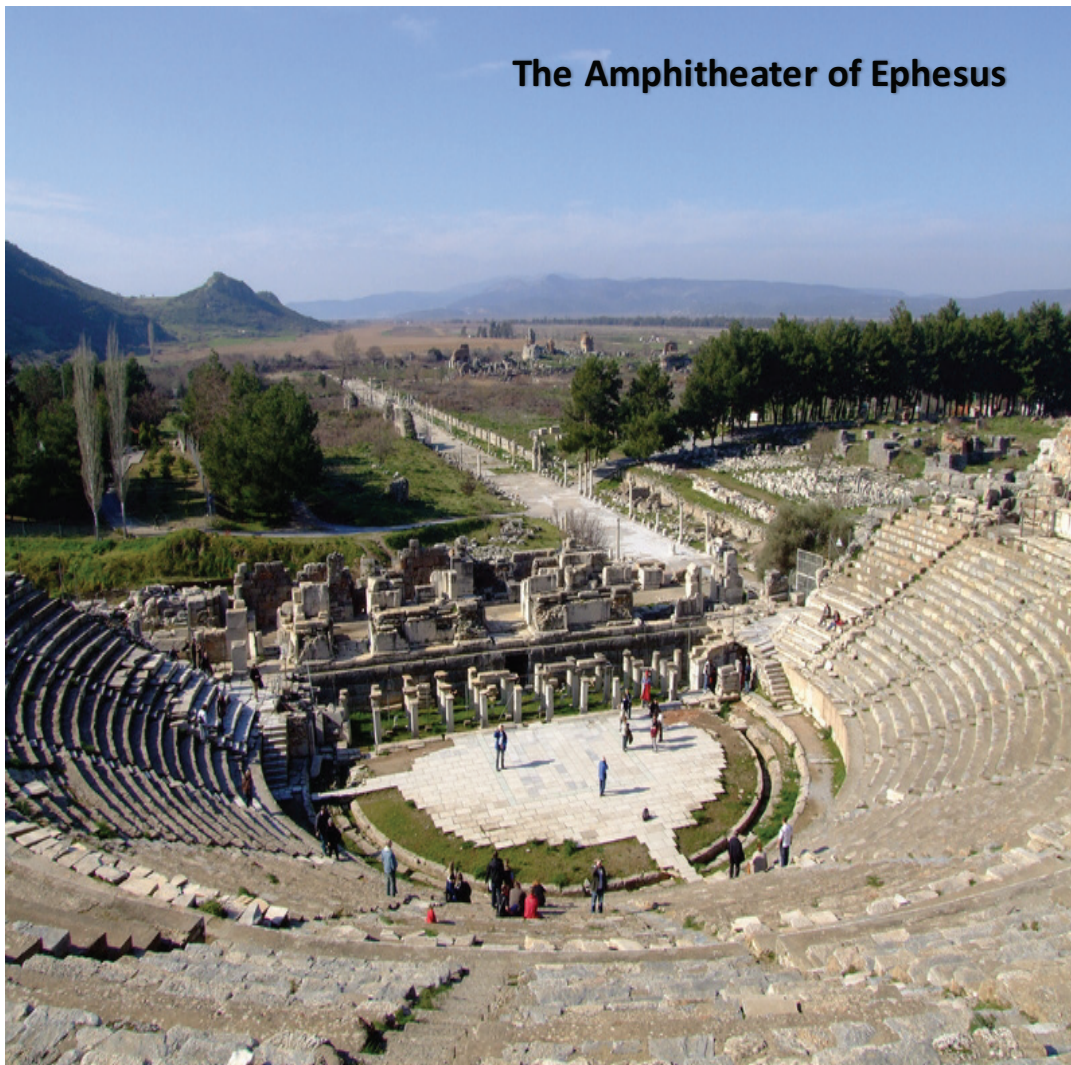


The Amphitheater of Ephesus



EPHESUS

The Amphitheater of Ephesus



EPHESIANS

FOR ALL OF THE CHURCH PLANTS OF THE LAST 75 YEARS

This study has taken the bulk of its outlined thoughts from the John Stott Bible Studies series, written by John Stott and published by the IVP Connect division of Intervarsity Press, of Nottingham England, 1998



THE GREAT CHURCH OF EPHESUS STARTED HERE.....

**The lose of focus can cause a metropolis of faith to wane and die.
What do we need to take home from the history of the rise and fall of
the Ephesian congregation?**

EPHESIANS

I. THE START OF THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS

- A. The story of the planting of the church in Ephesus, begins before Paul, the apostle, ever actually preached in Ephesus., possibly back as far as in the day of John the Baptist.
- B. NOTE: The message was moving around the whole Roman world ever since the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus' story preceded Paul's preaching.
- C. It most probably begins on the Day of Pentecost, when the people heard Peter speak in their own language. **Acts 2:9**.
- D. Ephesus is a city in Asia Minor, and its language and position is the dominant one of the area, being one of the cities of the established "Ionian League", and very successful under Roman rule.



The Library of Ephesus

EPHESIANS FOR THE MODERN CHURCH

THE ACTUAL START OF THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS:

- I. **Paul's Work There As "Church Planter".**
 - A. The story of the planting of the church in Ephesus, really got going after Paul went there.
 - B. Yes, seed had been sowed there, in all probability, before Paul's visit, but his visit got things **organized** and **grounded**.
 - C. -- read **Acts 18:1-21** This is the 'Actine story' of the planting of the church in Ephesus and a great part of the blueprint for the planting of the church in any locale.
 - D. -- read **Acts 19: 1-3** John, The Baptist's work in Ephesus is evidenced by Paul, and used as a starting point for all subsequent building / planting in Ephesus. **Obviously, it is okay to use the commonality of a common point of belief to begin any work !!!** Paul never started any church plant in Asia minor with aggression, but with **love and listening**.
 - E. -- The first twelve converts to **Christianity [Acts 19: 1-7]** is sometimes called "**The Gentile Pentecost**"
 - F. Paul stayed there for 3 months, preaching and teaching, '**guiding**' the people in their thinking. He did not try to impress people with his great biblical knowledge **Acts 19: 8**
 - G. -- **NOTE:** There is no distinctions that can ever be made between "Preachers" and "Teachers" , no matter what verbage is used in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, written later on.
 - H. There arose dissension and so Paul insulated this infant church from divisive and disruptive elements.
 - I. Today, the infant congregations can likewise be gravely harmed by divisive elements, false teaching, and by any grumbling dissension. **It can not be allowed to happen, ever, but particularly so in the case of the infant church.**

