



I AM GOD

ARE YOU SEARCHING FOR SPIRITUAL ANSWERS IN SCIENCE,
EDUCATION, OR HUMANISTIC PHILOSOPHIES?

I AM GOD

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Second edition 2006

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PN 01.01.02
ISBN 978-0-7617-1214-5

Printed in the United States of America by Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, Missouri.

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INTRODUCTION

New Age. Age of Aquarius. Channeling, karma, astral plane, the occult, inner self, crystals, transformation, Source energy, meditation, higher consciousness, incarnation, at-one-ment. All of these terms are familiar people exploring or involved in what has been described as the *New Age* worldview which is permeating every area of life in our society in the twenty-first century.

The *New Age* worldview might better be described as a renewed quest for spirituality by people who have not found in science, education, and humanism satisfying answers to the deepest longings of the human soul. Perhaps this describes where you are at the present time. Some *New Age* concepts began as far back as the Garden of Eden, and they are appealing because they promise spirituality without commitment to a certain “religious” point of view. The issues they raise need to be carefully explored to determine if they represent ultimate Truth. That is what we will try to do in this book.

In the following pages we will emphasize the importance of developing a personal worldview that passes four important tests of cohesiveness. We will also endeavor to determine whether the basic issues of the *New Age* worldview can pass these tests; and we will support our analysis of these issues with an overview of what the Bible teaches concerning each one. Keep in mind that the *New Age* worldview is not an organized religion, and people who have embraced this general point of view do not always agree on all of the issues. Many hold beliefs that are not addressed here; but these seem to be the basic issues.

Perhaps you have been drawn to the *New Age* worldview because certain aspects of it appeal to your desire to understand your own spiritual nature and destiny. Perhaps you are searching for answers to some of life’s toughest, most painful problems or you are looking for meaning in life. If you have a longing to satisfy your inner spiritual craving for “something more,” you need to read this book and carefully reflect on what it reveals about basic issues of the *New Age* worldview and the implications that derive from these issues. If you are seeking spiritual fulfillment now and for eternity, be sure you are looking in the right place.

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this study, you should be able to:

- Identify your personal worldview.
 - Discuss important issues of the New Age worldview.
 - Analyze whether there are critical implications, weaknesses, and contradictions inherent in these issues.
 - Understand biblical teaching related to these issues.
 - Make life-changing decisions about spiritual issues affecting your own eternal destiny.
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We gratefully acknowledge the generosity of Dr. Ronald H. Nash, Professor of Philosophy and Theology at Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando, Florida, for allowing us to include in this study his description of the five basic clusters of beliefs contained in any worldview and his four major tests for evaluating a worldview. Dr. Nash also served as a consultant during the writing of this course, and his contributions throughout the process have been invaluable.

Thanks, also, to those who have permitted us to tell their stories, including those of encounters with various New Age and occult practices and the effects of these encounters in their lives. Their stories are real, but their names have been changed in this book.

1 NEW AGE ISSUES AND YOUR WORLDVIEW

SUSAN'S STORY:

I decided that when I grew up, I would never go to church. My parents were converted in a revival meeting when I was six years old and became devout members of their church. We went to church twice on Sunday and on Wednesday nights for prayer meeting. But life in our home was far from perfect. My father would fly into sudden rages, or sometimes he would not speak to us for days. We were required to obey many “do’s” and “don’ts,” but there was very little peace or happiness in our home. Even as a young teenager, I saw the inconsistencies in what my father purported to be on Sunday and how he lived at home. Christianity seemed, to me, to be something restrictive and joyless. Our lifestyle seemed, to me, to be inferior to that of our non-churchgoing neighbors.

TOPICS _____

Understanding Your Worldview

Applying Tests to Your Worldview

Seeing New Age Issues as a Worldview

CAN YOU DESCRIBE YOUR WORLDVIEW?

Dr. Ronald H. Nash has identified five basic clusters of beliefs that form a worldview. They are . . .

BELIEFS ABOUT GOD

What does your worldview say about God? Does God exist? Is there one God? Many gods? What is God's nature? Personal and loving? An impersonal force? Whatever your belief about the concept we call *God*, it will shape your total worldview.

BELIEFS CONCERNING ULTIMATE REALITY

Is the universe eternal or did it have a beginning? Was it created by an almighty, transcendent God who continues to sustain it, or was it a product of mere chance? Is the natural world all there is? Is there design and purpose in the universe, or is it a product of chaos and chance? Are supernatural events possible? Do spirit beings exist?

BELIEFS ABOUT KNOWLEDGE

Is knowledge about the world possible? Is sense experience reliable? What is the place of reason in discovering knowledge? Can we know God? Is truth absolute or relative? Can faith and reason coexist? Your views about how one gains knowledge are crucial to your development of a coherent worldview.

BELIEFS ABOUT ETHICS

What is the basis upon which one determines whether a certain act is morally right or wrong? Is morality a cultural factor or a universal value? Are moral values objective or subjective? Are we accountable for our actions? How you answer these questions will reveal your ethical beliefs and inform your worldview.

BELIEFS ABOUT HUMAN NATURE

Are humans merely physical beings and the product of evolutionary processes, or are they complex, created beings possessing body, soul, and spirit? Are they determined or free? Is this life all there is? Do humans survive after death? Will they spend eternity in heaven or hell? What is the human nature like?

UNDERSTANDING YOUR WORLDVIEW

Your worldview is, quite simply, a set of views or beliefs about life and the universe. It is your comprehensive conception or understanding of the world and your environment from a specific standpoint. It consists of what you believe about the most important issues in life. Sometimes this is called one's "philosophy of life." Your worldview influences your everyday life in many ways. It guides you in the decisions you make and how you relate to others. It is the foundation for discovering meaning in your life.

Dr. Ronald Nash, a Christian philosopher, emphasizes that in order to interpret and judge reality, we must have a cohesive worldview which in some way forms a system.¹ Look carefully on the preceding page at the five basic clusters of beliefs identified by Dr. Nash as being the necessary ingredients of a cohesive worldview system. What we believe in each of these areas must be compatible with what we believe in the other areas, or our worldview is inconsistent. If our beliefs are contradictory, we do not have a reliable worldview.

Susan's story at the beginning of this lesson illustrates that a person's worldview or philosophy of life may be inadequate or inconsistent. Her father considered himself a devout Christian, but his lifestyle was inconsistent with the Christian way of life he professed. Many people have been turned away from Christianity by people whose Christian worldview did not measure up. Perhaps this was your experience.

Our worldview must provide meaningful answers to difficult questions of life, such as:

"Why has this bad thing happened to my family?"

"What should I do with my life?"

"Why did my child die?"

"Is abortion always wrong? Is it ever justified?"

"What is the best decision for me in this circumstance?"

"Should I stay with an unfaithful spouse for our children's sake?"

"In a given situation, does the end justify the means?"

"How can I realize my fullest potential?"

When I was young, I mulled over and over in my mind the concept of

eternity. I could not grasp the idea of timelessness. *How*, I asked myself, *could something always have existed? How can something continue forever?* Some questions are unanswerable to our finite minds. Some things may remain mysteries. It is important for us to have a worldview which helps us come to grips with such questions.

APPLYING TESTS TO YOUR WORLDVIEW

How does one evaluate a worldview to determine whether it is logically consistent? Dr. Nash has identified four major tests one should apply to any worldview to determine its coherence. These are 1) the test of reason; 2) the test of outer experience; 3) the test of inner experience; and 4) the test of practice.² If a worldview fails any of these tests, it needs to be reexamined carefully. Following is a summary of his discussion of these tests:

1) THE TEST OF REASON

This is the test of *logic* or of *non-contradiction*. It states, for example, that *A* (which can be anything) cannot be both *B* and non-*B* at the same time in the same sense. A belief (*A*) cannot be true (*B*) and false (non-*B*) at the same time in the same sense. A *round* object cannot also be *square*. The two concepts *round* and *square* are contradictory. A logically-consistent worldview must hold together logically both in its parts—its individual propositions—and as a whole.

It is important to emphasize, however, that while the presence of a contradiction in a worldview will alert us to error, the absence of contradiction does not guarantee the presence of truth. Other criteria are needed to do that. Let us look now at the *test of experience*, which we will divide into the test of *outer experience* and the test of *inner experience*.

2) THE TEST OF OUTER EXPERIENCE

By *outer experience* we are referring to our experience of the world outside us—what we perceive. It expresses what we know to be true of the physical universe. In our day, any worldview which claims that the world is flat or that the earth is the center of the solar system would fail this test. Examples of other beliefs which fail the test are: 1) pain and death are illusions; 2) human beings are innately good; and 3) humans are making constant progress toward perfection. Our worldview must fit what we know about the external world.

3) THE TEST OF INNER EXPERIENCE

What do you know about yourself? You know that you think, hope, experience pleasure and pain, and have certain beliefs and desires. Are you also conscious of moral right and wrong? Do you experience a feeling of guilt or shame when you fail to do what is right?

Humans have memory of the past, are conscious of the present, and look forward to the future. We can hear beautiful music and then replay it in our minds. We can dream dreams and imagine things that do not actually exist. We can make plans and carry them out. We have the capacity to love, to empathize, and to share someone else's sorrow or joy. We know that someday we will die. Many people are convinced that they will experience life after the death of their body.

Think about your own inner experience, your feelings, thoughts, and impressions. Are there any "gray areas" that do not quite fit into your general philosophy of life? If your worldview is inconsistent with what you know about yourself, it is clearly defective.

4) THE TEST OF PRACTICE

As we have illustrated, a person's worldview should pass the test in the laboratory of life. Ask yourself this question: Can I live *consistently* in harmony with the system I profess, or am I forced to live according to beliefs borrowed from a competing system?

Dr. Nash tells the story of the gangster Mickey Cohen, who responded to the invitation at a Billy Graham crusade and made a profession of faith in Christ. However, in the months that followed, his life showed no evidence of Christian regeneration. When questioned about this, Mr. Cohen made it clear that he was not going to leave his career as a gangster. He stated that just as there are Christian movie stars and Christian politicians, he wanted to be known as the first Christian gangster!³

Unlike the example given here, Christianity is replete with testimonies of lives changed as people leave their non-Christian practices and pattern their lives after the example of Jesus Christ. The test of practice indicates overwhelmingly that when people truly experience salvation in Christ, their daily lives bear witness of this.

SEEING NEW AGE ISSUES AS A WORLDVIEW

What do New Age issues have to do with your personal worldview? As we have indicated, everyone has a worldview, although not all worldviews are clearly defined or expressed. The five issues we will explore in the remainder of this study represent some of the major New Age beliefs.

As we look at each New Age issue, we will relate it to its area of worldview belief, and you will have an opportunity to examine it within that context. We will also contrast each issue with what the Bible teaches on the subject. For example, in the category of the test of reason, we will see that it is logically impossible for contradictory beliefs about God to be true. If the Bible's view of God is true, then a New Age belief, such as pantheism must be false. If the Bible is true, then the New Age belief about karma and reincarnation must be false. If the biblical account of Jesus is true, then the New Age picture of Jesus must be false.

In Lesson 7, we will apply the four tests of a worldview (reason, outer experience, inner experience, and practice) to the five New Age beliefs or issues we address in the next five lessons:

ISSUE 1: *TRUTH IS RELATIVE* (WORLDVIEW OF THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE)

ISSUE 2: *THE SPIRIT WORLD IS REAL* (WORLDVIEW OF ULTIMATE REALITY)

ISSUE 3: *WE ARE REINCARNATED BEINGS* (WORLDVIEW OF HUMAN NATURE)

ISSUE 4: *CHRISTIANITY IS OPPRESSIVE* (WORLDVIEW OF ETHICS)

ISSUE 5: *I AM GOD* (WORLDVIEW OF GOD)

SUSAN'S STORY REPRISED

My crisis experience came when I was seventeen. My mother had been diagnosed with a life-threatening illness, and my parents turned to the church for comfort. People began to pray, and my mother was completely healed. Not

only was my father dramatically changed by this experience, but I, too, saw Christianity in a new light. I will never forget the night my entire family publicly made a total commitment of our lives to Jesus Christ. Then we began to know the real and enduring peace and joy that only He can bring.

History has demonstrated that a person's worldview is not fixed for life. Just as a person can rise from a childhood of poverty to a position of wealth and influence, so can a person change worldviews. Some people who were once naturalists have changed as new scientific discoveries point to a Grand Design in the universe. People who once were committed humanists have become disillusioned with the human condition and have turned to other conceptual systems to find a better way.

We greatly desire, today, to get in touch with our spiritual selves, to fill a spiritual void within us that, although we may not realize it, only God can fill. In the search for more meaning in life, many people are turning to the New Age worldview. But can it pass the test? We will endeavor to answer this question in the following pages as we look first at Issue 1.

2 ISSUE 1: TRUTH IS RELATIVE

BEN'S STORY

My early childhood was one of unhappiness, bitterness, and deep psychological scars which I sought to dispel with pseudo-intellectualism in college. Then, during a stint in Vietnam, which added to my restlessness and anxiety, I began to seek out abstract philosophies and acquired a strong interest in metaphysics. Tapping into my inner resources, I thought, would help me to overcome the inconsistencies of my life. This led to a study of eastern religions and the use of mind-altering drugs. Endlessly, I sought release through Zen philosophy, astral travel, transcendental meditation, Nichiren Shoshu, and other such avenues. I believed I had found the mainstream of truth as I explored the meaning of life, reality, and my own identity. However, while these philosophies brought a semblance of peace, I was unable to dispel the restless hunger within me.

TOPICS

New Age Ideas about Truth

New Age and the Theory of Knowledge

What the Bible Teaches

DESCRIBING YOUR WORLDVIEW . . .

WHAT ARE YOUR BELIEFS CONCERNING KNOWLEDGE?

