in the evening worship, periodic special monthly meetings

Benefits - Fruitfulness in the land, alcoholism and drug use gone, fathers with their families, foreign investment coming into communities, fewer untimely deaths, generosity, fillings of the Holy Spirit, peace and unity, finished working by midday because of the abundance

Doctrinal Defeaters 2



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Christian Duty

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 5th Edition

Obligation - (noun) A social, legal, or moral requirement, such as a duty, contract, or promise, that compels one to follow or avoid a particular course of action.

Duty - (noun) An act or a course of action that is required of one by position, social custom, law, or religion. (noun) Required action or service.



Christian Duty

- **Part of Christian Life** - Is obligation or duty part of the Christian Life? Indeed it's labor, but a labor of love.
- **Duty is Bad?** - Sometimes the concept of duty or obligation is presented as, or seen as, possibly the worst thing in the world.
- **Christian Duty as a Blessing** - A Christian concept of duty is such that of course serving as a Christian at times is a duty, but it's a privilege to serve even when extreme self-denial is taking place. Putting the flesh to death is often difficult, but necessary to produce the fruit of joy over time.



Christian Duty

Exodus 38:21 - These are the records of the tabernacle, the tabernacle of the testimony, as they were recorded at the commandment of Moses, the **responsibility** of the Levites under the direction of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest.

Additional attestation (use of “duty” and “obligation”): Numbers 4:3; 1 Kings 4:28; 2 Kings 11:5; 1 Chronicles 9:33; 1 Chronicles 23:28



Christian Duty

Luke 17:7-10 - “Will any one of you who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and recline at table’? ⁸ Will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare supper for me, and dress properly, and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink’? ⁹ Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? ¹⁰ So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our **duty**.’”

Acts 6:3 - Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this **duty**.

Christian Duty



Romans 1:14 - I am under **obligation** both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.

Romans 15:1 - We who are strong have an **obligation** to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves.



Christian Duty

2 Timothy 2:1-6 - You then, my child, be **strengthened by the grace** that is in Christ Jesus,² and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.³ **Share in suffering** as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.⁴ No **soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please** the one who enlisted him.⁵ An **athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.**⁶ It is the **hard-working farmer** who ought to have the first share of the crops.



Christian Duty

- **Soldiers** - Soldiers suffer, endure hardship and persevere to succeed.
- **Athlete** - Athletes train hard even when they don't feel like it and even when they are tempted to be distracted or take a rest.
- **Hard-Working Farmer** - Farmers sow and reap according to the weather and seasons, and not according to how they feel on a given day.

All of these pursuits set aside comforts, pleasures, amusements and entertainments when they get in the way of the mission.



Christian Duty

Galatians 5:22, 23 - But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, **self-control**; against such things there is no law.

1 Timothy 1:6-7 - For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, ⁷ for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of **power and love and self-control**.



Christian Duty

Psalm 16:11 - You make known to me the path of life; **in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.**

Some use language of “Christian Hedonism” to underscore the truth that pleasure and joy are sourced in God. However, the term can be misleading because there are times when God withholds these feelings to test people and to see if they love Him, follow Him, obey Him, honor Him and seek Him in spite of the circumstances.

Will you seek Him and obey Him only when it feels good?



Christian Duty - a Labor of Love

- **Athletics** - Athletics is a labor of love!
- **Education** - Schooling and learning is a labor of love!
- **Parenting** - Raising children is a labor of love!

Seeking God is the same!



Christian Duty - Not Just When You Feel Like It

- **Cheerful Giver** - Since God loves a cheerful giver, should I not give if I'm not cheerful about it? The problem is not the giving, but the bad attitude, the answer is to repent of bad attitude and give anyway.
- **Devotions if in the Mood** - What if I don't feel like have a devotion or fasting? Isn't it better if I don't do it? No, there are obligations we have to God that are to be attended to, regardless of feelings. Obeying God usually means the good feelings will come in time.
- **Training Ground** - God is training His people. Will we only obey Him and do what's pleasing to Him when it doesn't go against our fleshly nature? It's the immature Christian who lets his passions overrule his duty to God.