EPHESIANS FOR THE MODERN CHURCH

THE ACTUAL START OF THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS:

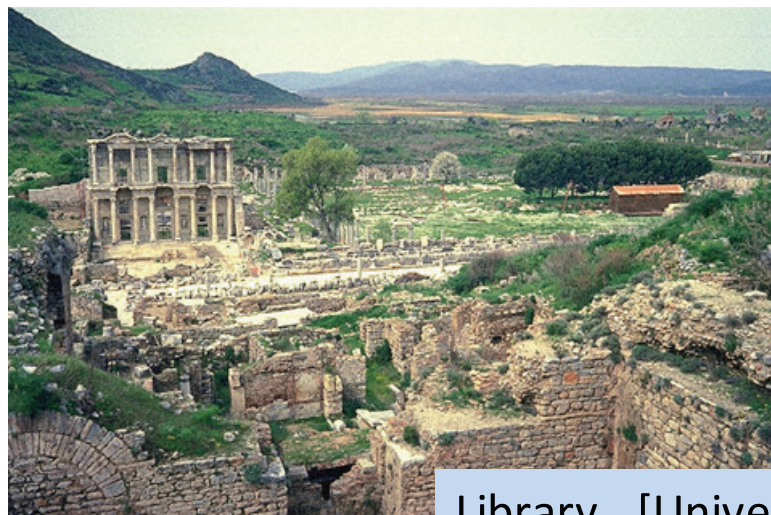
- II. But, More importantly, **God's Work** There In Ephesus As "The Premier Church Planter".
 - A. When Paul wrote the letter to the Ephesian congregation he could have taken the tract of 'what I,, Paul, have done', This would have been normal human nature....
 - B. but he, Paul, chose the far more significant topic of **what God did**, and **still does** in all church plants and developments.
 - C. Paul starts, as should we all, with the new life God has to us in Jesus Christ.
 - D. Importantly, "the new life in Christ Jesus", should be central to all of our preaching, teaching, and thinking.
 - E. No church plant can ever "long exist" without having a very strong "Christ-center". It can not "short exist either. So, Paul leads this congregation in thinking about their real roots., for the general health of this church plant.
 - F. [We all have real roots in our thinking-living reactions to the devil and His assaults as well as the general thoughts and assaults in life.
 - G. ----- Note: **We too need to stop and think about what are real roots are, and the real-life-time blessings we have received from God, in order to grow in strength. This is what our "mission statement" must reflect.**
- III. What has God given both Ephesus, and ourselves?
 - A. The Spiritual Blessings in Christ.....What are they? -----Write on the white board-----
 - B. How do "we" apply this knowledge in our daily lives?

EPHESIANS FOR THE MODERN CHURCH

THE ACTUAL START OF THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS:

THE EPHESIAN LIST,,, --- OUR PERSONAL LIST

1. Every possible blessing comes to us through Jesus and we have all that is possible
2. **CHOSEN OF GOD TO BE HOLY AND BLAMELESS**
3. **"PREDESTINED" TO BE PREDESTINED BY GOD TO BE ADOPTED, BY GOD, AS HIS SONS AND DAUGHTERS.**
4. **REDEMPTION / FORGIVENESS OF SINS**
5. **KNOWLEDGE OF THE HIDDEN THINGS OF HIS WILL**
6. **HOPE SUSTAINING HOPE**
7. **THE WORD OF TRUTH / GOSPEL OF SALVATION**
8. **THE SEAL OF GOD / THE HOLY SPIRIT**
9. **THUS THE GUARANTEE OF OUR INHERITANCE DOWN THROUGH ALL TIME**
10. ➔ **A VERY GOOD BASE TO BEGIN OUR THINKING FROM IN ALL SITUATIONS**
11. **WHAT HAVE WE HERE RECEIVED FROM GOD IN THIS CHURCH PLANT?**
12. **DO YOU THINK GOD IS GOING TO ABANDONE THIS WORK THAT HE HAS STARTED, IF WE DO NOT DO 'EVERYTHING' POSSIBLE EVERYDAY?**



Library [University]

EPHESIANS FOR THE MODERN CHURCH

THE ACTUAL START OF THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS:

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Stock Exchange

EPHESIANS FOR THE MODERN CHURCH

IV. The Concern Life of the Planter's of Churches

With such prayers being made, what sort of 'mindset' would be exhibited? What sort of personality and character would Paul want to see grow in Ephesus"

- B. The development of a "proven, and ever more "improving character", holds a great deal of value for the long term health of any congregation.
- C. It is accomplished, part by prayers such as the one that Paul prayed for Ephesus. This type of prayer must be one we are involved in ourselves!!!

V. Question For Discussions:

- A. Does getting to know God, require studies that are ultra-deep and highly scholastic?
- B. If not, how can the common man, the church planter, get to know God ever better?
- C. If we too are to encourage and sharpen each others iron, as Paul was doing, how are we actually going about it in our personal ministries today? What works and what does not work.
- D. How do you think these words from Paul affected the members of the church there in Ephesus?
- E. How do these words honestly affect you, every time you read them? Can we still become callous, and thus deaf, to the words of real encouragement?
- F. What can we do to build better self confidence in the members of this congregation?

EPHESIANS FOR THE MODERN CHURCH

IV. The Pessimistic Heart.

- A. "Pessimism" is the greatest enemy of every movement, and especially of all church plants.
- B. Paul addresses this problem in the Ephesian letter in **Ephesians 2:1-10**.
- C. Before we turn to that text, let's understand what "pessimism" is and how it presents itself.
 1. Pessimism is much more than the belief that the glass is half empty, rather than half full.
 2. Pessimism is "the **tendency to expect the worse and to see the worst in all things**", according to the Collins Dictionary.
 3. THUS, pessimism is the fear that evil is going to win and all possible outcomes will be potentially devastating, and opposed to any real goodness and the triumph of good over evil. "--**Goodness is a course that is an unrealistic response for me in my situation; it will not change anything.**"
 4. Pessimism is the observation of the world around from a perspective of negativism with there being just too many problems....everything is just too hard and so why should I really even try all that much and do any thing "hard" or "complicated".
 5. Pessimism is thus the willingness to accept a negative fate to fall on the individual, and or group, and it promotes **just giving up** because **the hope of a great future is already lost** due to the current stress factors....
 6. Pessimism is the **tendency to stop working for an improvement** because "my personal picture of the future" is out of kilter, coupled to a feeling that we can't change anything for the better anyway**SO IT IS BETTER TO JUST GIVE UP !!!**