As you begin this lesson, consider the following questions which will help you to identify and describe your views on knowledge, one of the five components of a well-rounded worldview. Use your notebook to write your impressions in answer to each of these questions:

1. Is knowledge about the world possible?
2. Is sense experience reliable?
3. What is the place of reason in discovering knowledge?
4. Can we know God?
5. Is truth absolute, or is it relative?
6. Can religious faith and reason coexist?

NEW AGE IDEAS ABOUT TRUTH

The old adage, “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder,” becomes, for followers of the New Age worldview, “*Truth* is in the eye of the beholder.” Each person has his or her own truth. What you believe to be true is true for you, and what I believe is true for me. That point of view helps us to understand why the New Age worldview includes such an eclectic mix of Eastern and Western religions: the occult; pantheism; a profound, subjective, mystical experience; and even some of the fundamental beliefs of Christianity. As Nash says, “It is difficult . . . to get a clear grasp of the major elements of the New Age perspective. The experience is not unlike that of attempting to pick up a handful of sand on a seaside beach. The harder one squeezes the sand, the more it slips through one’s fingers.”⁴

According to New Age thinking, truth is relative. Each person has his or her own truth. Something may be true for me and not true for you. Or something may be true in one situation, but not in another. When New Age author Shirley MacLaine asked an occultist if he believed reincarnation was a “fact,” he responded, “It’s not a question of whether it’s true but more a question of how it works. . . . Who knows if it’s true? It’s true if you believe it and that goes for anything, right?”⁵

This acceptance of relative truth makes it possible for people with a New Age worldview to draw from many contradictory sources ideas that fit their particular immediate experience. They often quote the Bible (where it agrees with their personal beliefs), or the sacred writings of Buddha, or the sayings of popular channelers (name for *mediums* in New Age terminology), and in doing so give each equal value.

This reminds me of an encounter I had in West Africa with an elderly woman who wanted to join the church. I asked her why she wanted to join, and she replied, “I have joined every religious group in town, because I don’t know which of them is true, and I want to be sure I belong to the right one when I die.”

Many New Agers rely for their “Truth,” to a great extent, on the messages they receive from *spirit guides* through channelers. Ruth A. Tucker describes a message that came from a spirit guide named Soli, who spoke through channeler Neville Rowe. Speaking before a large crowd of people (who had paid to hear him), Rowe gave this message from Soli: “You are here to search for yourself. The highest recognition you can make is that I am what I am. All that is, is. You are God. You are, each and every one, part of the Second Coming.” To which someone in the crowd “shouted out, asking if murderers were God, too. Soli responded, ‘Your truth is your truth. My truth is my truth.’”⁶

NEW AGE AND THE THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

Can we know what is true? Philosophers today generally recognize four possible sources of knowledge.⁷ They are:

1. *An authority*: The testimony of people of integrity who are recognized as authorities in their specialized field.
2. *Our five senses*: Also known as *sensationalism* or *empiricism*, this source of knowledge teaches us facts, such as *fire burns*, *water is wet*, *fried chicken tastes good*. However, our senses may also sometimes mislead us, and our empirical knowledge can be distorted by our expectations, prejudices, or emotions.
3. *Rationalism* or *thinking*: Reason is seen as the major source of

knowledge by rationalists. The human mind is actively involved in acquiring knowledge, and thinking is the instrument for discovering knowledge. The mind is able to distinguish between true and false, right and wrong by comparing opposing ideas. The mind also has the ability to create and to imagine.

4. *Intuition.* This source of knowledge has been described as a direct insight into truth or an immediate feeling of certainty about something. Intuition seems to be an inborn, instinctive reaction to life, a natural response of life to particular problems that arise. Some people see intuition as part of the mystical realm or mystical knowledge which comes from an external source. There are a number of widely divergent views on the subject of intuition as a source of knowledge.

Christians would add one more source of knowledge to those sources identified by philosophers: *revelation*. Christians believe God has revealed the truth about himself, human beings, and the universe in His Word, the Holy Bible, and that His written Word is a reliable source of knowledge about things we could not otherwise know.

BEN'S STORY PART 2

I met Sally while I was in the Army. She was beautiful, gentle, and free-spirited, a trait which appealed to my own sense of abandon. We soon married, and after my release from the Army, we decided to live in Mexico where we could bask in the sun and fully enjoy life. But this lifestyle did not satisfy long, and soon we returned to California with a determination to extend our search for meaning in life by a deeper study of the mysteries of philosophy and metaphysics. We were looking everywhere for a truth which would help us to make sense of our world and our place in it. Nothing satisfied.

Ben is typical of so many people who have a sincere desire to make their lives count for something, but do not know where to find the truth. Could that be said of you as well? The New Age worldview is appealing to many because it teaches that each person is divine by nature and can therefore create his or her own reality (or version of truth). It teaches that people are limited only by their lack of knowledge. As we shall see later in this study, Ben's search for truth led him down some strange and difficult paths.

The New Age point of view—that all spiritual paths lead to the same goal, even though these various paths are contradictory—is another example of the relativistic theory of knowledge held by New Agers. Yet they will also claim that biblical Christianity should be rejected because it is dangerous. It is the one path rejected by all New Agers.

Roger Olson points out that the relativism of New Agers is itself an inconsistency. Nash quotes him as saying,

In spite of attractive denials of exclusive truth, most New Agers believe that all other worldviews and belief systems are fundamentally flawed while theirs is the pure wisdom of Higher Knowledge, above rational embrace or criticism.⁸

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES

Is truth absolute? Are there universal truths? The founders of the United States of America believed so. Their introduction to the Declaration of Independence includes these words: “We hold these truths to be self-evident.” What *truths* were they talking about?

1. All people are created equal.
2. We are endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights, including the right to *life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness*.

The Bible also holds certain truths to be *self-evident*. For example, the Bible *assumes* God's existence from the first verse of Genesis. The apostle Paul indicated this was a self-evident truth when he stated:

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. (Romans 1:18–20)

Jesus declared, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father [God] except through me" (John 14:6). Jesus prefaced many of His declarations with these words: "I tell you the truth" (John 5:19,24; 6:26,32,53; 8:34; and others). Another time He said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31). One of His strongest declarations of truth is in John 8:42–47:

If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me? He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.

The devil's first untruth recorded in the Scriptures is the lie he put in the mouth of the serpent when he asked Eve:

"Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

The woman said to the serpent, . . . "God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman, "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (Genesis 3:1–5)

As the story continues, we discover that Eve believes the serpent and eats the fruit. She also gives it to Adam, her husband, to eat. This brings the curse of death upon them and their descendants (3:19). The same lie the devil told Eve is the one he is telling those who caught up in today's

New Age worldview: “*You will be like God.*” In this respect, the New Age worldview is not new.

Douglas Groothuis says the New Age worldview is “the most recent repeat of the second oldest religion, the spirituality of the serpent. . . . Satan lied; Adam and Eve complied; and we all died.”⁹ As we shall see in Lesson 6, the devil is still up to his ancient trick of trying to deceive men and women into believing they are equal to God. He counterfeits everything Christians hold dear, including Christ, prophets, miracles, angels, spirits, doctrine, and gospels.¹⁰ Satan is called “*the tempter*” because he is an expert at enticing people to follow “counterfeit” spirituality. We must constantly be on guard against his deceptive ways. As Jesus declared, “There is no truth in him” (John 8:44). Our best defense is the truth of God’s Word: “Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes” (Ephesians 6:11).

When people insist that truth is relative and whatever they believe to be true is, for them, the Truth, the result is chaos. The Old Testament has examples of this. Twice we read the words: “In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit” (Judges 17:6; 21:25). The people, lacking a godly leader, abandoned the standards for right living given to them in the Ten Commandments. The result was hatred, anarchy, and upheaval as the people gave themselves over to idolatry and immorality, each one doing “what was right in his own eyes” (21:25 NKJV).

In Lesson 3, we will look at the New Age understanding of the spirit world as a very real and powerful resource into which knowledgeable people can tap to realize their spiritual potential.

3 ISSUE 2: THE SPIRIT WORLD IS REAL

ANGELA'S STORY

I was raised as a Christian in a mainstream Protestant denomination, but I never really found a life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ in that church. When I was fifteen, I made a commitment to Christ one night, alone in my bedroom, but without nurturing it was like the seed cast upon rocky soil, and I almost immediately fell away. I began to experiment with drugs and became an alcoholic. At the age of thirty, I went into a drug rehabilitation program, and by the grace of God, I am sober today, twelve years later. But the program introduced me to the New Age worldview in a big way. I tried everything: psychobabble, Science of Mind, Emmett Fox, Christian Science, energized crystals, spirit writing, channeling spirits (i.e. demons), opening chakras, Buddhist services, Bahai faith—there was not much I did not try in my search for the “Truth.”

TOPICS

The Spirit World; the New Age Worldview

New Age View and Ultimate Reality

Biblical Teaching about the Spirit World

DESCRIBING YOUR WORLDVIEW . . .

WHAT ARE YOUR BELIEFS CONCERNING ULTIMATE REALITY?

In conjunction with Lesson 3, consider the following questions. They will help you to identify and describe your beliefs concerning ultimate reality, another of the five components of a well-rounded worldview. Use your notebook to write your impressions in answer to each of these questions, and explain your answers.

1. Is the universe eternal, or did it have a beginning?
2. Was the universe created by an almighty, transcendent God who continues to sustain it?
3. Is the natural world all there is?
4. Is there design and purpose in the universe, or is it a product of chaos and chance?
5. Are supernatural events possible?
6. Do spirit beings exist?

THE SPIRIT WORLD; THE NEW AGE WORLDVIEW

One issue common to both the New Age worldview and Christianity is a belief in a spirit world. But the New Age understanding of the spirit world is far different from that of Christians.

The New Ager's quest for spirituality is motivated by the desire for personal transformation. This transformation comes by looking deep into oneself to discover one's essence, which, according to New Age belief, is oneness with the Divine (called *at-one-ment*, a distortion of the Christian *atonement*). This total comprehension of one's being is facilitated by a number of spiritualistic and occultic practices, such as:

1. *Visualization*: Using your mental energy to *imagine* what you desire to realize, such as being healed of a sickness, being successful in your work, or, at a higher level, being in the presence of the "Divine Source."

2. *Astral projection*: Training your soul to leave your body and travel around. When the body dies, the soul is said to reside in its *astral form* until it is reincarnated.
3. *Contacting spirits*: Allowing “spirits” to guide you or speak through you. An example of this is the book entitled *A Course in Miracles*, which purports to be *the Voice* of the “Holy Spirit” speaking through a then self-proclaimed atheist. The book consists of a text (the words said to be dictated by *the Voice for God*), 365 lessons to be done one day at a time for a year (these are mind-altering exercises to be repeated over and over again with the purpose of *transforming* the mind), and a 92-page manual for “God’s Teachers.” The book repeatedly speaks of “God,” “God’s holy Son,” and the “Holy Spirit.” However, it is neither a Christian book nor a book based on the Holy Bible which Christians recognize as God’s Word. We shall say more about this book, *A Course in Miracles*, later in our study.
4. *Channeling*: The New Age term for *medium* is *channeler*. Channeling involves the transmission of messages from the spirit world to the physical world. It is “more than simply communication with the dead (necromancy), but [allows] the spirit of a deceased individual to speak through a living individual—the channeler. In most instances, this spirit is claimed to be from an individual who is not known to have actually existed.”¹¹

These and other “occult happenings”¹² are common experiences of many New Age advocates looking for “some secret and mysterious shortcut or alternative path to happiness and health.”¹³ New Agers also may seek mystical, spiritual, and even out-of-body experiences through the use of crystals, yoga, meditation, star-gazing, astrology, and other such spiritualistic methods.

Since the rise of the New Age worldview, the occult has gained new popularity and a greater degree of “respectability” as popular entertainers and other well-known figures have publicly embraced these and other occultic practices. But as we shall see, opening oneself to these “spiritual” forces, which are—for the most part—doubtless very real, leads one down a most dangerous and destructive path.

BETTY'S STORY

I don't know exactly how Julie got interested in the occult. I do know that when she was about ten, she was intrigued with a daytime television drama called "Dark Shadows." At the time, I didn't know what I now know about how the powers of darkness can bring people into bondage, or I wouldn't have allowed her to watch it.

I recently learned that when Julie went to "Lock-ins," an all-night youth event, the girls would look into the mirror in the bathroom and try to call up a spirit called "Bloody Mary." Once I was vacuuming her room and praying. Under the bed I found a book on how to put spells on people. We burned the book. Julie told me that once she became frightened after she and some school friends played with tarot cards. She said she saw demonic figures in the corner of the room.

I believe when people get involved in occult activity they open a door for Satan to oppress them. We experienced that oppression throughout the home. The Bible says, "Neither give place to the devil." What people may think is just an innocent parlor game can be the doorway for satanic strongholds in their lives. They need to renounce such activities and ask God for forgiveness to be set free.

You asked if I thought Julie was now free from demonic oppression she had been experiencing. The answer is, "Partially, but not completely." She has received some deliverance, but there's more to be done. I am fasting and praying for Julie.

NEW AGE VIEW AND ULTIMATE REALITY

At the beginning of this lesson, you were asked to consider some basic questions related to metaphysics. Is the physical universe all there is? Does it operate according to inviolate natural laws? Are supernatural events possible? Do spirit beings exist? People with a New Age worldview are convinced the spirit world is real. Here are some of their main beliefs in this regard:

1. Many spiritual entities exist around us.
2. We are all spiritual beings with eternal souls.
3. Channelers are spiritual mediums who speak to people.
4. Spiritual experiences reveal the mysteries of the universe.
5. We need to access the spiritual world by any possible means.

As we can see, New Agers have a profound belief in “spiritual” experiences and in spirit beings. Their view is that spirit beings or “entities” are, for the most part, disembodied spirits of people who have died but have not been reincarnated. Either they have reached a state of perfection and oneness with “God” or their souls have not yet connected with a new body in the cycle of reincarnation. Some are said to be ancients from the past who speak with great “wisdom,” revealing things about the past lives of those to whom they are speaking or foretelling the future. Some New Age channelers, through whom certain “entities” speak, have become wealthy by conducting paid seminars and calling on the “entity” to speak to those present or answer their questions.