Christian Duty - Not Just When You Feel Like It



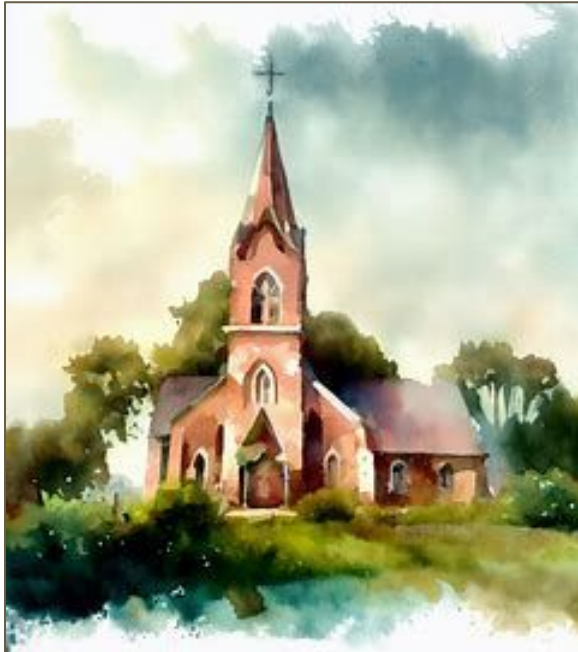
“It is a common temptation of Satan to make us give up the reading of the Word and prayer when our enjoyment is gone; as if it were of no use to read the Scriptures when we do not enjoy them, and as if it were of no use to pray when we have no spirit of prayer.”

George Muller (1805-1898)

Director of the Ashley Down Orphanage in Bristol, England

CoFounder of the Plymouth Brethren Movement

Doctrinal Defeaters 2



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Understanding “Freedom in Christ”

John 8:31-38 - So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “**If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.**” ³³ They answered him, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free?’” ³⁴ Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. ³⁵ The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. ³⁶ **So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.** ³⁷ I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you. ³⁸ I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father.”

Understanding “Freedom in Christ”



“True Christian liberty is not the power to live as we please but to live as we ought.”

Arthur Pink (1886-1952)
English Bible Teacher

Understanding “Freedom in Christ”



“We are free, praise the Lord! Free from sin and condemnation. Free from the yoke of bondage. Free in Christ Jesus!”

Charles H. Mason (1864 - 1961)
Founder of Church of God in Christ



Understanding “Freedom in Christ”

- **Confusing Passages?** The following passages in Galatians and Colossians at first glance could look like they discourage a regular, devoted pattern of seeking God, but in fact do not.
- **“Freedom in Christ”** - It does not mean God does not want Christians to seek Him in a disciplined fashion. It does not mean Christians do not have to obey His commandments. What does it mean?



Understanding “Freedom in Christ”

Galatians 4:8-11 - Formerly, when you did not know God, you were **enslaved to those that by nature are not gods.**⁹ But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose **slaves** you want to be once more?¹⁰ **You observe days and months and seasons and years!**¹¹ I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain.



Understanding “Freedom in Christ”

Galatians 5:1 - For **freedom Christ** has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of **slavery**. ²Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. ³I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is **obligated to keep the whole law**. ⁴You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace.



Understanding “Freedom in Christ”

Colossians 2:16-23 - Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a **festival or a new moon or a Sabbath.**¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.¹⁸ Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind,¹⁹ and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.



Understanding “Freedom in Christ”

Colossians 2:16-23 (cont'd) - ²⁰ If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— ²¹ “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” ²² (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? ²³ These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.



Understanding “Freedom in Christ”

- **Meriting Salvation** - These passages refer to meriting salvation and/or having to explicitly obey Jewish law, or obey non-Christian requirements.
- **Sabbath is Mentioned** - One mentions the Sabbaths. Do we believe Paul was discouraging Christians gathering on the Sabbath or Sunday? Of course not.
- **Seeking God Regularly and Diligently is Often Commanded in the New Testament** - We have many New Testament commands to seek Him regularly.
- **Universally Practiced** - Seeking God according to established patterns was universally practiced by the church for hundreds of years.