The Mindset Case:

A church plant" usually takes 25 years to complete, thus 25 years to set the "mindset of 'God-based optimism.'" MISSION WORK: "101"

EPHESIANS FOR THE MODERN CHURCH

V. The Optimistic Heart.

- A. "Optimism" is the greatest "friend" of every movement, and especially of all church plants / works.
- B. Paul does not address this concept in the Ephesian letter in **Ephesians 2:1-10** directly, but he does build that picture in their minds with four great maxims that will benefit every church plants / congregation.
- C. Before we turn to that text, let's also understand what "optimism" is and how it presents itself.
 1. **Optimism**, in the religious sense, is much more than the belief that the glass is half full, rather than half empty.
 2. Optimism is "the **tendency to anticipate the best and to see the best in all things, as the church looks to see God's hand in the process**",
 3. THUS, optimism is the conviction, coupled with the necessary actions, that good is going to win and all possible outcomes will be potentially wonderful, and opposed to real evil / downer type mindsets.
 4. Optimism is then the "marriage" of the triumph of good over evil, and the life style and public presentation that says, "**Good is seen as strong and behind me and my situation, which I can celebrate and assist with my attitude and actions.**"
 5. Optimism is the observation of the world around from a perspective of positivism with everything being possible "so let's get going!!!".
 6. Thus, optimism sees God as active and in promotion of every good thing
 7.**SO IT IS BETTER TO JUST GET STARTED AND MAKE A MOVE, AFTER "OUR LONG NIGHTS OF PRAYER" AND STAY WITH IT !!!GOD IS WITH ALL THINGS THAT ARE GOOD FOR THE KINGDOM / CHURCH, AND HE WILL HELP FIX ALL WRONG STEPS !!!!**

EPHESIANS FOR THE MODERN CHURCH

IV. The Development Of An Optimistic Heart.

D. Paul replies to the problem of “pessimism” that every church plant will face, reminding Ephesus of that which sustains all of us positively and optimistically.

E. The Four Great Truths Of a Strong Optimistic Faith are...

THE DOCTRINE OF ESCONCEMENT

1. Energize the good side of the present and celebrate it. **Eph. 2:1-5**
2. Expand your mind on The Giver of your greatest gift and not on your current problems. **Eph. 2:6-7**
3. Recall your Victory over your enemy, sin, and that you did not earn it, but it was given to you as a gift. **Eph. 2:8-9**
4. Remember why you are here...to do good works. **Eph 2:10**

“GI-GO” = GOD IN → God Out

F. This is not some spiritual ‘special enlightenment’ by some form of Holy Spirit event, rather this is what we do to and for ourselves, although God does help us in this through the work of the Holy Spirit. It starts with me and my mind.

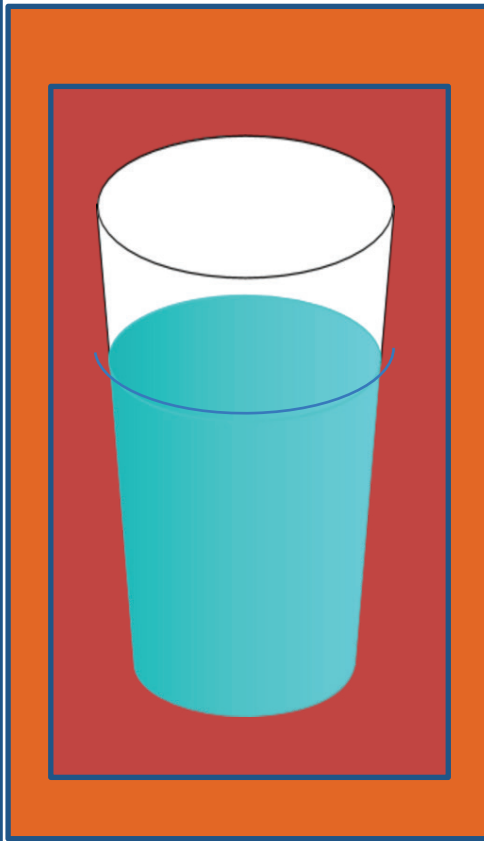
G. The great historical case upon which we base all of our faith and subsequent actions is “Jesus”

**NEVER FORGET
YOUR OWN
HISTORY**

H. Congregations who only base things on our work, are not real, nor real Christians..... There must be God’s part too: recognized and celebrated.

I. In this application of the four, we will come to know God better. In knowing God better, we will look up and recognize that we ‘can’, and that we ‘will’, with God.

The Mindset Case:



1. **OPTIMIST:** "½ FULL, AND MORE TO COME"
2. **PESSIMIST:** "½ EMPTY AND BEST CHECK FOR LEAKS."
3. **REALIST:** "THERE IS WATER IN THE GLASS."
4. **NIHILIST:** "I DO NOT CARE IF THERE IS, OR IS NOT, ANY WATER IN THAT GLASS. WHAT IS IN IT FOR ME?"
5. **MEDICAL DOCTOR:** "DRINK 6 TO 8 GLASSES OF WATER, PER DAY, FOR GOOD HEALTH."
6. **MATHEMATICIAN:** "THERE IS BETWEEN 50% TO 75% CAPACITY OF WATER IN THIS CYLINDER. I MUST MEASURE IT"
7. **CHEMIST:** "THERE IS H₂O IN THAT GLASS, ALONG WITH SOME SIMPLE AIR."
8. **ENGINEER/INVENTOR:** "WE CAN MAKE A BIGGER AND STRONGER GLASS!"
9. **ASTRONOMY STUDENT:** "REALLY, DID THIS COME BACK FROM MARS ON THE LAST PROBE"
10. **RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY STUDENT:** "WHAT? THE 'GLASS BIT', AGAIN! WE HEARD THIS LAST WEEK, AND THE WEEK BEFORE....".
11. **KID:** "OOH, WATER, AND I'M THIRSTY SO LETS JUST DRINK THE ALL THE WATER IN THE GLASS."
12. **DETECTIVE:** "WHO PUT THAT GLASS THERE? ---WHAT IS IN THE GLASS?ARE THERE ANY FINGER PRINTS?"
13. **POLITICIAN:** "WHO IS LOOKING INTO THE WATER IN THAT GLASS TODAY?"
14. **AUSTRALIAN SUBMARINER:** ""WATER!!!" GET TO THE SURFACE, NOW !!
15. **THIRSTY DESERT TRAVELLER:** " A drop of Water! Finally!!"
16. **PLANT:** "Oooh, RAIN IN A CUP! -THANKS, BOSS!"
17. **WEST TEXAS COTTON FARMER:** "HEH MA?! BETTER CALL AND ORDER TWO OR THREE MORE SACKS OF COTTON SEED THIS YEAR. ITS GOING TO BE A BUMPER CROP"
18. **SYDNEYSIDER:** "½ A GLASS OF WATER... IT MUST BE REALLY WET IN MELBOURNE.....LETS CELEBRATE. YOUR SHOUT"
19. **MOTHER:** "QUICK! PUT A COASTER UNDER THAT GLASS BEFORE IT MAKES MY TABLE!"
20. **TWO YEAR OLD:** "[OPPORTUNITY KNOCKETH] 'I BETCHA I CAN TURN THIS OVER..... THAT WAS FUN. LET'S DO IT AGAIN.'"