In a conversation with “Ben,” whose story began in Lesson 2, I asked what having an “astral experience” was like. He indicated that for New Agers, there are “supposedly different planes of existence” and by putting oneself into a trance-like state, one can travel into one of these planes of existence and encounter invisible entities. Or one can “travel” to India and consult with a “guru.” Ben’s “astral” experiences seemed real to him at the time of occurrence. In retrospect, he sees them as being comparable to one’s ability to get so absorbed in a movie one vicariously experiences what is happening so it seems to be a real, personal experience. “Then,” Ben says, “how good it is is judged by how well it fools us.”

Likewise, according to Ben, psychedelic drugs deceive people into thinking they are having a real, spiritual experience. In contrast to what

happens when you stub your toe (simply stated, the message of pain comes into the closest nerve in the area of your toe that has been hurt, then jumps to the second nerve, and so on until, after a slight delay, it reaches your brain), taking a psychedelic drug “opens the floodgates” at the end of each nerve in your body, sending signals everywhere at once. Sometimes these are pleasurable experiences and thus are termed *spiritual*; sometimes they are horrible experiences, completely divorced from reality, and are called *bad trips*.

According to Ben, when some early users of psychedelic drugs, such as Timothy Leary, compared the psychedelic experience to what gurus had been demonstrating for years, the experience was given a spiritual emphasis. By taking a pill, one could supposedly travel to some other domain in the astral plane. The psychedelic experience would give one an “awareness” of the pantheistic nature of the universe. Ben explains, “If I drop [take] this pill, my sensory functions come alive and I can hug a tree and feel that I am one with the tree and that it is talking to me.” He indicates that the New Age concern with environmentalism is based on this pantheistic viewpoint.

The New Age experience with the spirit world, including occultic practices, is very dangerous because it opens people to satanic attacks. Because New Agers deny the existence of evil, claiming it is merely “ignorance,” they see all contacts with the spirit world as useful in taking them to a higher plane of consciousness where they come closer and closer to “Reality” or personal perfection.

One problem with these approaches to the spirit world is that what the goal—the state of perfection—consists of is unclear. This state of perfection does not seem in any way related to moral values, such as good or evil, right or wrong. Many of those who have broken away from New Age “spiritual” experiences see them, in retrospect, as illusions—sometimes of a terrible, demonic nature. We shall look at that possibility in our next section.

BIBLICAL TEACHING ABOUT THE SPIRIT WORLD

The Bible reveals that an active spirit world does exist and that it is inhabited by both good and evil spirits. In fact, the Bible tells us: “God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth”

(John 4:24). Although He is in essence *spiritual* and has no body, God is a personal being with intelligence, feelings, and will.

Humans, who are created in God's image, are also personal beings whose personalities are patterned after God's. One might describe God as "the one and only eternal spirit who created the universe and all it contains." He is the triune God, God in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the three Persons being of the same substance and equal in glory, power, majesty, and eternity.¹⁴

Angels, including those who are God's messengers or ministers, are also spirit beings. Those who are His messengers voluntarily do God's will and serve Him in holiness. Psalm 148:2–5 says angels and all of the "heavenly hosts" were created by God.

All angels were created holy, but some fell from their holy state. Satan, or the devil, is such an angel. The Bible says, "God did not spare angels when they sinned" (2 Peter 2:4). John 8:44 indicates that one of the sins which caused the devil to fall from a holy state was "not holding to the truth." Those who sinned became part of the devil's angels (Matthew 25:41). This was the beginning of evil in the world. The angels who did not sin remained as God's holy angels (Mark 8:38) or messengers.

When we look at what the Scriptures teach about the unholy angels—Satan and those angels who followed him—we learn more about their demonic activity. One indication is that Satan is a deceiver or a counterfeiter, that is, he mimics the activities of God. For example:

1. Satan has a throne and is referred to in Scripture as "the prince of this world" and the "ruler of the kingdom of the air" (John 14:30; 16:11; Ephesians 2:2; see also Revelation 2:13).
2. He is the head of an evil organization. He has his angels (Matthew 25:41) and they oppose God (Revelation 12:7–9; see also Ephesians 6:12 and Colossians 2:13–15).
3. He is called *Satan* (meaning "adversary" or "opponent"); he is the adversary of both God and humans. He is called the *devil* (meaning "slanderer," or "one who makes false charges against someone"). In Genesis 3:1–5 Satan accuses God to man; in Job 1:9–2:10 and Revelation 12:10, he accuses man to God. He is also called the *tempter* because he entices people to sin.

Jude, verses 8 and 9, warn that we should not speak lightly of the devil, nor should we underestimate his determination to destroy our spiritual life. Evil spirits cannot exercise their power over us without our consent. Through faith in God and prayer we can resist the devil (1 John 4:4; Hebrews 2:14,15). While we need to understand that evil spirits operate in the world and that we need to be able to recognize them in order to overcome them, we should not become obsessed by thoughts of them. In *The Screwtape Letters*, C. S. Lewis writes:

There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence, the other is to believe and to feel an unhealthy interest in them! They themselves are equally pleased by both errors, and they hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.¹⁵

The Bible clearly warns against such practices as those engaged in by many New Agers, which we have described earlier in this lesson. Deuteronomy 18:10–12 speaks about the person “who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord.”

The danger of seeking spiritual experience, hidden knowledge, or supernatural help or healing through occultic practices is that it opens the door to Satan and the powers of darkness. Scripture forbids these practices because they are equivalent to calling upon other gods (see Exodus 20:3–5). Remember that Satan is called “the god of this age” (2 Corinthians 4:4) While Satan may provide hidden knowledge or help through such sources, those who seek this kind of spiritual help open a door of access to Satan and become victims of the forces of darkness, which oppress in many ways.

The Bible is our safeguard and guide with respect to the spirit world. We need to take seriously these words from Ephesians 6:10–17:

Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able

to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

You may be saying, “Christians claim to be ‘filled with the Holy Spirit’ and they seek spiritual help from God.” This is true. Before Jesus ascended to Heaven, He told His disciples:

I will ask the Father [God], and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. (John 14:16,17)

Christians believe God’s Holy Spirit resides within them to reveal the truth about God to them and guide them (John 14:26). Whatever He counsels will always be in agreement with the Bible, God’s written Word. The Bible also tells us angels are “ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation” (Hebrews 1:14). But angels are the messengers of God and they act at His command. They are not ours to command. However, believers can take comfort in this promise:

If you make the Most High your dwelling—even the Lord, who is my refuge—then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. (Psalm 91:9-11)

We do not need to go through life aimlessly seeking many different paths of enlightenment, because God has revealed himself and His will for our lives in the Bible. We only need to know what it says and apply its teaching to our daily lives. We can find satisfying answers to life’s most perplexing questions in its inspired pages.

4 ISSUE 3: WE ARE REINCARNATED BEINGS

AKBAR'S STORY

I am an “outcaste” or “untouchable.” As an “outcaste” I rank below the Sudras, who are the slaves and servants—the lowest status level in the Hindu four-caste system. Untouchables or outcastes, such as myself are called “Pariahs.” We belong to no caste at all. I am so despised that if my shadow falls upon the food of a caste man while he is eating, the food is considered defiled and is thrown away. My miserable existence as an outcaste is the result of my karma in a previous life. I have reaped what I have sown. The only way I can improve my status is to be reborn in a higher caste by living righteously and obeying caste rules in this life. I do not remember my past life, but I must have been a cruel, undisciplined person to have deserved being born an untouchable in this life. It will take me many reincarnations to achieve liberation from this wheel of existence.

TOPICS

New Age Ideas of Reincarnation

Your Worldview on Human Nature

Biblical Teaching about Human Nature

DESCRIBING YOUR WORLDVIEW . . .

WHAT ARE YOUR BELIEFS CONCERNING HUMAN NATURE?

In conjunction with Lesson 4, consider the following questions which will help you to identify and describe your beliefs concerning human nature, another of the five components of a well-rounded worldview. Use your notebook to write your impressions in answer to each of these questions, and explain your answers.

1. Are humans merely physical beings and the product of evolutionary process, or are they complex created beings possessing body, soul, and spirit?
2. What is the human nature like?
3. Are humans determined, or free?
4. Is this life all there is?
5. Do humans survive after death?
6. Will human beings spend eternity in heaven? In hell?

NEW AGE IDEAS OF REINCARNATION

You may find it strange that we have introduced this lesson with the story of Akbar, an *outcaste* from India who was born before the caste system was outlawed in India. But his story provides us with the background from which we will look at the modern-day belief in reincarnation frequently associated with the New Age worldview.

Surprisingly, while belief in reincarnation and its related belief, the law of *karma* or *deed*, has been foundational in the Hindu belief system, the hereditary caste system was later originated by Hindu priests in an effort to prevent the intermingling of races. The Hindu belief in reincarnation and the law of karma were used by priests to justify the rank of each person in the system.¹⁶ The law of karma, often described as “what you sow, you will reap,” justified the idea that a person was born into a certain caste, high or low, as the result of the previous life he or she had lived. The only way to rise to a higher caste in the next life—and eventually to be liberated from the “wheel of life” and be reunited with

Brahman—was to live righteously and obey caste rules. The following quotation further explains this belief:

According to Hinduism, the ultimate goal of man's soul is union with Brahman, which is bliss beyond change or pain. But the soul cannot achieve this goal in one lifetime. The religion . . . claims that the soul is not born and does not die. It passes from body to body until it becomes pure enough to be reunited with Brahman. . . . When the soul achieves union with Brahman, karma no longer operates. The soul is then liberated from the cycles of birth and death.¹⁷

It is important to understand this background in order to grasp the significance of reincarnation and karma in the New Age worldview and the extent to which Eastern mysticism has penetrated Western thought. Just as in Hindu thought the individual soul (Atman) progresses in the wheel of existence through many reincarnations until it achieves union with Brahman, so in the New Age worldview one's soul may progress through many reincarnations until one achieves the "higher consciousness" of self or the realization of self-perfection. At that time, the individual soul becomes part of the impersonal One or God. (We will look at the New Age view of God in Lesson 6.)

If your view of human nature includes the New Age belief in reincarnation, you probably accept the following ideas:

1. *Our souls have many lives.* According to this idea, the soul is eternal and is ever striving to achieve perfection or oneness with the One (the impersonal divine Source known as God). Living out many lives is necessary for the development of the soul, because perfection cannot be achieved in a single lifetime.

2. *Each reincarnation is the result of karma.* This is sometimes called the "law of cause and effect," that is, "whatever you sow, you will reap." A well-known, modern-day astrologer named Zolar gives us this updated explanation of *karma* by author William Judge:

Karma is the name adopted by theosophists of the nineteenth century for one of the most important laws of nature. Ceaseless in its operation, it bears alike upon planets, systems of planets, races, nations, families, and individuals. It is the twin doctrine to reincarnation. So inextricably interlaced are these two laws that it is impossible to properly consider one apart from the

other. No spot or being in the universe is exempt from the operation of Karma, but all are under its sway, punished for error by it yet beneficently led on, through discipline, rest and reward, to the distant heights of perfection. It is a law so comprehensive in its sweep, embracing at once our physical and our moral being, that it is only by paraphrase and copious explanation one can convey its meaning in English. For that reason the Sanskrit term *Karma* was adopted to designate it.¹⁸

Zolar adds, “According to the teachings of theosophy it is not our ‘deeds’ but rather the ‘thoughts’ that precede them that make, or break, our karma and determine the circumstance of this and our next incarnation.”¹⁹

Theosophy is the teaching of a movement that originated in the United States in 1875 which follows chiefly Buddhist and Brahmanic theories of pantheistic evolution and reincarnation. According to the theosophist’s explanation of *karma*, it is a divine law that, in essence, judges the morality of human behavior and determines whether, in one’s next life, one will be rewarded for one’s past behavior and be reborn to a better life than the preceding one, or be punished and reincarnated into a more difficult level of life the next time around. Since we choose how we will live in this life, *we are responsible for our own level of reincarnation.*

3. *Reincarnation explains the problem of evil.* This is a very important aspect of reincarnation for those who accept it as true. With respect to good and evil, it is typical for some New Agers to say, “There’s no such thing as good and evil, there is only ignorance.” Those who accept the teaching of reincarnation, however, might say, “Karma is the answer to good and evil. An evil person has a bad karma and will be punished in his or her next reincarnation, while a good person will be rewarded.” Some carry this idea further and suggest that if, for example, a child dies from a blow to the head, perhaps that child (that is, the soul) in its previous life caused the violent, untimely death of other people. Nash observes:

Once one abandons a worldview in which one’s existence involves a relationship with a personal God, theories of reincarnation and karma offer “explanations” for many of life’s negativities and inequalities. We are where we are now because of things that happened to us in the earlier, impersonal wheel of existence.²⁰

4. *Reincarnation explains many of the world's mysteries.* Most of the information New Agers have about reincarnation and karma seems to be given through channelers. The “entities” who speak through the channelers are disembodied “souls,” and some of them are said to have lived as humans far in the ancient past. They often reveal “mysteries” of the universe. For example, they may reveal what they claim is information about other planets or extraterrestrials that could not otherwise be known. They also tell inquiring people, through their channelers, about the past lives these people have led, and this gives the people insight into their personal karma.

5. *The Bible teaches reincarnation.* In his *Book of Reincarnation*, Zolar devotes two chapters to “hints at reincarnation” in the Old and New Testaments. The passages cited in the Old Testament are Genesis 28, Ecclesiastes 1:4,9–11, Jeremiah 1:4,5, and Proverbs 8:22–31. To show that Jesus taught reincarnation, he cites Matthew 16:13–16; 17:10–13; John 8:56–58; 9:1,2; and Revelation 3:12.