Understanding “Freedom in Christ”

- **Romans 8:21** - that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the **freedom** of the glory of the children of God.
- **2 Corinthians 3:17** - Now the Lord is the Spirit, and **where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.**
- **Galatians 2:4** - Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our **freedom** that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery—



Understanding “Freedom in Christ”

- **Galatians 5:1** - **For freedom** Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.
- **Galatians 5:13** - For you were called to **freedom**, brothers. Only do not use your **freedom** as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.
- **1 Peter 2:16** - Live as people who are **free**, not using your **freedom** as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.
- **2 Peter 2:19** - They promise them **freedom**, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.



What “Freedom in Christ” is Not

- **Permissiveness** - It's not freedom from having to obey the “royal law” as James put it. Faithful obedience is highly prized!
- **Lack of Discipline** - It's not freedom from faithful habits of drawing close to God.
- **Self-Indulgence** - It's not freedom from duty and obligation including hard work, toiling, struggling, striving, self-denial, and taking up one's cross.
- **Promise of No Hardships** - It's not freedom from difficulties in life including loss, hardships, griefs, and disappointments of all kinds.
- **Promise of Being Universally Loved** - It's not freedom from rejection, disparagement and persecution from others.



What “Freedom in Christ” IS

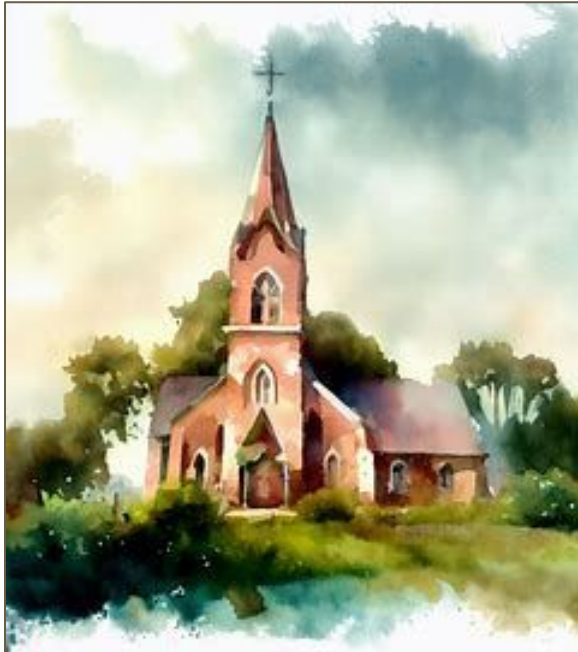
- It’s freedom from the burden of having to merit salvation through perfect conduct.
- It’s freedom from the fear of the final wrath of God (but be afraid of temporal wrath), including fear of death.
- It’s freedom from having to obey laws only applying to Israel (dietary laws, circumcision, animal sacrifices, etc.)
- It’s freedom from having to sin and experience the guilt and shame from one’s sins.
- It’s freedom from feeling abandoned and alone.
- It’s freedom from (if receive inner healing and deliverance) curses and demonization that can cause great affliction.
- It’s freedom to approach the throne of grace with boldness and confidence.



How Does “Freedom in Christ” Come?

Freedom in Christ comes as a fruit of diligent, steadfast obedience to Jesus Christ in all matters.

Doctrinal Defeaters 2



11. Pleasing God
12. Striving in the Faith
13. Happiness and Abundant Life
14. Christian Duty
15. Freedom in Christ
- 16. Revival “Spark”**
17. Prayer Changes Us Not God
18. Practicing the Presence
19. God as Therapist
20. Not My Job



Revival “Spark”

- The Scriptures never use the term “spark” to mark the beginning of an outpouring of the Spirit. Why is that?
- Nor is there phraseology such as “revival fires.” Why is that?

It can be helpful to avoid these phrases because they can be misleading, confusing many Christians about how to seek the presence of God. God pours out His Spirit when Christians meet the conditions in 2 Chronicles 7:14, creating and maintaining a culture of seeking God wholeheartedly.