V. The Outcome Of An Optimistic Heart. **Eph 2:10ff**

- A. POINT: If we know and practice “optimistic thinking” better we should be able to see the importance of the “optimistic heart” straight away and be filled with its ‘hope’ ...or so one may think.
- B. I does not take much to see that “pessimism” kills the individual’s energy, drive, focus, and eventually, their faith. Pessimism / fear is a great weapon that is used to discourage every church plant, because it always seeks to undermines the necessary factors of all ‘hope’, ----- slowly and assuredly.
- C. We can then easily see the value of positive, Christ-centered, “optimism” as being a ready protection against the Devil, because “God” is glorified in the way that God intended to be revealed, known, and absolutely obeyed, in a true form of optimistic, constant outreach, and ‘God-hope’ is strengthened and given some ‘long enduring legs’. → **We have been blessed by Jesus !**
- D. Any alteration from the standards of real optimism, and all of the very necessary companion elements of ‘realized optimism’, is now a victory for the Devil, who now becomes the prime ‘master’ of a church plant, taking away hope and purpose and life-bloods.
- E. When people leave and go there own way, they’re telling us their preferred gospel, in defiance to the low-hope, proscribed, gospel, of ‘conservativism’ and ‘pessimism’ and thus setting up the standard of a selfish, ego-centricism and closet anti-God worship.
- F. Even if the name of Jesus is used repeatedly, and frequently, the real God of the pessimist is that child inside of us that is just a “smartened up form” of form of pure rebellion and constant warfare against all of the potential positive successes of any church plant. **All pessimistic thinking is an enemy of Christ.**
- G. But... “Optimism” recognizes God as supreme, and my self as but a servant of the supreme power, who is actually in control, anyway. ***Remember that Jesus is head over all things for the church. (Eph. 1:22) Thus if the whole church family is growing and rejoicing in all the elements of that growth, then Jesus is involved there, and He is then absent from any and all of the ‘pessimistic attitudes’, or other minimalisations that one may conjure up. Focus on the fact that all optimistic thinking promotes real ‘God-hope’.***
- H. Thus, “optimism” promotes stability and growth, but “pessimism” promotes static death and the fear of growth because of the fear of what ‘may’ happen. **Therefore focus on all of the centralities of the holistic -faith relationship for the sake of the group / plant / congregation.**

E. The Outcome Of Having That Optimistic Heart For Humanity 's Sake.

- A. "Christian Optimism" makes room for a new mindset where the whole of mankind is included on equal footing. This is essential for long range church health
- B. The breakdown of the lines of communication is one of the fruits of overt conservatism, and a pursuit of puritan ideals, aka Oliver Cromwell and the New Modern Army.
- C. -----**ASIDE:** We in the Church of Christ need to look even farther back in history if we wish to see our real ancestors and progenitors. Our history actually included the work of Thomas Campbell, Alexander Campbell, and Barton W. Stone; but it did not start with them. They were responding to the pressures and politics of their day in Northern Ireland, along with Robert Haldane in Scotland. They were the real product of the English civil wars and the rise of the whole Puritan movement. Even today, we still see evidence of the continued maintenance of the Puritanical correctness of conservativistic lifestyles.
- D. --**So, to be a successful church plant , we need to listen to Paul's point about the real centrality that should epitomize the Church of our Lord, found in Ephesians 2:11-22. → →**
Read it carefully.....
- E. What do we need to do? ---- **First, identify our real opposition and our real foes !!!!!** Who are they?
- F. **Second**, we must remember that we were brought into a relationship with God that we had not had, historically before.....**this should produce joy, but not elitism.** This is going to be evidenced by our preaching of all of the elements of "Christ-centered peace",
- G. --- **!!! Doctrine is crucial, but doctrine by itself is the road to congregational death.** It can not be the only element of a congregational development plan; that is a very poor diet and a very foolish leader. Touch the hearts and the intellect of a congregation!!!
- H. So, yes, ---"Christian Optimism" does go a long way towards making room for a new mindset and appreciation where the whole of mankind is included on an equal opportunity of footing, with an equal focus in our future basic missions.

The Mindset Case:



.....My way !!!

..... No! My way !!!

..... Why not God's way and be done with it ???

When all of the kids begin to "compete", the game, and the joy, is eventually going to be lost, and all the energy gets directed to the squabble and not the game.

- I. The 'abolishing' of the old school "two part world", into a single world was the eternal goal of God all along. Jesus did not just throw the old law out so we would have a new and better 'law': He did not just change the basic legalism of all of the earlier covenants, --- He changed mankind's basic relationship picture, once, for all, for the real benefit and hope of all.
- J. The optimism of the new relationship now embraces the dynamics, of all people and all cultures, under one common response to God, via real "God-like love" in our mission perspectives. "We seek truth, and we seek relationships based on the penultimate" truth of God's way / word, and His acceptance of people as the objects of His love.
- K. This is a totally new concept of a "Godly society": one based not on the exactitude of a perfect legalistic conformity, but on the realities of His 'grace'; not on mere obedience, but on love and mercy, and devotion. This is a whole different picture of "God" from what which went on in the training segment of history, before the actual advent of Jesus.
- L. In "Jesus" we now have the perfect edifice, the perfect picture, the perfect and absolute master, the perfect picture of how to view all other peoples.
- M. Jesus must be the perceived center point of the Church in its teachings and in any, and every, community, as well as the functional center of the whole Christian communities public presentation.....sadly this is impossible in a nominal-centered organization, in a biased and segregation based society, be that segregation based on race or any other thing. **This is the new mindset by which the church must be known**
- N. Today the church is known in many areas as that group which is non-denominational, does not use musical instruments in worship and which preaches baptism as the great difference between the old and new covenants the message of Jesus is totally lost, and or an aside to these particular points.....now that is very sad !!!!!
- O. The 'diminished Jesus' is a totally wrong point to leave behind in people's minds when the preacher sits down. **Read Ephesians 2:11-22, --- again and meditate on it.**