Bible scholars who study these passages in their historical and literary context using proven exegetical methods easily disprove the claims that these passages hint at reincarnation. For example, John 8:56–58 is clearly understood by Christians as a declaration by Jesus that He is the eternal Son of God, “very God of very God.” However, for those who claim that Jesus was simply a man who led the way in showing other people how to realize their full spiritual potential and achieve “Christ-consciousness,” this passage is interpreted as a statement by Jesus that He lived before Abraham and was reincarnated.

6. *“Deja-vu” and “child prodigy” are proofs of reincarnation.* Those who believe in reincarnation also support their belief by giving as an example the *deja-vu* experience of many people. This is an overwhelming impression, when you are going through a given experience, that you have had that experience before, even though you feel certain you have not had actual prior experience of it in this lifetime. Another example is that of the child prodigy who can play *Beethoven* or other classical music perfectly at the age of five. How could this be, unless the child mastered it in a previous existence?

YOUR WORLDVIEW ON HUMAN NATURE

You can see from our discussion thus far that a belief in reincarnation has a profound impact on how one views human nature. For example, such a view diminishes the individual life to be merely the means for the eternal soul to progress until it loses its own personal identity and becomes one with the impersonal One. Humans are simply physical beings who house an eternal soul and whose physical life and status are the result of karmic consequences. One's human existence takes the form determined by one's karma, and all of life is shaped by one's understanding of the need to practice discipline and work at achieving a higher level of consciousness in order to improve one's karma for the next life. The level of each life is determined by one's previous karma. One's physical life ends with death, but the soul survives and continues in repeated cycles of physical life and death until it reaches perfection. There is no heaven or hell, only a final state of perfection or oneness with the One.

Some questions arise from all of this: If the human's highest goal is perfection and unity with the impersonal One, who judges one's moral behavior and who determines the status of one's reincarnation? How could an *impersonal* Higher Source care about moral behavior and imperfections anyway? An impersonal Source would lack the characteristics of personality, which include the ability to reason, to feel, and to make choices. Also, if truth is relative and sin does not exist, what is there to judge?

We do need to emphasize that not all people who have, in general, a New Age worldview believe in reincarnation. Some flatly reject the idea, while others are ambivalent concerning it. For example, in *A Course in Miracles* (which we described in Lesson 3), in the section "Manual for Teachers," the question is raised, *Is reincarnation so?* The following ideas are included in the two-page response to this question:

In the ultimate sense, reincarnation is impossible. There is no past or future, and the idea of birth into a body has no meaning either once or many times. Reincarnation cannot, then, be true in any real sense. Our only question should be, "Is the concept helpful?" For our purposes, it would not be helpful to take any definite stand on reincarnation. A teacher of God should be as helpful to those who believe in it as to those who do not. . . .

It cannot be too strongly emphasized that this course aims at a complete reversal of thought. When this is finally accomplished, issues such as the validity of reincarnation become meaningless. . . . Does this mean that the teacher of God should not believe in reincarnation himself, or discuss it with others who do? The answer is, certainly not!²¹

As you can see, this response contains the kinds of statements which fail to pass the test of non-contradiction we discussed in Lesson 1. On one hand, it claims belief in reincarnation is meaningless; on the other hand, it asserts that it may be useful to believe in it. The stated goal of *A Course in Miracles* is a complete reversal of thought, that is to say, if one follows the prescribed meditations and mental exercises in the course, one can achieve perfection of the self or save oneself. All else is said to be meaningless.

Let us look now at what the Bible teaches about human nature.

BIBLICAL TEACHING ABOUT HUMAN NATURE

While we do not have adequate space in this course to give a comprehensive treatise on biblical teaching concerning the human nature, we will summarize some basic teaching for the purpose of contrasting it with the New Age views we have discussed. According to the Bible:

1. *Humans are a special creation of God, made in His likeness or image. This likeness is of a moral and spiritual nature, but humans are not divine.*

The biblical account of creation reveals that humans are unique in all of God's creation because we, alone, are created in the image of God, and God himself breathed into our first parents the breath of life (Genesis 1:26,27; 2:7,18–23; see also Psalm 139:13–16). This is not stated of any other creature. We recognize that humans are different from all other created beings in a number of ways. For example, we have the power of speech and the ability to think, understand, and communicate our ideas through speech. Humans have the ability to recognize and enjoy beauty, anticipate future needs, plan ahead, and make choices. We are able to distinguish between right and wrong; and throughout history, in every culture, humans have manifested a deep need to worship a superior being or God. We are not divine; we are created beings of our Almighty God who alone is divine.

2. *Human nature consists of a physical aspect (a material body) and a non-material aspect (a soul or spirit).*

Humans are complex creatures, created with a visible, physical body that will eventually decay and die and an immaterial soul or spirit that will never die. Biblical references to the soul and the spirit make it unclear whether these are two elements of the non-material aspect of the human nature or simply one element (see Genesis 2:7; Psalm 42:6; 1 Corinthians 5:3; Hebrews 4:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:23). Some Bible scholars identify the *soul* as that which gives us breath and makes us living creatures, and the *spirit* as our mind or that which is the basis of rational life, related to reason or understanding.²² The word *soul* is also used in the Bible to refer to the whole person, as in Ezekiel 18:4 (see also verses 5,9,20):

Every living soul belongs to me [the Sovereign Lord], the father as well as the son—both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die.

This passage implies that the soul of each person is unique and an integral part of that person's being, in sharp contrast to the reincarnation view that the soul has many lives.

3. *Being made in God's image means that, like God, humans have intellect, emotions, and will.*

The Bible reveals that God is a personal Being: He communicates (Psalm 25:14); He has feelings or emotions (Isaiah 1:14); He thinks (Isaiah 55:8); and He makes decisions (Genesis 2:18). Humans, too, are personal beings who have the ability to reason, to feel, and to make choices. We can communicate with God because He has given us this capacity. He has also given us a conscience (Romans 2:15). Our conscience judges our actions and attitudes on the basis of 1) our knowledge of God and of His revealed will, 2) the moral awareness He has given us, 3) what we have been taught about right and wrong, and 4) the social standards we have accepted.²³ However, our conscience is not perfect and it can be defiled (1 Corinthians 8:7), corrupted (Titus 1:15), and seared (1 Timothy 4:2).

4. *Humans are capable of sin. Sin explains the problem of evil.*

Humans are not determined—that is, their choices are not determined for them—but have the possibility of making both good and bad choices. *We are therefore accountable to God for the choices we make.* God

created us to fellowship with Him, but sin entered the world through the choices made by Adam and Eve (Genesis 3). Because of their sin, we live in a damaged world ruled by Satan's evil influence, and we are prone to sin. Ronald Nash observes, "What a paradox human beings are! The only bearers of the image of God on this planet are also capable of the most heinous acts."²⁴ As we shall see in Lesson 8, it is only by God's grace that we can overcome our sinful nature and live to please God.

5. *This life is not all there is. Every human being faces a final destiny.*
The Bible teaches our existence does not end with physical death:

Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him. (Hebrews 9:27,28)

This passage indicates that, contrary to the concept of reincarnation, all humans can expect to have a one-time experience of physical death followed by judgment. Their judgment will be based not on *karma* but on the decision each of us has made concerning Jesus Christ. If we accept Him as our Lord and Savior, our final destiny will be the resurrection of our physical body—which will be reunited with our soul—and an eternal life of peace and joy as a unique, redeemed member of the body of Christ in the kingdom of God. This will take place when Christ comes to *rapture* (take away) His Church. The Bible also affirms that each believer will, at the Rapture, experience the glorification or perfection of body and soul. (See the following Scripture passages which help us to understand the concept of *glorification*: Philippians 3:20,21; 2 Corinthians 5:1–5; 1 Corinthians 15:35–52.) In contrast, those who reject God's plan of salvation through the atoning work of Jesus Christ will be judged and will experience what the Bible refers to as the "second death" (Revelation 21:8). This is described by theologian Millard J. Erickson as "an endless period of punishment and of separation from the presence of God, the finalization of the lost state of the individual who is spiritually dead at the time of physical death."²⁵

In conclusion, while the Bible does not give extensive details about what is called the *intermediate state* of the soul—the period between the time of physical death and the resurrection of the body—we do know that the soul does not die. Erickson discusses these implications of the biblical doctrines of death and the intermediate state:

1. Death is to be expected by all, believer and unbeliever. Unless we are alive when the Lord returns, it will happen to us as well. It is important that we take this fact seriously and live accordingly.
2. Although death is an enemy (God did not originally intend for man to die), it has now been overcome and made captive to God. It therefore need not be feared, for its curse has been removed by the death and resurrection of Christ. It can be faced with peace, for we know that it now serves the Lord's purpose of taking to himself those who have faith in Him.
3. There is between death and resurrection an intermediate state in which believers and unbelievers experience, respectively, the presence and absence of God. While these experiences are less intense than the final states, they are of the same qualitative nature.
4. In both this life and the life to come, the basis of the believer's relationship with God is grace, not works. There need be no fear, then, that our imperfections will require some type of postdeath purging before we can enter into the full presence of God.²⁶

Let me emphasize what Erickson has said: The decisions we make in this life will have eternal consequences. We will not have a second chance to make the right choices. The Bible is clear: after death, judgment. I urge you to consider seriously the biblical teaching about human nature. Your life for all eternity will be affected by how you respond to this teaching.

We now turn our thoughts to another important issue for those who have a New Age worldview: their conviction that Christianity is oppressive. We will look at this issue in Lesson 5.

5 ISSUE 4: CHRISTIANITY IS OPPRESSIVE

ALAN'S STORY

I came across the “Course” in the pop psychology aisle of my local bookstore. There is no doubt that it has shaped my spiritual life over the past few years. I browsed through the book, liked it, and soon was reading it almost non-stop. There was something that truly harmonized. Perhaps it offered an alternative approach to spirituality from the traditional Christianity that had been “crammed down my throat” during childhood. It certainly appealed to me intellectually, and as a lay student of psychology I found that it had a familiar ring in that arena as well.

I do not engage in “authenticity debates” about the Course, or about the Bible, for that matter. I find that if you want them to, they can complement one another. They can also, of course, mutually exclude, depending on one’s predetermined intent.

TOPICS

New Age View of Christianity

Ethics and the New Age Worldview

Christianity and Biblical Ethics

DESCRIBING YOUR WORLDVIEW . . .

WHAT ARE YOUR BELIEFS CONCERNING ETHICS?

In conjunction with Lesson 5, consider the following questions which will help you to identify and describe your beliefs concerning ethics, another of the five components of a well-rounded worldview. Use your notebook to write your impressions in answer to each of these questions, and explain your answers.

1. Are people accountable for their actions? If so, to whom are they accountable?
2. What is the basis upon which one determines whether a certain act is morally right or wrong?
3. Is morality a cultural factor? a universal value?
4. Are moral values objective? subjective?

NEW AGE VIEW OF CHRISTIANITY

We mentioned in Lesson 1 that the New Age worldview draws from many belief systems for its ideological framework. Most people who have this worldview are of the opinion that all spiritual paths contribute to one's spiritual awareness and lead to the same goal of enlightenment, perfection, and union with the divine Essence (God). The one exception they make is Christianity. Why do they consider Christianity so "dangerous"? Here are some of the reasons they give:

Christianity seeks to control. Some people reject Christianity because they claim that it is oppressive and seeks to control how one lives. Its ethical system is restrictive and requires people to be accountable to a personal God for their thoughts and actions.

Christianity claims to possess absolute truth and to be exclusive. Those with a New Age worldview reject Christianity's claims of absolute truth and exclusivity. These claims are unacceptable to New Agers who believe truth is relative and that Jesus Christ, while a good example of what a human being can be, was merely a man like all other men. Christians are criticized because they maintain that their religion is the

only one that leads to God. For those who believe there are many viable pathways to God, this is the ultimate arrogance.

The Christian Bible is untrustworthy. The accusation is often made that the church has altered some Bible passages to suit its own purposes, making the Bible untrustworthy. In her book *Out on a Limb*, Shirley MacLaine reports on a conversation with a “spirit entity” named John who spoke to her through a channeler named Kevin. John claimed:

Much of what exists in your Bible today has been reinterpreted . . . by the Church. It was to the advantage of the Church to ‘protect the people’ from the real truth [about] the process of each soul’s progression [by means of reincarnation] through the ages. . . . [S]uch a truth would make the power and the authority of the Church unnecessary. Each person, that is, each entity, becomes responsible to itself for its conduct. It does not need a church.²⁷

The claim is also made that at the Second Council of Constantinople—also called the Council of Nicea—the Council voted to strike the teaching of reincarnation from the Bible in order to solidify the church’s control. This is a false claim which we shall discuss later in this lesson.

Despite these claims, however, many New Age books quote from the Bible when it suits the authors’ purposes, and biblical terminology has been adapted by a number of New Age leaders and authors. This terminology, however, is used to teach a variety of concepts contrary to biblical teaching.

An example of misuse of Scriptural terminology is the use of the word *atonement*. Hebrews 2:17, speaking of Jesus Christ, says: “He had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might . . . make atonement for the sins of the people.” The word *atonement* here and in other New Testament passages speaks of Jesus’ sacrificial, substitutionary death on the cross to pay the penalty of sin for all people. It includes the appeasement of the wrath of God against sin and provides for the reconciliation of God with those who accept Christ’s sacrifice on their behalf and who make Him the Lord of their lives. For New Agers, however, the word *at-one-ment*, as they write it, speaks of being at one with the original creation (pantheism). It has nothing to do with Christ’s sacrifice for sin, but describes what New Agers perceive to be the end result of one’s own efforts at enlightenment or self-realization.

Many New Agers in the Western world are of the “baby boomer” generation and have had a background of Christian teaching in their childhood. Some of these, like Alan in our introductory story, rejected “traditional Christianity” because it had been “crammed down their throats” when they were young. Like Alan, they are left with a spiritual void in their lives which they are trying desperately to fill. As a result, they are turning to various New Age “channeled” doctrines in a search for truth that will satisfy their spiritual longing and still leave them free to control their own lives and destiny. They are not willing to be accountable to anyone but themselves for the choices they make.