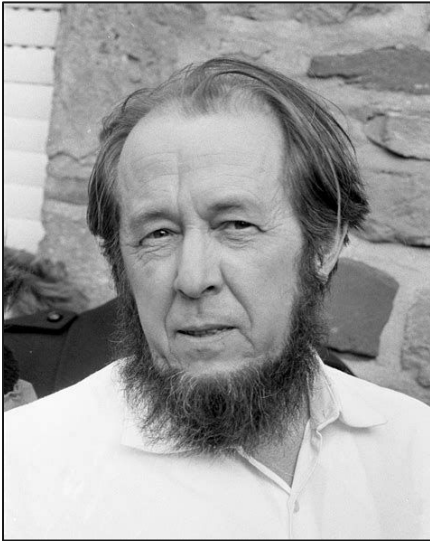


Holy Spirit Falls When We Seek Him Wholeheartedly

Rarely does the Holy Spirit fall on a community randomly. Some can wait around and hope for God to come close, yet it's Him who is waiting for humanity to come close. God commands us to "humble ourselves" but instead we pray, "humble us God". He's given humanity commands to fulfill which He rewards by pouring forth His Spirit. If there's not much power of His Spirit, then it's clear that the conditions are not being met.

*Some of the best passages: 2 Chronicles 7:14 ; Zech 8: 20-23,
Luke 11:5-13, James 4:8*

Self-Denial in Seeking After God



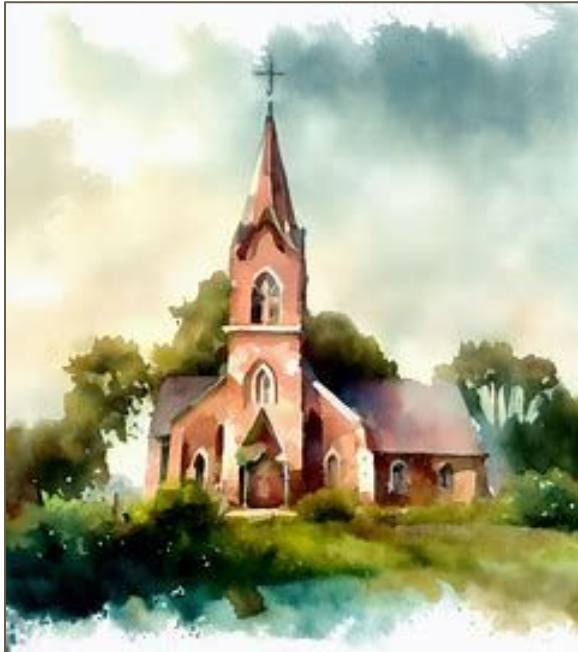
Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn has criticized the West for being taken captive by luxury and ease such that there is little moral courage and little desire to deny oneself. He said:

“No weapons, no matter how powerful, can help the West until it overcomes its loss of willpower.”

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (1918-2008)

Russian Writer and Prominent Soviet Dissident

Doctrinal Defeaters 2



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Prayer Changes Us Not God

Malachi 3:6 - “**For I the LORD do not change**; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed.”

God affirms His unchanging character, which is a theological concept known as the “immutability” of God. This means that God's nature, character, and purposes do not change over time. His love, justice, mercy, righteousness, and holiness are the same now as they have always been and will always be.

However, God does indeed change his actions based on prayers and actions of His people. God has formed the world such that humans have influence over Him.



Moses Persuades God

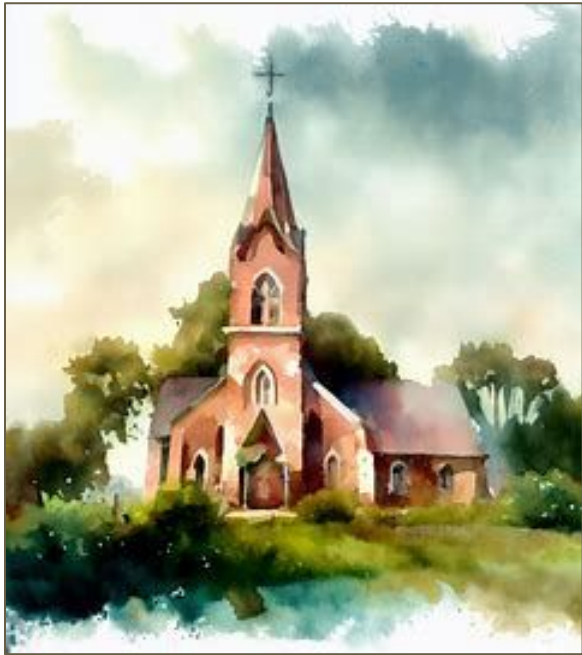
Exodus 32:11-14 - But Moses implored the LORD his God and said, “O LORD, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? ¹² Why should the Egyptians say, ‘With evil intent did he bring them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth?’ **Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people. ¹³ Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.’” ¹⁴ And the LORD relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people.**

God Answers When There's Persistence



Luke 11:9, 10 - And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For **everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.**

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Practicing the Presence

Seeking to connect with God throughout one's daily life does not remove the need for focused, dedicated time (for example 30-60 minutes at a minimum) morning and evening to draw near to God in worship, Bible reading and prayer. Seeking to connect with God may be a valuable practice throughout one's day, but never serves as a substitute for dedicated focused time of seeking God.