VI. OUR MINISTRY And OUR MISSION Eph 3:1-13

- A. God begin the long planned ministry and mission of the church when He called all people, in **Acts 2**, to come to "Him and He even called that arch-Pharisee Saul of Tarsus. in **Acts 9** to do so. A new relationship is revealed along with a new message.
- B. This is the biggest change in all of world thought and Paul thus confirms this new and proper world view, here in the Ephesian letter, to both that congregation, as well as to you and I today.
- C. This letter is then, not so much a list of additional doctrinal matters to be added to our doctrinal war-chest, as it is a sounding of the "charge" to the church, to get them up and working, as a purposed unit, keeping them focused on pursuing the ministry and mission that God has now finally revealed and authorized, [**→ This was done after the long 'age of training', sometimes called the "Edenic", "Ante-Diluvian", "Diluvian", "Patriarchial", and "Mosaical" dispensations of the O.T. --These are a bit misleading terms at the best of times.]**
- D. So what does this charge really mean for you and me, Joe and Brenda Pewsitter, today, where we are at?

- E. This is a very major question for all of the church, because the church is in trouble, --very 'grave-trouble'-- ...and that phrase 'grave-trouble' is **the appropriate term**, albeit a sort of a pun...
- F.no matter what congregation of believers we are attending, Christianity has lost the sense of the primacy of His voice in all of western culture. This current deficit reality is then the beginning of the slow lose of personal ministry and mission consciousness. It is not a new thing at all; -- it is not a new phenomenon, but it is a phenomenon of such severe proportions that we have to deal with. **[NOTE: the ultra-conservative will not even consider this because they are afraid of having to change because of their false use of language and logic.]**
- G. The next question is then **what do we do, NOW**? First, we must divorce ourselves from all 'pew-sitting' mentalities, practices and dependence's upon a special trained, professional staff, who will do all of out thinking and service for us, as well as defending every possible aspect of 'Puritan defined, legalistic ideology and beliefs' --- something we do not even see because we have shut down and left the thinking to those 'professional and egotistical few who adhere to pessimism / fear / --and legalism.
Paul asks the individual to serve and think in the Ephesian letter !!
- H. **That is not easy, but it can be done, and it must be done, again.** They had to fight this same problem in every first century church plant where Jewish thought and legalized Phariseism reigned and railed against the rejection of the old ways, and then sought to rerouted the train of faith, as it did evidently in Ephesus and so many other places.

VI. OUR MINISTRY And OUR MISSION Eph 3:1-13

- I. To get the church back into its proper place in society it starts with our own mindset. So we need to start think and speaking along those lines which will universally recognize and promote the central fact of "The Faith".
- J. To do that, we must adjust our fundamental logic line. This will mean that we must no longer use the term **"CONSERVATISM"** as a proper synonym for **"CHRISTIAN"**, nor for any of the parts of **"CHRISTIANITY"**.
- K. NOTE: Conservative thinking is not bad, in its own right, if the dynamic we follow is the dynamic and the fulfillment of the ministry of being a "Christ preaching – Christ honoring" voice on the whole world stage, telling all the people the real message, ministry, mission and meaning of God's church, meeting the challenges of all of the competing philosophies and cultures. **[Primitive cultures are no more sacrosanct than any other culture that is not based on being 'Christian'. We must present the gospel opportunity.]**
- L. FACT: The philosophy of "Ultra-Conservatism" will, over time, bring us to the place that it has already brought us to, repeatedly and destructively. Paul told the Colossian church "don't get caught in the trap of that which sounds like 'good thinking', but is not good thinking. **[Colossians 2:8-14]**
- M. So, "conservatism", and all other man made philosophies, are really filters by which we present our mission and our ministry Our thought patterns as well as our voices must clearly define who we are, and whose we are, just as they did in the first century, not long after the start of the Church. This will destroy the church works done so far, as it has always done. **WE MUST COME TO REAL GRIPS WITH PAUL'S WORDS TO THE EPHESIANS: ALWAYS THINK "JESUS" – "JESUS" – "JESUS".**
- N. ➔ ➔ Thus, we must take great care in every church plant, as Paul did here, to develop a mindset that is not just a bunch of new 'laws' for the sake of having 'laws and rules for living', but to develop a mindset that is an expression of the real mission and ministry of Lord we serve.If we lose sight of our sovereign, or even the thought of Him, we will build nothing more than a 21st century form of a first century nightmare ➔. Neo-Judaism.
- O. Thus Paul offers this advice to the Ephesians, as they 'play the game'
 1. **"Christ" is the great mystery, finally revealed,appreciate and honor Him above all other things, ideas, and laws. He is the one and only message and rule maker that we should be known by.** **Ephesians 3:1-5**
 2. **Tell everyone that "Christ" is for all, and not just for the elite and the 'perfect few'. Open yourselves up to the mission and get on with it, personally Don't just study, -speak / think** **Ephesians 3: 6**
 3. **"Preach Christ" and His boundless riches, open and free to all.** **Ephesians 3:7-8**
 4. **...and yes, also.... "Preach the way to make this grace come alive in people too, using God's given and revealed way without losing the picture of Jesus** **Ephesians 3:9**
 5. **Commit yourself to telling even the kings of the earth the message of Jesus and God's grace through Jesus.** **Ephesians 3:10-11**



Why didn't the writers of the four gospels present any of Jesus' teaching sessions on the intricacies and connections between all of the Old Testament passages and the new coming covenant?