Does this describe your experience? Have early encounters with traditional Christianity caused you to feel Christianity is dangerous, intrusive, restrictive, misleading, or too exclusive? Are you seeking spiritual enlightenment in some other form because you have been disappointed with Christians or Christian organizations? Do you find Christianity to be oppressive, as New Agers claim? If this is your opinion, please consider carefully what we have to say in the remainder of this lesson.

ALAN’S STORY CONTINUES

The “Course” claims to be “dictated,” which I guess is just an alternative way to say “channeled.” I am not comfortable with that. On the other hand, that seems to be a similar phenomenon as is claimed with the Bible. I just leave all that alone and respond to the Course in ways that seem natural, which almost always involves a change in the way I see something. I believe these are changes for the better, and they are cumulative. The Course would say they are just changes in awareness, as we come closer and closer to Reality . . . Reality being that we already exist in a state of utter perfection, and to the extent that we do not perceive this, we suffer from illusions. By the way, I have not been and am not now into “new age.” I gave up on groups because they seem to draw a lot of mixed-up people.

ETHICS AND THE NEW AGE WORLDVIEW

Let's start this section with the premise that human beings make value judgments every day. If we see an artist's painting, we might judge it a beautifully crafted work of art or a piece of junk. This is an *aesthetic* value judgment. We hear a news report on the radio and determine that someone's actions are good or bad, right or wrong. If someone voluntarily commits a crime, we judge that person as being bad or wrong. These are *moral* value judgments.

Morality, as we define it, is *right conduct*. By *right* we mean the conduct meets a standard by which it is measured. *Ethics* is the study of values in human conduct.

Titus, Smith, and Nolan, in their textbook *Living Issues in Philosophy*, identify three levels of moral development which we have summarized as follows:²⁸

Level 1: Preconventional. The bases of moral decisions are avoidance of punishment and satisfaction of one's own needs. The conclusion is that *behavior is morally right if it brings satisfaction to oneself.*

Level 2: Conventional. The bases of moral decisions are customary societal norms, social harmony, and approval of others. The conclusion is that *behavior is morally right if there is loyalty to others and respect for law and order.*

Level 3: Postconventional. The bases of moral decisions are internalized personal principles and valid universal principles. The conclusion here is that *behavior is morally right if it is based on carefully-selected, highly-principled moral values that are chosen independently.*

You can see from this brief description that there is a broad difference between views of right and wrong among these three levels. Which one best describes your own level? These three levels are related to three very different approaches to morality, which are:

1. *Relativism:* Subjective, no fixed values, no universal standards
2. *Situation ethics:* A flexible application of absolute standards based on what is deemed "best" for a given situation
3. *Absolutism:* A reliance on some absolute authority

Admittedly, it is difficult to evaluate the nature of New Age ethics when the claim is made by New Agers that there is no such thing as sin

or evil—rather, there is only ignorance. While some New Agers might blame their actions on their karma, those same persons would object (and probably react in some way) to a negative action against them by someone else. No husband would say, “I can’t judge or condemn the thief who robbed me and raped my wife, because he is unenlightened about his higher self and is acting out of ignorance. He will pay for his ignorance in his next life. His action against us is what we deserve because of things we did in our previous life.”

According to the New Age worldview held by reincarnationists, people are accountable for their actions only with respect to how those actions will affect their karma. In other words, they are accountable only to themselves. The only punishment they will receive (outside the realm of law and order in their society) is through continuous cycles of rebirth until they achieve inner perfection and are united with the eternal One.

The New Age worldview, then, seems to be that morality is a cultural factor imposed by such institutions as the Christian church in order to control members of the church. Thus, moral values are subjective, not objective.

CHRISTIANITY AND BIBLICAL ETHICS

Devout Christians believe that one can determine whether conduct is *right* or *wrong* and that standards exist by which one can evaluate an action as *moral* or *immoral*. Christian ethical standards are based on 1) obedience to God’s will as revealed in both the Old and New Testaments, 2) a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and 3) adherence to the teachings of Jesus given in the New Testament. Donald E. Baldwin further clarifies this:

The ethical monotheism of the Old Testament (particularly that of prophets, such as Amos and Jeremiah) is very close to the teaching of Jesus, as we would expect, since Jesus was nurtured in this Old Testament teaching. The view of both the Old Testament and of Jesus is that ethics and religion are inseparable. It is quite contradictory for a believer to have true religion and not live an ethical life. [Believers do not] look upon Jesus as merely a good example that they should follow. This is a very inadequate understanding of the role of Jesus in relationship to believers. He is our Lord and Savior, and He indwells us by the Holy Spirit to help us live out the will of God in the world.²⁹

On reading Alan's story earlier in this lesson, one gets the impression that the Christianity of his childhood did not provide for him a belief system compelling enough to captivate his heart and soul. This raises the question, why do so many people abandon their early Christian teaching and look elsewhere for spiritual fulfillment? And if Christianity is all it claims to be, why is it that so many people who call themselves "Christians" fail to live up to its standards in ethical conduct?

One answer to these difficult questions is that some of these people have grown up in an *experience-oriented* church and lack a solid doctrinal foundation. All of the emphasis of the church is on having a *spiritual experience*. In contrast, people in some churches have received a *doctrinal foundation* but lack the personal, spiritual experience of a relationship with Jesus Christ. The emphasis of the church is on doctrine. The doctrines these people have heard are not relevant to their daily lives because simply knowing the doctrines does not affect the whole person. True believers have both the *experience* of knowing Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and a solid, biblical, *doctrinal foundation* or belief system, and this gives direction to their lives. Their faith includes intellectual understanding of and assent to the body of evidence for Christianity and the joyful experience of a personal relationship with God through His Son, Jesus Christ. Such a faith inspires one to voluntary obedience to God's will as revealed in His Word, the Bible. It teaches one how to resist the temptation to sin and how to live a morally pure life; it gives one the desire and enablement to do so; and it prepares one for a life of eternal joy and satisfaction in the presence of Almighty God.

Now let's look again at the claims made against Christianity by people who have a New Age worldview.

The first claim we mentioned is that *Christianity seeks to control*. Such a view is understandable, because God does require a high standard of ethical behavior of those who have given their lives to Him. However, subjection to His will is a voluntary choice, because His ethical standard is based on love. Jesus answered the question, "Which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" (Matthew 22:36), with these words:

"'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments'" (Matthew 22:37-40).

God did not give the Ten Commandments because He wanted to restrict people's enjoyment of life; rather, obedience to these commandments provides for our highest good, which is unhampered communion with Him and with one another. Such communion, based on love, is our greatest blessing in this life and our hope for eternity.

The second claim we will consider is that *Christianity claims to possess absolute truth and to be exclusive*. It is said to be exclusive because it claims there is only one way to God, and that is through Jesus Christ. It claims that truth is found in Jesus Christ alone.

We talked about this claim in Lesson 2. Both of these claims are in fact true, and are summed up in these words of Jesus: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

People who have had a personal experience of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, and who have seen their hopeless lives dramatically changed because of the new life He gives, realize He is the only way to abundant life. They want to share this good news with everyone they meet so all might have everlasting life. It is like a fireman trying to rescue people from a burning building. He calls to them, "Come this way. This is the only way to get out of the building alive." But some go in other directions, doubting his words. Imagine his frustration and sadness when they refuse to listen to him and are doomed. In the same way, when believers plead that Jesus Christ, God's Son, is the only way to the Father, they are not being arrogant. They long to rescue those going in the wrong direction.

The third claim is that *the Christian Bible is untrustworthy*. Biblical scholars would flatly refute this claim. Extensive research has been carried out and comparisons made between the oldest biblical manuscripts and more recent ones. The Dead Sea Scrolls, ancient manuscripts discovered during the twentieth century in caves near the Dead Sea, confirm the exceptional accuracy of the contemporary translations of the biblical manuscripts. Many archeological findings over the years also confirm the Bible's accuracy, as do a large number of fulfilled Bible prophecies. No other documents from antiquity have provided greater evidence of authenticity than the ancient biblical texts. We do not have space here to cite the many evidences, but we can say with assurance that the Christian Bible is absolutely trustworthy and reliable. Woodworth emphasizes the Bible's miraculous unity of themes:

Although written by about forty authors over a period of sixteen hundred years, the books of the Bible present one overriding theme: *God's redemption of man through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ*. In the Scriptures there is but one doctrinal system, one moral standard, one plan of salvation, and one divine plan of the ages. The books, instead of conflicting with one another and confusing the theme, serve to fill out and complete each other in a harmonious way. A marvelous series of unfolding revelations move along a dramatic course that reaches its breathtaking climax in the final triumph over Satan. Books of the Bible as different as Leviticus and John produce but one story, one theme, one work. The four Gospels give us details about the life of Christ, and each of them sheds light on a different aspect of His character and ministry. Yet together they are a unified whole.³⁰

Finally, in response to the false claim of some that the teaching of reincarnation was removed from the Bible at the Council of Nicea, those who make this claim have either misunderstood or reinterpreted what actually happened. Groothuis explains:

What actually happened was that either in 543 or in 553, fifteen anathemas (condemnations) were adopted against Origin [an early church father], none of which refers to reincarnation. Yet one of them reads, "If anyone asserts the fabulous pre-existence of souls . . . let him be anathema." New Age writers take this to mean a rejection of a strong current of reincarnation in the early church. This is just not so. The anathema only concerned Origin's teaching that human spirits predated their existence in human bodies. Origin did not hold to reincarnation, but simply spiritual pre-existence.³¹

In defending false claims against Christians, it is not our purpose to propose that no immoral act in history has been done in the name of Christianity. Christians are not infallible, but Christianity is the pure gospel of Jesus Christ. People and human institutions who call themselves "Christian" are sometimes guilty of very wrong (sinful or evil) actions, but Jesus Christ, from whom we get the name *Christian*, is the sinless Son of God. He alone is our standard of holiness. As we pattern our lives after His perfect example, we receive spiritual power to resist temptation and make moral choices pleasing to Him.

Christianity has also dramatically changed the world in countless *positive* ways during the two thousand years since the birth of Christ. For example, the message of the gospel has inspired many of the world's great masterpieces in music, art, literature, and architecture. All over the world, Christian missionaries have made a difference in people's lives through medical and other social services and the education of children. The gospel message they have preached has brought hope to the hopeless and elevated the social status of women. The result is that people who have been transformed by the gospel and who now live by Christian ethical standards reveal the amazing love of Jesus Christ to the world and are a blessing to their community.

The Psalmist describes the moral character a Christian should have:

Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary?

Who may live on your holy hill?

He whose walk is blameless

and who does what is righteous,

who speaks the truth from his heart

and has no slander on his tongue,

who does his neighbor no wrong

and casts no slur on his fellow man,

who despises a vile man

but honors those who fear the Lord,

who keeps his oath

even when it hurts,

who lends his money without usury

and does not accept a bribe against the innocent.

He who does these things

will never be shaken.

—Psalm 15

6 ISSUE 5: I AM GOD

ANGELA'S STORY CONTINUED

The last big belief system I became ensnared in was A Course in Miracles, which could aptly be renamed Lost Souls 101. I studied it intensely for four years. All the while, I felt God was drawing me closer and closer to Jesus. Deep down, I thought I was not good enough for Jesus, that I had done too many bad things for Him ever to love me. That is exactly where Satan wanted to keep me—uninformed and in doubt.

One night as I was reading the “Course,” I felt I was getting the strong message from my reading that I should kill myself in order to be one with “the Jesus.” Something inside me cried out against that self-destructive message. I suddenly realized I ought to go in search of my parents’ belief, back to my Christian roots. Maybe there was something to it after all. I began to cry out for God to lead me and show me the truth.

TOPICS

New Age Concepts of God

Implications of New Age Concepts of God

What the Bible Reveals About God

DESCRIBING YOUR WORLDVIEW . . .

WHAT ARE YOUR BELIEFS CONCERNING GOD?

In conjunction with Lesson 6, consider the following questions which will help you to identify and describe your beliefs concerning God, another of the five components of a well-rounded worldview. Use your notebook to write your impressions in answer to each of these questions, and explain your answers.

1. What does your worldview say about God?
2. Does God exist?
3. Is there one God? many gods?
4. What is God's nature: personal and loving? an impersonal force?

NEW AGE CONCEPTS OF GOD

ALL IS ONE; ALL IS GOD

Groothuis explains that *monism*, the belief that “all is one,” is “foundational for the New Age; it permeates the [New Age worldview] in all its various manifestations—from holistic health to the new physics, from politics to transpersonal psychology, from Eastern religions to the occult.”³² This belief, he goes on to say, leads us but a short step to *pantheism*, the belief that *all is God*. God is not transcendent to the universe; rather, a pantheistic god *is* the universe, or the universe *is* God. It is evident, then, that human beings, as part of the universe, are God. However, according to the New Age worldview, we suffer under the illusion that we are imperfect mortal human beings with limitations and flaws. We need a transformation which will enable us to recognize not only that *all* is God, but that *we* are God.

I AM GOD

The term *New Age* implies transformation, and the transformation of the self is the major theme and goal of the New Age worldview. The purpose of this transformation has been described in a variety of terms by New Agers. Terms such as *Christ-consciousness*, getting in touch with one's *Higher Self*, *oneness with the One*, and even such biblical terms as

I Am that I Am are used to describe the pantheistic belief that all is God; therefore, I am God. An example of this is Shirley MacLaine's statement in the Epilogue to her book, *Dancing in the Light*. She asserts:

The total understanding and realization of my self might require eons for me to accomplish. But when that awareness is achieved, I will be aligned completely with that unseen Divine Force that we call God.

For me to deny that Divine Force now would be tantamount to denying that I exist.