Practicing the Presence

Brother Andrew - Brother Andrew, a 17th-century French monk, popularized the concept of “practicing the presence of God” in everyday life, documenting it in his book, *The Practice of the Presence of God*. Whether doing something menial like washing dishes, or anything else, remembering the goodness of God and His good purposes has value for a Christian. Today, the concept can be confusing for some, with them believing that focused devotions are not necessary if one thinks about God throughout the day.

Application Today - What high school athlete can say they are ready for the meet because they “exercise as they walk to school each day”? Without focused, dedicated times of seeking God, Christians won’t have His presence.

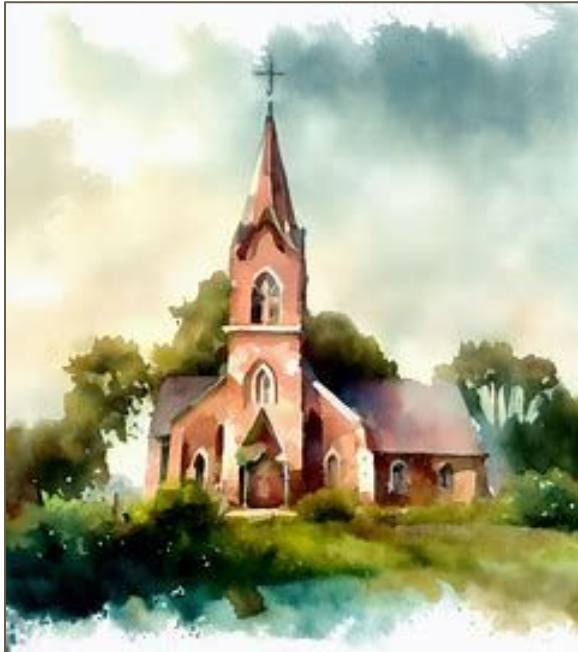


Examples of Praying Throughout the Day

- **1 Thessalonians 5:17 - Pray without ceasing**
- **Nehemiah 1:4, 5** - Then the king said to me, “What are you requesting?” **So I prayed to the God of heaven.** ⁵ And I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers’ graves, that I may rebuild it.”

Praying throughout the day complements and never replaces dedicated devotional times of morning and evening, the sabbath, monthly-all day and twice a year. Moreover, there are times of extraordinary praying and fasting such as 120 days as recorded in chapter 1 of Nehemiah.

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God as Therapist

Humanity exists to please and glorify God, fulfilling His purposes, yet some can believe that God exists for humanity, serving primarily as therapist when having problems and difficulties of all kinds.

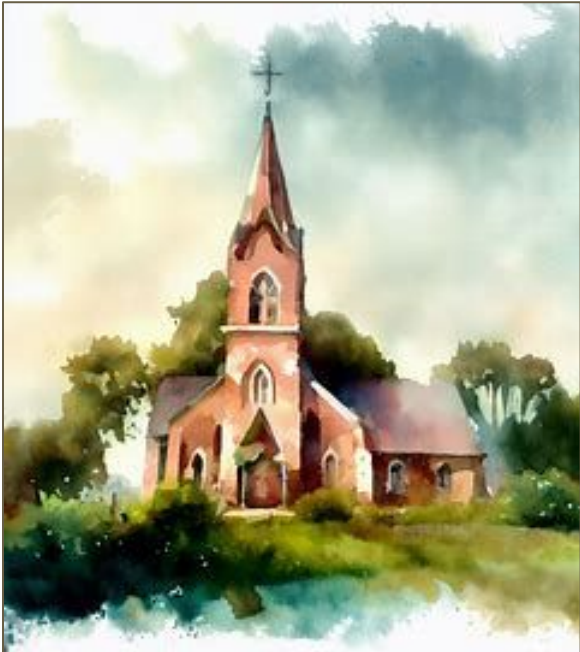
Though God loves us and desires our flourishing and happiness, our lives are to be oriented around Him and not the other way around.



Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (MTD)

- **Source** - Sociologists Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton in their 2005 book, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, popularized the term.
- **Philosophy of MTD** - MTD believes in a watered-down, individualistic version of Christianity centered on self-improvement and personal happiness rather than faithfulness to Jesus Christ in all matters. It's a radical orientation on the self instead of God.
- **De-Motivator** - This misunderstanding of who God is and why humanity was created can blunt motivations to seek Him wholeheartedly; why seek Him when my life seems fine?

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Responsibility to Teach and Admonish One Another

Colossians 3:16 - Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, **teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom**, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Hebrews 3:13 - But **exhort one another every day**, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Hebrews 10:24 - And let us consider how to **stir up one another** to love and good works.



Cultivating a Culture of Seeking God Wholeheartedly

Zechariah 8:20-23 - “Thus says the LORD of hosts: Peoples shall yet come, even the inhabitants of many cities. ²¹ The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, ‘**Let us go at once to entreat the favor of the LORD and to seek the LORD of hosts; I myself am going.**’ ²² Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the LORD. ²³ Thus says the LORD of hosts: In those days ten men from the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, ‘Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.’”



Three Waves of Zechariah 8:20-23

- **First Wave** - inhabitants of one city urgently seek God and recruit others.
- **Second Wave** - new recruits also seek God wholeheartedly.
- **Third Wave** - non believers are spiritually changed and seek to become a part and also want to seek God wholeheartedly.

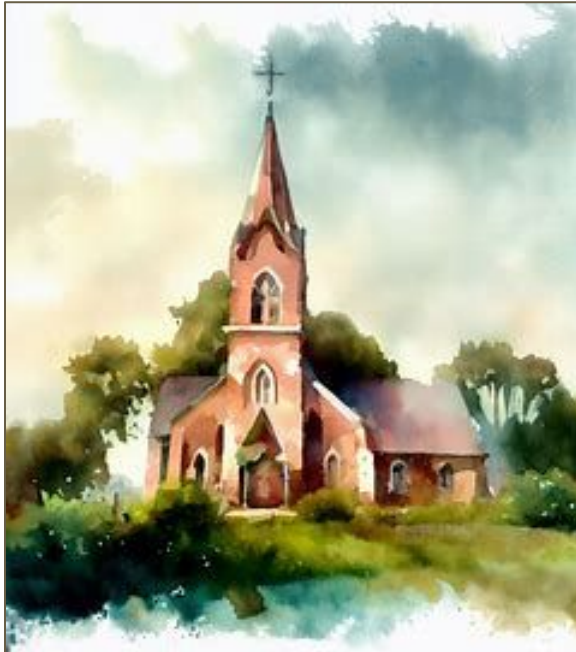


Moral Fragility

One pastor with an excellent devotional pattern of seeking God three times per day, was asked why he didn't make his congregation aware of this, and teach them to seek God with similar faithfulness. He said, "I don't want to put that on people."

Today it can be thought that Christians are too fragile to be called to seek God wholeheartedly. That somehow the grace God has provided Christians throughout history is no longer available.

Doctrinal Defeaters 2



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2. Theological Foundations: 2. Doctrinal Defeaters 2

We live in the church age, and it's our role to hasten the day of Christ's return by deepening and expanding the kingdom of God.

A large number of theological misunderstandings about God and how to please Him hinder modern-day Western Christians in their spiritual vibrancy and seeing revival. Knowing and believing the truth brings freedom and life.

Some call these theological misunderstandings “seeking-god defeaters,” “revival defeaters” or Doctrinal Defeaters



We live in the church age, and it's our role to hasten the day of Christ's return by deepening and expanding the kingdom of God.

As Christians seek God wholeheartedly, He gives grace, power and direction to be used as His instruments in our families, communities and nation.

**Help America Return to God by Becoming a Cornerstone Partner
with Christian Union: christianunion.org/cornerstone**

Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord,
the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!

Psalm 33:12



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