VII. OUR MINISTRY And OUR MISSION Eph 3:14-21 THE HEART OF OUR PRAYERS

- A. People truly do 'pray' for what is really on their hearts and upper most in their minds, as John Stott once noted. They may just voice some long learned trite expressions while down on their knees, but they actually "pray" about the most important things they are having to confront and with which they have to contend.
- B. Paul in the second great prayer in this letter, requests God to help sustain and secure the congregation there in Ephesus. Paul has both fears for this young church and a knowledge that all churches will face these same attacks on their primary ministry and mission.
1. Paul first says, he is praying that God will **strengthen the Ephesian's inner heart with power through the Holy Spirit**. Do we ever pray for this, today? Can we pray for this today? Should we pray such a prayer today? → It is a rare prayer request in most congregations, I fear.
 2. He says second that he is asking God to help them **have Jesus dwell in their hearts, through faith, so that they are grounded in Jesus and in their love**. This is fundamental to our faith presentation, -more so than any bit of restoration logic!!!
 3. He lastly says that he is praying that they "**may have strength to comprehend with all the holy ones what is the breadth and length and height and depth,¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.**" so that the congregation will truly know Christ, ever better.
 4. To build a congregation, the leaders, the preachers, the teachers, the servants and even the janitors, need to be going about their jobs so that Jesus is known ever better. This aspect of every church plant, young or old, is that which gives life, energy, and direction.
 5. When people have lost this primary thought, they begin to grumble and complain, seeing fault in everyone else. This robs the church plant of all vitality and hope. Such a theft of identity is a devilish ministry....it is never Christian. If the world knows us for what we are against and not for "whose we are", we have failed and sustaining energy is lost.

VII. OUR GOD WHOM WE SERVE

Ephesians 3: 20-21

²⁰ Now to Him who is able to accomplish far more than all we ask or imagine, by the power at work within us, ²¹ to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

- A. **God is the absolute.** We must always recognize Him as the primary power. No other power, no matter who or what is greater or more capable than He is.
- B. He is the supreme one, the one and only sovereign, the commander, who is to be obeyed, in all matters.....
- C. **"Giving Glory" is more of a military term than anything else.** It is like the giving of a salute to a superior officer, in this case, to the one who is The Supreme Commander.
- D. **"Giving Glory" is a call to a lifestyle, it is not a couple of quickly expressed words without thought or meaning.** It can never be done without meditation and total surrender!!
- E. We are to give all glory to Him, in word, in deed, and in submission.
[the key term here is submission.]
 - 1. This means that "I" can not be 'God', nor can 'I' order Him around in my prayers, praying those "give me-give me" type of prayers. **I serve Him, not the other way around as so often is seen.**
 - 2. **"Giving Glory" is the act of supreme submission** and it is always building the **"work-servant-mindset"**.
 - 3. It is not a resting position that is called for to "give glory", but a bending of the will and the knee, and being like the wise virgins, always ready to jump up at midnight to serve and honor the bridegroom.
 - 4. **"Giving Glory" is not ever a "when-it-is-convenient" lifestyle.**
 - 5. It is not a "family-first-lifestyle", either.
 - 6. It is not a just "get-by" life style, but a "give it a 110% in all things, life style.
 - 7. It is not a 'peace-at-any-cost' lifestyle.
 - 8. **IT IS A GOD FIRST LIFESTYLE.**
 - 9. **IT IS THE WILLINGNESS TO DIE FOR JESUS, IF NECESSARY, and it will probably be necessary**
 - 10. **"Giving Glory" is the church plants primary mission. It is not just a call to remember how powerful God is, but of our duty in the process of under-standing His awesome, total power, and total love for all of mankind, expressed through is church.**



What things did Jesus actually teach the apostles????

VII. OUR MINISTRY And OUR MISSION Eph 3:14-21 THE HEART OF OUR PRAYERS

C. Jesus taught: The Big Picture that we are to still teach as the primary's

1. - The down hearted, that they were *valuable in their own right*, because they too were loved by Godask the people who listened to Him on the mountain side
2. - God wants the pure hearted youth, and the innocent little child, as well as the highly educatedask the kids who followed Him around Galilee
3. - God cares about the non-Jews as much as the Jewsask the woman at the well
4. - God cares about the sinner and those who have fallenask the woman caught in adultery
5. - God cares about the sick and diseased of mindask Legion
6. - Salvation is by way of surrender and not by perfection in our keeping of any laws, or in our stature ...ask the rich young ruler. ... ask Zacchaeus
7. - God wants people to look to Jesus, hear Jesus, and to let the rest of history be subordinate to His Sonask the men at the transfiguration
8. - God wants people of faith to follow Him out of choiceask the crippled woman who was healed on the Sabbath
9. - God wants His people to give their everything to Himask the widow who only had two mites
10. - God is full of power way far beyond any concept of man's imagination and He controls even life over death.....ask Lazarus
11. -**And many more.....→ → never once do we have recorded an example of where Jesus took His disciples on a "connect the dots" search of obscure and quasi-theological type of studies, or demonstrate any of the other "ego-centric mentalities".**
12. - Jesus taught hope, belief, service, love and absolute surrender in real time
13. - Jesus lifted people up to higher plains of consciousness rather than the ivory towers of mere knowledge.
14. - Jesus said that He was the way, the truth and the life.....WHEN WILL THE CHURCH EVER GET THIS SIMPLE MESSAGE, FILLED WITH THE HAPPINESS OF THE UP-CAST FACE.
15. - Then Paul told the Ephesians about Gods power to help. He said **"...Now to Him who is able to accomplish far more than all we ask or imagine, by the power at work within us, ²¹ to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen."**

→ → → LETS GET OUR BALANCE POINT RIGHT, THE MINISTRY AND THEN THE MISSION WILL BE RIGHT.AND LET US LEARN OF God's power/ methods, too.

POINT: JESUS DID NOT TEACH DOCTRINAL RELATIONSHIP, FIRST.
BUT JESUS TAUGHT GOD'S CARING FIRST, WITH DOCTRINAL RELATIONSHIPS TO FOLLOW.
[Cf. The Sermon On The Mount's teaching pattern]

VII. UNITY WITHIN A CHURCH PLANT

Ephesians 4:1-16

I. Some preliminary thoughts:

- A. After the proper identification of the new congregations identity, mission and ministry of a church plant comes the development of unity. Unity is one of the most important factors in all church plants and one of the most difficulty to maintain in a dynamic and productive manner.

Note: there is an all too frequent church plant motive of a 'personal utopia' a hideaway from responsibility that must be combatted from the beginning.far too many preachers spend too much time in bible study and or drinking coffee than in actual congregation development and clearings foe the way of unity .

- B. Unity must be understood as a work that everyone in the plant is firmly committed to, above and beyond ant concerns or agendas that can be pursued by any one individual. Church plants can not ever tolerate any of the "lone wolf" antics.
- C. UNITY ACCORDING TO PAUL: There is a point when we have to stop philosophizing about, dreaming of, and just constantly studying the scriptures and just down to plain old 'working' to establish the new congregation as a "family for God"

Note: Time spent in study is good time spent, but study in esoterics and the minutes of "my personal theology and why I think this way" are total wastes of time and actually they are denials of both grace and Jesus, in the long run.