I *know* that I exist, therefore *I AM*.

I *know* that the God-source exists. Therefore *IT IS*.

Since I am part of that force, then *I AM* that *I AM*. . . .

As far as my own life is concerned, my higher self is with me every moment. When I get in trouble, I consult with it. When I have a question, I direct my inquiry to it. It is my teacher. It is the master of my soul. It is *me*.³³

Nash indicates that the New Age experience or transformation is primarily religious or spiritual in nature. He further states: "An experience of this type is the one common element that all New Agers share."³⁴ The quest to achieve this experience of total understanding and realization of one's Higher Self is pursued through many avenues including yoga, meditation, mystical astral experiences, psychic experiences, courses or seminars that teach New Age pantheistic concepts, mind-altering exercises, and the use of crystals, to name a few. One such avenue that we have already mentioned in this study is *A Course in Miracles*, which describes itself as follows:

Although Christian in statement, the Course deals with universal spiritual themes. It emphasizes that it is but one version of the universal curriculum. There are many others, this one differing from them only in form. They all lead to God in the end.³⁵

This point of view that "all paths lead to God" (which, by the way, is definitely *not* Christian in statement) characterizes the pantheistic nature of the New Age view. All paths lead to God because all is God, and it is only our ignorance of our Higher Self that keeps us from recognizing our own divinity. According to New Age author Shakti Gawain, it is only through the process of creative visualization of some sort that we come to this understanding:

Creative visualization is not just a technique, but ultimately a state of consciousness. It is a consciousness in which we deeply realize that we are the continuous creators of our universe and we take responsibility for that at all moments. There is no separation between us and God Creative visualization is the process of realizing and making visible on the physical plane our divine potential.³⁶

IMPLICATIONS OF THESE CONCEPTS

Let's look now at some of the critical implications of the New Age concept of God:

Concept: God is an impersonal Force or a divine Energy. This conclusion has several implications. First, because God is an impersonal Entity, a loving personal relationship with God or accountability to God is impossible. Second, because sin does not exist, neither can moral requirements. Third, since sin does not exist, forgiveness is not needed. We are accountable only to our Higher Self in our effort to escape the illusions of our present existence and achieve the utter perfection which will make us one with the Divine Force.

Concept: Jesus is no more or less God than I am. Jesus is the perfect example of a person who achieved "Christ-consciousness" and "oneness with the One" by getting in touch with His "Higher Self," but He was a man like all other men and had no special claim to divinity that we do not have. This implies that He did not have to atone for the sins of others because sin doesn't exist. There is only karmic justice, which each person must work out for himself or herself. "All physical suffering, all happiness, all despair, and all joy happens in relation to the Karmic Laws of Justice."³⁷ *At-one-ment* simply means identification with the original creation, being in perfect harmony with or at one with the God-force, realizing we are God. Jesus' death and resurrection are not the means of our salvation; we can save ourselves (from the karmic cycle) and be one with God.

Concept: Humans are limited only by their ignorance of their true nature. This implies that we suffer from a lack of understanding of our true nature and potential and continue on in the cycles of existence until we realize "there is no separation between us and God" and all we need to do is to "[make] visible on the physical plane our divine potential."³⁸

WHAT THE BIBLE REVEALS ABOUT GOD

Is there anything about the New Age concepts of God that seems to you to be less than adequate when one is talking about the most Supreme Being (or—using a New Age term—Entity) in the universe? Now that we have looked at some of the concepts that make up the New Age view of God, let's contrast this view with the Christian view.

Briefly, the Bible reveals that God is eternal and self-existent; He is the uncreated Creator of all else that is. He is infinite or limitless in all He is and does. He is unchanging, all-powerful, all-knowing, and everywhere present. We have also seen that God is a personal being who reasons, has emotions, and has a will.

While there is inadequate space here to develop all the Bible discloses about this One who is higher than all others, we do want to focus on some specific attributes of God. First, the Bible tells us He is a God of *love*. A. W. Tozer describes the love of God in these moving words:

From God's other attributes we may learn much about His love. We can know, for instance, that because God is self-existent, His love had no beginning; because He is eternal, His love can have no end; because He is infinite, it has no limit; because He is holy, it is the quintessence of all spotless purity; because He is immense, His love is an incomprehensibly vast, bottomless, shoreless sea before which we kneel in joyful silence and from which the loftiest eloquence retreats confused and abashed.³⁹

One of my favorite passages of Scripture is in the book of Exodus where God describes himself and His immeasurable love to Moses:

The Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the Lord. And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. (Exodus 34:6,7)

This passage gives us a revelation of God's great love for those whom He has created to be like Him. He offers us His unsurpassing love, and He desires our love in return. His love is unconditional. The Bible says He loved us even when we rebelled against Him (Romans 5:8). His

love is a patient love. He is compassionate and gracious and slow to anger, even when we stubbornly continue in our sinful ways. His love is a forgiving love. When we come to him, repenting of our sin, He is “faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Second, He is a *holy* God. Holiness is the characteristic which expresses the perfection of all that God is. It means that everything He does is right and good; He is incapable of immoral acts. Holiness also implies *separation* from that which is not holy. A holy God cannot look upon sin. He separates himself from sin and condemns evil.

God’s holiness is expressed in justice and righteousness. In Exodus 34:7, God adds a chilling note of warning to His description of himself: “He does not leave the guilty unpunished.” But we do not have to remain in our guilty state. God’s love for us is so great He provided a perfect sacrifice to pay the penalty for our sin—His only Son, Jesus Christ our Lord (John 3:16,17). We do not have to rely on our own merit to be found acceptable by Him. We could never achieve a level of holiness by our own efforts which would make us acceptable in God’s sight because we have inherited a sinful nature. It is only through the righteousness of Christ that we can find favor with God the Father. When we come to the Father through the Son, we receive forgiveness for our sin and become part of the family of God. As Tozer so eloquently expressed it:

No honest man can say “I am holy.” . . . Caught in this dilemma, what are we Christians to do? . . . We must hide our unholiness in the wounds of Christ as Moses hid himself in the cleft of the rock while the glory of God passed by. We must take refuge from God in God. Above all we must believe that God sees us perfect in His Son while He disciplines and chastens and purges us that we may be partakers of His holiness.⁴⁰

I do not know how this affects you, but when I read Tozer’s words, “We must take refuge *from* God *in* God,” my heart swells with gratitude to know that Jesus, the Son of God, is himself the covering for my sin. Thus, I stand before God the Father not in unholiness as a guilty sinner but as one redeemed, clothed in the righteousness of Christ (Philippians 3:7–9; Titus 3:5; Galatians 3:26,27). My heart responds with the songwriter, “Oh, what a Savior! Oh, hallelujah! He gave His life’s blood for even me.”

Third, He is a *miracle-working* God. He is a God who acts in history. The Old Testament records the history of God's involvement with the nation of Israel. It is a story replete with miracles as God intervenes in the natural processes of life from time to time and performs mighty works on behalf of His people. The New Testament, also, gives an account of many miracles wrought by Jesus and His disciples. We do not have space here to review all of the many miracles recorded in Scripture, but we do want to mention briefly the three greatest miracles in the biblical account: the Incarnation of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, and the new birth experience of the repentant sinner.

The Incarnation of Christ. The virgin birth of Jesus Christ is the first of the three greatest miracles recorded in history. In chapter 1 of the Gospel of John is a description of the birth of Christ that focuses on His eternal nature:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. . . . The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth . . . From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but God the only Son, who is at the Father's side, has made him known. (John 1:1-5,14,16-18)

The details of this miracle of the virgin birth of Christ are recounted more fully in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. The Bible teaches that Jesus was fully God and fully man. This is a mystery that can only be explained as a divine miracle. Because of His human birth, He is able to identify completely with the trials and tribulations we face in life as He now intercedes with the Father on our behalf (see Hebrews chapters 1 and 2).

The Resurrection of Christ. This is the second greatest miracle. The apostle Paul wrote, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. . . . But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead" (1 Corinthians 15:17,20). The resurrection of Christ, three days after He was crucified, is one of the best-documented miracles in the

Bible. It is described in great detail in the concluding chapters of all four Gospel accounts. The apostle Paul explains that Christ's resurrection was "the firstfruits" of the resurrection of those who belong to Him (15:20–28). The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the believer's assurance that he, too, will be raised to eternal life in the presence of God. (For a more complete discussion of the validity of these two great miracles, consult the book *Worldviews in Conflict* by Ronald H. Nash.)⁴¹

The New Birth. The third greatest miracle is *the new birth*. When the repentant sinner confesses his sin and asks Jesus Christ to be his Lord and Savior, a marvelous miracle takes place. The sinner is "*born again*" (John 3:3); he becomes a new creature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). Paul wrote, "God made him who had no sin [Jesus] to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). The result is a transformed life. We no longer walk in darkness, but the light of the gospel has entered our soul and changed us forever. We belong to Him. We are not god; *we are God's!*

What a mighty God we serve! He is not an impersonal Entity, unfeeling and uncaring. He is holy and just, unchanging and eternal, and loves us with an everlasting love. No wonder Moses sang this song to the Lord:

Who among the gods is like you, O Lord?

Who is like you—
majestic in holiness,
awesome in glory,
working wonders? . . .

In your unfailing love you will lead
the people you have redeemed.

In your strength you will guide them
to your holy dwelling.

—Exodus 15:11,13

The God of the Bible is majestic in holiness. What a thought! He is the one who called to Moses from the burning bush and told him, "Do not come any closer. . . . Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5). When Moses asked His name, the Lord said: "I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you'" (3:14). This name of God, I AM, is a most holy name.

The Jews asked Jesus, “Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?” (John 8:53). At the conclusion of Jesus’ response to this question, He declared: “I tell you the truth . . . before Abraham was born, I am!” (v. 58). Here Jesus identified himself as God with the holy name, I AM.

Is it any wonder, then, that Christians consider it an affront and blasphemous when an ordinary human being assumes the holy name by which God identified himself and declares to the world, “I AM THAT I AM”? God is holy. His name is holy. “Our father in heaven, hallowed be your name” (Matthew 6:9). We need to take seriously the glory and honor of His name. Likewise, the name of Jesus is holy and powerful to save. Paul the apostle wrote:

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:
Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be
grasped,
but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!
Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

—Philippians 2:5–11

7 PUTTING THE ISSUES TO THE TEST

BEN'S STORY PART 3

About this time, Sally and I met a practicing “white witch” who introduced us to such metaphysical phenomena as communing with spirits and mental telepathy. I was fascinated by the mystics, but in time, my conflicts with this self-proclaimed soothsayer became so excruciating that I decided to sever our relationship. To this point, I had not discovered the peace and harmony that each new philosophy and cult promised. Instead—even in my relationship with Sally—there was nothing but division and strife. Even when our son was born, the constant fighting continued. My dedication to egotism and selfishness caused me to make strange rationalizations which even made it easy for me to be unfaithful to my wife. In a reaction to this hopeless situation, Sally slashed her wrists. I got her to the hospital in time to save her, but within a short time I left her. After a period of self-obsession which included drugs, sex, and robberies, I was at the point of mental and physical breakdown, and I returned to Sally for help.

TOPICS _____

Evaluating the New Age Issues

Recognizing Implications of the Issues

DESCRIBING YOUR WORLDVIEW . . .

HOW DOES YOUR WORLDVIEW MEASURE UP?

In the preceding lessons we have asked you to identify and describe your beliefs concerning the various aspects of the five components of a well-rounded worldview. In doing this, have you discovered any contradictions or weaknesses in what you believe in any of the following areas?

1. Beliefs concerning knowledge (truth).
2. Beliefs concerning ultimate reality.
3. Beliefs about human nature.
4. Beliefs about ethics.
5. Beliefs about God.

Take a few moments now to summarize in your notebook what you have discovered about your beliefs that may indicate a need to rethink what you believe in some of these areas. If there are inconsistencies or uncertainties in any of your beliefs, your worldview needs to be reevaluated and changes need to be made. Give this careful consideration.

EVALUATING THE NEW AGE ISSUES

As we have followed Ben's story in these pages, we have seen that the paths he chose led him to near destruction. The conclusion we might reach from this is that his worldview failed to meet his deeply-felt needs in crucial areas even though he sincerely followed these paths expecting positive spiritual results. Obviously, the New Age philosophies he embraced failed to pass the test of a cohesive worldview.

We have now reached the point where we need to put the New Age issues to the tests of reason, outer experience, inner experience, and practice. This will reveal whether or not the New Age issues represent a balanced, consistent worldview that is meaningful and fulfilling in every way. Further, we will examine the implications of those aspects of the New Age worldview that fail to pass these tests but are being spread by New Age adherents. Let us begin by applying to New Age issues the test of reason.

THE TEST OF REASON

In our study of New Age issues, we have found contradictions. When such contradictions exist at the center of a belief system, they should be taken seriously. Dr. Nash indicates that a belief system should be regarded as “being terminally ill” if charges of inconsistency cannot be successfully rebutted.⁴² For example, we have seen inconsistencies in the following areas:

1. *Belief that truth is relative.* The New Age worldview is that truth is whatever we say it is, because we all are creating our own realities. Therefore, all views and choices are of equal value.

It is interesting to note that the preceding statements about truth are absolute statements which are held to be true by people who believe that truth is relative. It is clear that such “truth” is no truth at all.

2. *Belief that people are limited only by lack of knowledge and that all spiritual paths, even if they contradict one another, lead to the same goal.*

While New Agers make this claim, they reject Christianity as a path to God, and they insist that their belief system alone is the pure wisdom of Higher Knowledge. Such contradictions do not meet the test of reason.

THE TEST OF OUTER EXPERIENCE

Does the New Age worldview pass the test of outer experience? Is it consistent with what we know to be true of the physical universe? Is it consistent with human experience?

For example, New Agers reject the idea of sin or evil. They say there is no evil, only ignorance. This is inconsistent with our experience of the outer world. We live in what is called the “information age.” People are more educated and knowledgeable than at any other time in history. Yet every day we hear of atrocities, prejudices, crimes, and injustices enacted against members of society who do not deserve this kind of treatment. How can anyone say that such sinful behavior is merely ignorance?

THE TEST OF INNER EXPERIENCE

Our worldview must be consistent with what we know to be true about ourselves as thinking, feeling, responsible human beings. Nash makes this observation about the test of inner experience:

No matter how hard it may be to look honestly at our inner self, we are right in being suspicious of those whose defence of a worldview ignores or rejects the inner world. Worldviews that cannot do justice to an internalized moral obligation or to the guilt we sense when we disobey such duties or to the human encounter with genuine love (*agapé*) are clearly defective when compared to the biblical worldview.⁴³

Does the New Age worldview support what we know to be true about ourselves? Does it make allowance for our feelings of guilt or shame when we do something wrong? Does it recognize our sense of moral obligation to our society? These are some of the questions Ben and Sally eventually had to answer for themselves, as we shall see.

BEN'S STORY PART 4

It wasn't long before I became enslaved to a man named Rudy, whose psychic abilities appeared to be greater than my own. His diabolical powers ensnared both Sally and me at first. I seemed totally incapable of resisting his strangely hypnotic control. One night, after Rudy had sought guidance through the "spirits," he convinced me that I should help him commit a robbery. By this time, Sally could no longer tolerate such a way of life and wanted only to rid our home of the evil oppression with which we had become enslaved. Bravely, she reported the robbery to the police. Rudy and I were arrested and placed in jail.

As we can clearly see from Ben's story, the New Age worldview fails to pass the test of inner experience for those who are looking for real meaning in life.

THE TEST OF PRACTICE

Are people who have embraced a New Age worldview able to live consistently in harmony with this system of beliefs? We have discovered that this is not possible, because the system is inconsistent within itself.

For example, a system with some adherents who consider belief in reincarnation as meaningless yet useful for those who want to believe in it fails the test of practice. A system that excuses evil behavior because it is someone else's "karma" fails the test of practice. A system that views humans as capable of being "God" must either inflate the idea of what it is to be human or diminish the idea of what God is like. A system which insists there are many equally valid paths to God of necessity must reject the biblical path to God which insists that Jesus Christ is *the Way, the Truth, and the Life*, and that no one comes to God the Father except through Him. Such a system fails the test of practice.

RECOGNIZING IMPLICATIONS OF THE ISSUES

Many people are being drawn into a New Age way of viewing their world without realizing this is happening. For example, Christians are largely unaware of the subtle way in which the thinking of their impressionable children is being influenced. The following story illustrates this point forcefully.

DONNA'S STORY

My first-grade daughter Jenny came home from school one day with a cute worksheet describing her "clear mind" and "mud mind" choices. When I questioned her about this activity, she said her class was learning to sit quietly and think about "good choices" after each student had emptied his or her mind of other things. I became concerned when so many of the things she described fit the examples of "new age" activities that I had recently read about. After doing some research into the self-esteem programs the school was using, I became extremely worried about the connections with the occult these programs used.

The school counselor had no idea that the program Jenny described was so closely tied to the occult and spiritualism; he saw it only as a self-esteem curriculum the school system

had endorsed. But he did set up a small group meeting of parents, teachers, a child psychologist, and the supervisor for the guidance counselors for the city. They allowed me to present all of the research I had done, and after some discussion they decided the program was inappropriate and it was dropped from the school curriculum.

I was thankful they listened and were willing to make this change, but the scariest part was the fact it could be slipped into the schools so easily—almost without detection—in front of professionals and parents. Children’s minds are being altered, and we don’t even realize it is happening.

Just to give you an idea about how the self-esteem programs sounded to the children, these are actual excerpts from the “Pumsy” curriculum being used with Jenny (“Pumsy” is a small dragon):

You can visit your clear pond any time you like. It’s as near to you as your own mind, as close to you as your own heart. No one can stop you from going there. When you are ready to leave the meadow now—you’ll be back and you’ll be there more and more often—you can start wiggling your fingers, and then, when you are ready, you can open your eyes and repeat aloud with me in a clear, strong voice. . . . “I can choose how I feel!” . . .

You may return to spend time with Friend and Pumsy any time you wish by creating your own Mind Picture whenever you like. But for now, tell Friend and Pumsy good-bye. If there is anything else you would like to say to Friend and Pumsy, you might want to say it now. . . .

Pumsy peacefulness comes from her Clear Mind. Whatever you think or say or do that leaves you feeling OK about yourself probably comes from your Clear Mind. . . .

Remember that all the strength you need is close to you when you need it, and you can fill yourself with strength any time you wish, just like you did with your magic cup that continued to be filled up even when you gave some away. Would you like to have that feeling of being strong all the time? . . . Like

all the other beautiful, wonderful parts of yourself, nobody can take your strength from you. Your Clear Mind is yours, your strength is yours, and the choice of how to use them is yours.⁴⁴

The conclusion I reached in studying these materials is that “Friend” in the Pumsy program is to be seen as a “spirit guide.” In my research I came across this statement of a New Age educator quoted by Jack Canfield in an article entitled, “Education in the New Age”: “Every child will be introduced to his very own spirit guide by graduation time.”⁴⁵

What I thought was scary about that quote was that it showed me what the real danger in such school programs is: these programs are introducing children to occult activities. Even if nothing happens as a direct result of the programs, the children will be desensitized to occult activity and accept it with less resistance later.

There is another program very similar to Pumsy called DUSO (Developing an Understanding of Self and Others). In this program DUSO is a dolphin in a “secret place” within oneself called Aquatron. Here’s an excerpt from the DUSO program:

I would like to take you to a secret place where DUSO and I go. We call our secret place Aquatron. What makes it so secret is that it’s inside ourselves. We get there by swimming very fast and hard until our bodies are all tired out. Then we relax, close our eyes, and drift into Aquatron. When we’re in Aquatron, we start by relaxing our bodies. Then, when we feel comfortable and relaxed, we let our minds wander . . . Afterwards we will talk about what we have imagined in Aquatron. Pretend you are with your friends in Aquatron. When the music stops we will leave Aquatron.⁴⁶

One last thought: Children at the elementary school age are still easily influenced by those in authority. They don’t have sufficient knowledge or experience yet to be able to make a judgment call on anything that may be in conflict

with their own small set of values. They are also notoriously easy to hypnotize, which leaves them open and vulnerable to whatever the counselor wishes to suggest to their open minds when they are “comfortable and relaxed.”

The following quotation by Ken Tye of *Network News* illustrates the insidious methods being applied to influence students with New Age philosophies in a manner that will not alarm their parents:

We view global education as what sociologists call a “social movement.” It is a new way of thinking about relationships in our world. As such, it has to seem legitimate to people and not to contradict current and deeply held values.⁴⁷

Recently, I watched an interview on television of five people who were identified as spiritual leaders. They included four men (a Jewish rabbi, a Buddhist teacher, a well-known evangelical Christian, and a popular New Age philosopher/teacher) and one woman (a spiritual “healer”). The issues addressed were quite similar to those we have looked at in the preceding lessons. *Is there life after death? Can we communicate with the dead? What about reincarnation? What is the truth? Is truth relative? Do you believe in God? Is there more than one way to God? How do we find happiness in this life?*

The responses were quite interesting and varied. Each of the respondents appeared to be sincere and gave convincing arguments for his or her point of view, although the answers represented worldviews that were very different from one another. The Jewish rabbi based most of his answers on Jewish tradition and the Torah (Jewish Scripture), although he seemed uncertain about some of the questions. The evangelical Christian clearly emphasized that what people need most of all is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ to find fulfillment both for this life and for the hereafter. His responses were consistent with biblical teaching, although he did not quote directly from the Bible.

The Buddhist focused on the law of karma, belief in reincarnation, and the Noble Eightfold Path to mystic illumination and *nirvana* (cessation of striving). The spiritual healer basically held a New Age worldview that

emphasized getting in touch with one's "inner self" to receive physical and spiritual healing.

As one might expect, the New Age philosopher/teacher supported all of the New Age issues we have raised in this course of study. What troubled me about his responses, however, was that in every instance he quoted passages from the Christian Bible to "support" his New Age beliefs. He came across as an "enlightened" Christian who spoke convincingly as he erroneously applied or reinterpreted Scripture to fit his New Age worldview.

This reminded me that in the biblical account of Jesus' temptation, the devil himself quoted from Scripture when he tried to tempt Jesus to do things contrary to God's will (Matthew 4:1–11). The apostle Paul warned believers to be on guard against those who practice such deception:

Such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve. (2 Corinthians 11:13–15)

The apostle Peter also warns believers when he says, "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith" (1 Peter 5:8,9).

The following statement by a New Age advocate serves as a warning to those who unwittingly have been led astray by New Age teaching:

One of the biggest advantages we have as New Agers is, once the occult, metaphysical, and New Age terminology is removed, we have concepts and techniques that are very acceptable to the general public. So we can change the names and demonstrate the power. In so doing, we open the New Age door to millions who normally would not be receptive.⁴⁸

Our emphasis throughout this study has been that the Christian worldview is the only one which passes the tests of reason, inner and outer experience, and practice. God has provided, for those who will seek Him with all their heart, a worldview that can only be described by biblical superlatives such as "joy unspeakable" (1 Peter 1:8), "great love" (Ephesians 2:4), "peace that passes understanding" (Philippians 4:7), "God's abundant provision of grace" (Romans 5:17),

PUTTING THE ISSUES TO THE TEST

God's "abounding in love and faithfulness" (Exodus 34:6), the "grace of God" (2 Corinthians 9:14), the "incomparable riches of his grace" (Ephesians 2:7), the "unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:8), the "surpassing greatness of knowing Christ" (Philippians 3:8), and on and on. The Psalmist David expressed his joy in God's provision with these words:

The Lord is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and rich in love.
The Lord is good to all;
he has compassion on all he has made.
All you have made will praise you, O Lord;
your saints will extol you.
They will tell of the glory of your kingdom
and speak of your might,
so that all men may know of your mighty acts
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.
Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures through all generations. . .
You open your hand
and satisfy the desires of every living thing.

—Psalm 145:8–13,16

In our final lesson, we will show you how you can personally experience this rich, fulfilling, and marvelous way of life.

8 GOD'S MESSAGE FOR YOU

BEN'S STORY PART 5

While I was in jail, Sally renewed contact with some Christian friends of hers. Through their patient guidance and love, she made the decision to surrender her life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. In her eagerness to help me, she permitted one of her friends to visit me in jail for the purpose of witnessing to me about Jesus' love for me. Very systematically, I tore apart every statement he made.

Often, in the jail, groups of young Christians who appeared happy and sincere would come to sing and talk to us, but I would respond in anger and bitterness. I dismissed them as simple-minded people who were intellectually challenged and operating from emotionalism rather than factual evidence. Although I argued with them and forcefully refuted their beliefs, they would still smile patiently and kindly. One of them even gave me a Bible, which I accepted and began to pore over to find statements I could disclaim.

TOPICS _____

God Loves You

You Can Touch the Living God

GOD LOVES YOU

BEN'S STORY CONCLUDES

The young Christians gave one prisoner four pictorial gospel booklets. How we laughed and mocked as we poked fun at the stupidity of their contents. Nevertheless, as time passed we were all silently reading the material and even waiting eagerly for the next one to be passed on to us.

Then one day, as I was doing my assigned duties, I saw a distinguished-looking gentleman heading toward me. He looked like a preacher. We spoke for a few minutes, and he handed me a small book. After he left, I returned to my cell and began to read it. It was the testimony of another prisoner who had heard the gospel message, accepted Christ as his Savior, and learned the power of worshiping and praising God in every circumstance.

As I read the book, something strange happened to me. This was quite different from the many head trips I had experienced in my quest for spirituality. My whole body began to shake and hot tears began to roll down my cheeks. Although I didn't understand everything I was reading, the simple truth of the story gripped my heart, and I began to follow the example of the author and give thanks to God. There came over me then a peace, such as I had never experienced before. I could not comprehend it, but I knew instantly that this was what I had long been searching for. I couldn't wait for the preacher to return. When he did, I told him what happened and I asked him, "What's happening to me?" He responded with a broad smile, "You have touched the living God!"

Then we sat and talked, and he explained that God loved me and had a plan for my redemption from sin. He asked me to pray with him and ask the Lord to forgive me of my sin and take control of my life. In my prison cell, I got on my knees and surrendered my heart to Jesus Christ. My life was completely transformed! God gave me a great, unselfish love for others, and he healed my broken marriage. My only regret was that I had wasted so much time and for so many years had let my own pride blind me to the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Can you identify, in any way, with Ben's long struggle to find meaning in life? Many people who have been drawn to New Age philosophies say they had already tried Christianity and it failed them. As we have demonstrated throughout this book, there are many reasons this might be so. The main reason is these people never learned the truth that God loves them with an everlasting love and because of His great love He has given His own Son, Jesus Christ, as the one and only sacrifice for their sin. They have never learned that true joy comes from a total commitment to Jesus Christ and obedience to His will. They have never known the wonder of the salvation experience.

What do we mean by *the salvation experience*? Let's look at what happened to Ben as he read the gospel—the good news—of Jesus Christ. His body began to shake and tears rolled down his cheeks. Ben was experiencing the shame, guilt, and sorrow that come when one is face to face with one's own sinful condition. Shortly afterward, his Christian friend led him through repentance to a salvation experience.

We know from Scripture that repentance of sin involves sorrow for sin, confession of sin, turning away from sin, and in faith turning to Jesus Christ as the only way of forgiveness for sin. This turning to Christ involves confessing that He is one's Lord and Savior and committing one's life to Him.