II. Unity versus Uniformity: The Great Silent Killer.

- A. What is the difference between these two points?

1. **"Unity"** is the pursuit of a common goal while allowing the individual members the right of 'loving dissent and disagreement'. It is the belief that we do not all have to believe exactly alike on all points to maintain family structure. It is saying we are all in a state of growth and we need to give room to each other to allow all of "us" to grow ever more 'together.'
2. So what does Paul really mean in **1 Corinthians 1:10?** → **"UNITY" or "UNIFORMITY"** → TWO GREAT ENEMIES OF EACH OTHER ...
3. **"Uniformity"** is, on the other hand, one idea, and only one idea, -that normally being, of course, "my idea". There is only one way to say things, see things and to defend things, for God has put special knowledge in my mind / mouth, and all must conform to my teachings or else we violate the "Puritan Code that I have designed for me".
4. All conservative filtration systems are built on uniformity, and not on unity. Unity is an enemy of conservatism which fears all challenges to the perceived way.



VS



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CHAOS

Remember: This first relational, and second doctrinal

VII. UNITY WITHIN A CHURCH PLANT

Ephesians 4:1-16

A. HOW DO WE ACHIEVE BALANCED ONENESS ? ----

➔ Ephesians 4:1-6

1. We all must live to express in daily actions that sort of life that says, "Jesus is the Lord and Master, The Divine Taskmaster." Eph 4:1
2. All must practicing real humility - sublimation of the self Eph. 4:2a
3. All must be patient - bearing with one another in a common love for God and each another Eph. 4:2b
4. All must be making every effort to be unified in peace as the definitive of our singularity, living and functioning as a congregation that is "one God-ed", "one people-ed", and "one faith-ed" UNITY Eph. 4:3-6
5. After all, we all are the recipients of 'one grace', sufficient and thus appropriate to meet our sin needs directly, thus we are all totally equal and thus 'uniform' in this matter. Eph. 4:7
6. We all have a unique and common attachment to God, the supernatural Lord, who came down here for all of believing mankind. Eph. 4:9-10
7. We all have been commissioned and assigned roles to prepare God's people for long service life and positive production and a common sense of mission-ministry-knowledge of Jesus the Lord. Eph. 4:11-13
8. **THUS WE ALL ARE TO GROW UP, TOGETHER INTO A COMMON TEAM; STEADY AND STALWART AND SECURE IN OUR COMMON GROUND, OUR COMMON MISSION, OUR COMMON MODE OF OPERATION, OUR COMMON 'BODY'.** Eph. 4:14-16
9. ➔ ➔ ➔ SO DON'T MESS IT UP BY BEING "A LONE WOLF" AND FIGHTING THE 'BROTHERHOOD OF THIS GREAT "ONENESS"'. We all have more than enough to do on our own watch.
10. NOTE: While the idea of "one" here in 4:5 does carry the idea of a singular and identifiable God, and likewise a singularity of our faith's expression and the subsequent singularity of doctrine, as well as the one single way to appeal to Him for His salvation's application to our lives, this is a secondary concept at best here. It is not the primary point!!! In the church we tend to make the secondary here the prime and that is not what Paul is saying. The primary point is the one common set of foundations which have been given to define our common brotherhood, the one we are being told to defend here in Ephesians 4.
11. There were lots of competing ideas, religions and philosophies in Ephesus, just as there are today where we are. To loose sight of the one goal, one supreme Lord, is to loose the church plant's central core values and visions. This is something to guard against, in very serious and constant measure, as a family member would naturally do for his family.
12. REMEMBER: --The "common picture", if held by all, builds a real, loving, congregational unity and thus a real reserve of energy, making the church plant / congregation always self-sustaining and always supporting fellowship that is ever works towards a truly common reality. Anything that is against that common reality-truth will naturally be driven out.



The Mindset Case:



**IT IS ON THE
RELATIONSHIP LEVEL'S,
WITHIN THE
CONGREGATION, THAT
MOST CHURCH PROBLEMS EXIST
AND ARE ACTUALLY BASED**

**Church plants fail because of
Self-centered based actions
and a denial of the absolute
surrender of the people to Jesus.**

**If we do not love Him first,
we will get pulled down and become
segregated and serrated to the soul.
When ever one is seen as separated
from a congregation, it is usually
because the separated person will
not work with other adults due to
that person's self-willed nature and
their love of just being different.**

VIII. THE FUNDAMENTAL BOUNDARIES WITHIN "UNITY"

Ephesians 4:17-5:4

A. THE RISE OF "ANTINOMIANISM"

1. Some people argue that there should be, **absolutely, no laws and no responsibilities, to be demanded of any member**. This idea is called 'antinomianism', or "**the worship of no laws and the demand that there be no judgements at all**", --no matter what is defined as judgements, they are opposed to all of them.
2. This is a highly subjective concept that has raised its head several times each century in very small ,individualistic camps, over the last few years. Bible-wise, it is not Christ-like at all.
3. What is most amazing is that the 'antinomian' factions of the past have written more "laws governing the whole concept of 'no laws'", than the legalist have written, whom they oppose vigorously, and thus they have become the super-legalists of their day through the force of their demand's presentation.

B. Other congregations have become so 'tolerant' oriented that they follow the antinomian line, but with a softer spirit. There are no boundaries in this practice at all, with everything and every body being accepted on their own level,

C. Paul has the same advice for both of these forms of perversion. He says, -
-----Ephesians 4:17-5:4-----

1. Note this is both highly doctrinal and highly relational. -For those who argue against the teaching of doctrine this passages is a major stumbling block.
2. What Paul is doing is the establishing of some very necessary boundaries by which inter-personal relationships are to be governed.
3. The 'antinominalist' and their twins, the 'super-tolerance-sympathizers', go to a boundary to squelch and control the voices of opposition to their way of thinking. at some point, thus this becomes the law used to defend the "no-law and no-judgement" ideology.

D. PAUL'S 'BOUNDARY LINES' -----for all church plants, young and old-----

A. **He suggests that the first building block is**

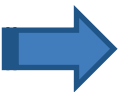
B. ➔ ➔ **Don't rely on just your own way of thinking!** That is what the gentiles do.....rather, **we** are to be a part of a group who thinks and works, --together

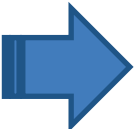
Ephesians 4:16-18

The Mindset Case:

[REMEMBER THE GENERAL CONTEXT THAT Paul has been developing of 'unity' and 'co-operation']

- 2) Coupled directly to this is do not be hardened in your heart, and thus never seeking out the thoughts of others, not to just debate them, but to learn from them. This is one of the great sins of conservatism, a reliance only on the thinking of the past heroes.. The followers of this tradition will become their own, and their only, interpreters. **Ephesians 4:17-19**
- 3) "Boundaries " are thus crucial, or else we have no element in place to stop ourselves from crossing the line into infidelity, and therefore no governance for rogue thinking
Ephesians 4:20=24
- 4) Whenever " I" become "my own and only "interpreter, " I" have just booted Jesus out of the Lordship chair and installed myself there.. That is the road that leads to becoming a follower of the 'Anti-Christ'it is never a good idea to demean and demote Jesus, even if in the process we claim to love and serve Him through our singularity.
Ephesians 4:20-24

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- 2) **THEREFORE** we are to live lives in keeping with active Godliness" speaking truth, avoiding every possible element that can dissolve the 'unity' we seek to build. Build one another up!!! With in the given boundaries that define real Godliness, as dictated by God.
Ephesians 4:20-24

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- 3) **SO THEN,** -- do not get caught up in any activity that is designed, intentionally or unintentionally, to tare down the unity and godliness of the congregation. Get out and get involved in doing something good, everyday, put your hand to work for God, and not just in doing manual hand labor type of jobs. **" Fight to uphold unity ! "No Hugenots' thinking!!**
Ephesians 4:25-28

- 4) **FOLLOW GOD'S EXAMPLE IN ALL MATTERS** Ephesians 5:1-4

These [*words*] are fountains of salvation that they who thirst may be satisfied with the living words they contain. In these alone is proclaimed the doctrine of godliness. Let no man add to these, neither let him take out from these. [ATHANASIUS THE GREAT 296-373 ad]

True godliness does not turn men out of the world, as hermits, but enables them to live better in it and excites their endeavours to mend it. [WILLIAM PENN 1644-1718 ad]

The Mindset Case:

"No Hugenots' thinking!! → What is a "Hugenot" ??---

1. In brief, "Hugenots" were French protestants who believed and lived along the lines of the 'Reformed Teachings' of John Calvin from Switzerland
2. After the wars of Religion were fought on the continent, many moved to new locations. There are significant, albeit shrinking, communities in Canada, France, England, Scotland, Germany, Switzerland, South Africa, Northern Ireland, and even Australia, today.
3. The term "Hugenot" is considered to be a derisive term by the people who practice this faith, --like members of the Church of Christ being called Campbellites. However the term has been adopted as an acceptable name in some of the communities. In Australia they are preferably called the "Australian Reformed Church".
4. Eight civil wars have been sparked into flame by the members of this faith over the years, in France mainly, but also in South Africa where many others followed this faith.
5. The Hugenots, like the Amish, believe in a more 'primitive' based lifestyle with a very full reliance on doing things humbly and simply. They believe that the real Christian works with their hands in some sort of farming or crafts. They are very opposed to higher education and academics, seeking to understand through the observations they make from current cultural tools. They take the idea from Ephesians 4 on "working with your hands", very literally, seeing this as a cover to all evangelism, which they see as a worship of a foreign and ultra legal system.
6. There is a definite altruistic side to their thinking, with The Holy Spirit speaking to them and guiding them so that they are perfect in all of their thinking, as long as they continue to follow a life plan of simplicity, isolation, and openness to the Spirits guidance. [They were the opening of the door to the Methodist-Pentecostal-Holiness movement in 1700 England.
7. Many Hugenots today call themselves the 'Congregational Church'. The Congregational Church are the third major part of the uniting of the Methodists with the Scots Presbyterian's that have come together to form the Uniting Church of today. While there are many common Calvinistic ideas, and common points of religious philosophy down through history between these three, there are still some significant differences. Not all parts of these three different groups have accepted the uniting into one common church.
8. One of the great stumbling blocks is the mode of interpretation that is employed in understanding the scriptures today.

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9. NOTE: The initial development of the ideas that culminated in the emergence of the 'Church of Christ' and the Restoration Movement in the late 1700's and early 1800's, is the very convoluted and violent history of the various civil wars and religious conflicts within England, Scotland, and Northern Ireland prior to the days of the Campbell's and Haldane's. Also included in this were the teachings of the Waldensian Movement of Northern Italy, the Hugenot Movement from France, as well as the movement of Menno Simmons and the Puritans in the Low Countries of Holland and Belgium. *We are from a very large background of ideas, and it has all been influenced by the political and religious events that caused a lot of people to start 'thinking' along the same lines, with God's help !!!*

The Mindset Case:

These [words] are fountains of salvation that they who thirst may be satisfied with the living words they contain. In these alone is proclaimed the doctrine of godliness. Let no man add to these, neither let him take out from these. [ATHANASIUS THE GREAT 296 - 373 ad]

Athanasius of Alexandria (also spelled "Athanasios") (c. 296 C.E.^[1] – May 2, 373 C.E.) was a Christian bishop —the Patriarch of Alexandria—in the fourth century. He made three primary (and integral) contributions to the theory and practice of Christianity: an endorsement of the monastic lifestyle, the formulation of the New Testament Canon, and a theological defence of the full divinity of Christ, against the position taken up by Arius /Arians.

For these contributions to the development of the Christian faith, Athanasius is revered as one of the 33 Doctors of the Church by the Roman Catholics, is counted as one of the four Great Doctors of the Eastern Church, and is regarded as one of the greatest early leaders of the church by many Protestant sects. Further, he is also venerated as a SAINT by the Roman Catholic Church,, the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Church.

There is modern criticism of Athanasius for his allegedly merciless way of treating the Arians who denied the divinity of Christ in favour of his humanity. It should be noted, however, that Athanasius himself never denied the humanity of Christ. So, a friendly dialogue between him and his Arian opponents could have happened, if he only had the mind and temperament to pursue it.

SUMMARY: He was a devout and active Christian, who was capable of violent defense of the Christ, a bishop who suffered for his faith, but who maintained that faith through out his life. We owe our bible to him, and our view of the Godhead. **Taken from New World Encyclopedia {on line}**

FURTHER: Athanasius is actually the original voice that coined the phrase, “Do not or take away from the words of God”, as used as a foundation for the whole Restoration Movement, and did so as a Proto-Catholic. Alexander Campbell lifted it during his days at the University of Glasgow, where he studied theology.