Ben's salvation experience was a miraculous event that changed his life forever. The miracle occurred when God made him a new creation

(called *regeneration* by theologians) and declared him “not guilty” (called *justification*). Another aspect of this miracle was the perfecting of his nature (called *sanctification*). This is not to be equated to the New Age claim that one can by one’s own efforts achieve one’s “higher self” or a state of “utter perfection.” It is a miracle of an almighty, personal God, a God of love and compassion.

Let’s examine more closely what is involved in God’s justification of the sinner. I like Millard J. Erickson’s definition of *justification*, which describes it as an act of God on behalf of the repentant sinner:

In the New Testament, justification is the declarative act of God by which, *on the basis of the sufficiency of Christ’s atoning death*, he pronounces believers to have fulfilled all of the requirements of the law which pertain to them. Justification is a forensic [legal or declarative] act imputing the righteousness of Christ to the believer; it is not an actual infusing of holiness into the individual. It is a matter of declaring the person righteous, as a judge does in acquitting the accused. It is not a matter of making the person righteous or altering his or her actual spiritual condition.⁴⁹

Several things are implied in the biblical doctrine of justification. **First, justification provides freedom from the penalty for sin:** “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). When Ben, the repentant sinner, by faith accepted Christ as his Savior, he was set free from the penalty for sin, which has been described as “spiritual, physical, and eternal” death.⁵⁰ This was made possible by the death of Christ: “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness” (1 Peter 2:24).

Think about the enormity of what Jesus Christ has done for you and me. If you read the four Gospel accounts in the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), you will get a picture of one who came into the world for the sole purpose of doing the will of His Father (God). His birth was miraculous: He was born of a virgin, conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. He was fully a human being, the perfect example of all a human being can be. He was fully God: His entire life was one of service to others in obedience to the will of God the Father. The Gospels record that as He went about doing good, great crowds followed Him, and He had great compassion on those who were in such physical and

spiritual need. He saw them as sheep without a shepherd. He healed the sick, He cast out demons, He blessed the children, He fed the hungry, He forgave sinners, and He taught them about the kingdom of God.

Then, in obedience to His Father's will, He went to the cross. There this sinless human being and Son of God endured the shame, dishonor, and excruciating pain placed upon Him by an angry mob who spit upon Him, placed a crown of thorns upon His head, cast lots for His clothes, and hanged Him on a cruel cross—the most infamous of deaths in that period of time. An old song based on Scripture says, "He could have called ten thousand angels, but He died alone, for you and me." No wonder Ben's heart was broken as he contemplated God's great love as demonstrated by the death of Christ to atone or pay the penalty for his sin. The prophet Isaiah foretold Christ's atoning work in these compelling words:

But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,
and by his wounds we are healed.
We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.

—Isaiah 53:5,6

Second, Jesus Christ not only set Ben free from the penalty of sin, but he also **restored him to favor with God, and His own righteousness was imputed or credited to Ben.** This does not mean Ben from that moment became a perfectly righteous individual in himself; rather, it means God *declared* him righteous. The source of this restoration and imputed righteousness was the grace of God (Romans 3:24)—God's unmerited favor granted to Ben—by the blood of Jesus. This justification was imputed as a response to Ben's faith in the atoning power of Christ's sacrifice (Romans 5:1).

This is a wonderful reassurance for Ben as he begins his Christian walk. He does not have to depend for his salvation on his own efforts to attain righteousness because he has been "*clothed with Christ*"

(Galatians 3:27). If he sins, the Lord Jesus Christ is his covering. How else could he stand before a holy God? As Tozer says, “We must take refuge from God [the Father] in God [the Son].”⁵¹ This marvelous grace of God is further explained in Ephesians 2:1–10:

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

This passage of Scripture describes God as being “rich in mercy.” Someone has explained the word *mercy* in this way: “Because God is *rich in mercy*, He *doesn’t* give us what we *do* deserve.” What we do deserve is eternal punishment. In contrast, the word *grace* is explained in this way: “Because of the *incomparable riches of His grace*, God *does* give us what we *don’t* deserve.” That is, He gives us eternal life in His presence when we put our faith in Him and confess Jesus as Lord.

Third, justification is “an objective work taking place outside of us. It has to do not with our spiritual *condition* but with our spiritual *relation*.”⁵² Romans 4:1–8 gives two examples that illustrate this. Abraham illustrates the *grace* of God. God credited righteousness to Abraham because of Abraham’s faith in Him. King David illustrates the *mercy* of God. God did not count David’s sin against him because of David’s faith in Him.

We mentioned that another aspect of the miracle of salvation is the believer’s *sanctification*. This is described by theologians as an act of God having three time elements:

1. The initial act or *positional* sanctification by which God reckons to the believer the holiness of Christ⁵³ (see Acts 26:18; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Ephesians 5:25,26; Colossians 1:22; and Hebrews 10:10,29; 13:12).

2. The *process* of sanctification, which is described by Erickson as “the continuing work of God in the life of the believer, making him or her actually holy [or] bearing an actual likeness to God.”⁵⁴ In other words, being conformed to the image of Christ is a subjective, ongoing process in which the believer cooperates with the Holy Spirit to manifest the fruit of the Spirit described in Galatians 5:22,23 as “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

The glory of the process of being sanctified or conformed to the image of Christ, as Ben begins to learn, is that as “holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix [their] thoughts on Jesus” (Hebrews 3:1), they become more and more like Him. This process is unique and progressive for every believer as each one learns to put self out of the way and live a life of holiness unto God. This is the exact opposite of the New Age focus on oneself which brings one to the erroneous, devil-inspired conclusion that “I am God.”

3. *Complete* and *final* sanctification. As we have already indicated, complete perfection will not occur in this life but will be realized at the death of the believer, or, for those who are still alive, when Christ raptures the Church. The apostle Paul wrote, “We know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears” (1 Corinthians 13:9). The apostle John clarifies the phrase, “when perfection comes”: “Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he [Jesus Christ] appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he [Jesus] is pure” (1 John 3:2,3).

What a glorious hope this is! In this life, Ben will struggle against imperfection, and he will not be able of himself to live a perfect life. But through the agency or enablement of the Holy Spirit and by fixing his eyes upon Jesus, he is given the possibility of growing into Christ-likeness and separating himself more and more unto service for God.

The process of sanctification in this life does not imply that Ben, as a new believer, must work for his salvation, for he is justified freely by the grace of God through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The *result*

of his salvation experience is that he desires to serve the Lord and obey Him, thereby being conformed, day by day, into His likeness. Obedience and abiding in Christ (John 15:5; 1 John 3:6) are prime requisites to maintaining sanctification and progressing in conformity to the likeness of Jesus.

What a blessing it is for Ben to know that in his *standing* before God his sin is covered by the righteousness of Christ and that in his *position* before God, he has been set apart unto holiness and is enabled to live a life of holiness, without which no one shall see God.

The salvation experience is a miracle because it transforms people's lives. When Christ comes into their hearts, people are changed forever. They have no more desire for the things of the world, but their desire is to do the will of the One who saved them from the penalty of sin. Their testimonies, like Ben's, are told in every language, in every nation, tribe, city, and village all over the world. They have changed their hopeless, sinful state for the blessings of God throughout all of eternity.

YOU CAN TOUCH THE LIVING GOD

Miracle of miracles, God loves you and me! The extent of His love is well expressed in the following two Scripture passages:

God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (John 3:16,17)

God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

You may be saying, "But I don't know *how* to ask God to forgive me." Let me say, first, that this does not have to be an emotional event, although sometimes it is, but it does have to be sincere. One might begin by saying something like the prodigal son said to his father: "Father [God], I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son" (Luke 15:21). You might continue by confessing your known sins. For example, Ben might have said, "Father, I have sinned against my wife and children, I have broken my marriage vows, and I have rejected Your Word and your Son. I have broken many

of the Ten Commandments, and I have opened myself to evil spirits. I confess my sin and I ask You to forgive me and restore my fellowship with You. Create in me a pure heart. I accept Jesus Christ, Your Son, as my Lord and Savior. Help me to be a committed Christian who puts You first in my life.”

I have no doubt that once you begin to pray a prayer like this, words will come from your heart as you confess your sin and ask forgiveness. I believe as you pray you will sense the cleansing of Jesus Christ. The Bible says, *“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come”* (2 Corinthians 5:17).

It may also be helpful for you to read Romans, chapters 7 and 8. You may need to read the chapters several times. You can see that the apostle Paul struggled with the same things we all struggle with: the sin problem. But we can be overcomers “through Him who loved us” (Jesus Christ). Whenever we sin (even after becoming a Christian), we come to Him and confess our sin, and it is forgiven. It bears repeating that we do not come to God in our own righteousness because none of us is righteous enough to do that. We come to Him clothed in the righteousness of Christ. He paid the penalty of sin for all of us ONCE FOR ALL, the Bible says. In 1 John 2:1,2 we have this assurance:

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

Also, I encourage you to read all of the Epistle of 1 John—it’s only five chapters long. (It is near the end of the New Testament, just after 2 Peter). It is my prayer that as you read, God will let these words penetrate your heart so you will see just how great God’s love is for you. Then respond to the words of invitation in this old song written by Lelia N. Morris (1862–1929):

If you are tired of the load of your sin,
Let Jesus come into your heart.
If you desire a new life to begin,
Let Jesus come into your heart.

Just now, your doubtings give o'er;
Just now, reject Him no more;
Just now, throw open the door;
Let Jesus come into your heart.

You have reached the end of this study. We have examined the New Age worldview and found it inadequate. We have presented the Christian worldview as one that abundantly passes the tests of reason, inner and outer experience, and practice. It provides the answers to life's toughest problems; it brings joy and peace in this life in every circumstance we face; and it provides the sure hope of eternal life with our Creator and Lord, who loves us and gave himself for us. It is our prayer that you will claim the Christian worldview as your own and share the love of God with others.


EPILOGUE TO BEN'S STORY

As I look back at my life now, I must say I have one serious regret, and that is that I did not give my heart to Jesus a whole lot sooner and avoid the horrible pain of walking in sin.

Few who have walked in the deep things of sin share the fact that sin permanently scars. Jesus can and does remove the pain from the mental and emotional scars of sin. But scars are scars. The only reason I can deal with it now is that the Lord has brought a lot of healing into my life. The first few times I shared my testimony I never finished the story, because I ALWAYS ended up weeping!

Finally, I need to say that the longer I walk with the Lord, the more my story about my life before I became a Christian shames me. It is nothing of which to be proud. Most people who have "bad" testimonies usually forget to mention that it's not necessary to have a testimony

of a past “bad” life in order to glorify Jesus. Today, I am much more impressed with testimonies of the keeping power of Jesus. Nothing thrills me more than to see young people in this crazy world who are standing tall for Jesus when that is not the popular thing to do. That’s a powerful testimony.



BOOKS FOR RECOMMENDED READING

BOOKS BY DR. RONALD H. NASH

Life's Ultimate Questions: An Introduction to Philosophy (Zondervan, 1999). A popular introduction to the most important questions in life including God, human knowledge, ethics, ultimate reality, and life after death.

When a Baby Dies (Zondervan, 1999). A biblical answer to the question, "What happens when a baby dies?"

Worldviews in Conflict (Zondervan, 1992). This book is a basic primer on worldviews in general and on the Christian worldview in particular; includes important material about New Age thinking.

Is Jesus the Only Savior? (Zondervan, 1994). This book answers attempts of false theories that deny that Jesus is the only Savior.

OTHER RESOURCES

Apologetics. An ICI Study Guide by William Menzies. (ICI University Press, Irving, Texas, 1996.) This college level study guide presents a solid defense of the Christian faith.

The Knowledge of the Holy by A. W. Tozer (Harper Collins Publishers, San Francisco, 1961.) A biblical, devotional study of the attributes of God and their meaning in the Christian Life.

Mere Christianity by C. S. Lewis (Macmillan, New York, 1952). An Oxford don and Cambridge professor presents the case for Christianity.

ENDNOTES

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- ²*Ibid.*, page 46.
- ³*Ibid.*, pages 45–46.
- ⁴Ronald H. Nash. *World Views in Conflict*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992, chapter 1.
- ⁵Shirley MacLaine. *Out on a Limb*. New York: Bantam Books, 1983, page 48.
- ⁶Ruth A. Tucker. *Another Gospel*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1989, page 352.
- ⁷Donald E. Baldwin. *Introduction to Philosophy*. Irving, Texas: ICI University Press, 1998, Lesson 7.
- ⁸Nash. *World Views in Conflict*, p. 143, quoted from Roger E. Olson’s article, “Christianity, Coherence and the New Age Worldview,” *Christian Scholars Review* 20 (1990–1991); page 356.
- ⁹Douglas Groothuis. *Confronting the New Age*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1988, page 17.
- ¹⁰*Ibid.*, page 19.
- ¹¹Tucker, 1989, page 326.
- ¹²*Ibid.*, page 320.
- ¹³*Ibid.*, page 320.
- ¹⁴Floyd Woodworth. *Cornerstones of Truth*. Irving, Texas: ICI University, 1986, p. 25.
- ¹⁵C. S. Lewis. *The Screwtape Letters*. New York, The Macmillan Co., 1969, p. 3.
- ¹⁶Jean Bothwell. *The Story of India*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1952, pages 44–45.

- ¹⁷*The World Book Encyclopedia, Volume 9*. Chicago, Illinois: Field Enterprises Educational Corporation, 1968, pages 224–225.
- ¹⁸Zolar. *Zolar's Book of Reincarnation*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996, pages 36–37.
- ¹⁹*Ibid.*, page 37.
- ²⁰Nash, 1992, page 136.
- ²¹Foundation for Inner Peace. *A Course in Miracles*. Combined Volume. New York: Viking, Penguin Books, 1996, pages 60–61.
- ²²Woodworth, page 157.
- ²³*Ibid.*, page 161.
- ²⁴Nash, 1992, page 47.
- ²⁵Millard J. Erickson. *Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1985, page 1170.
- ²⁶*Ibid.*, page 1184.
- ²⁷MacLaine, 1983, pages 204–205.
- ²⁸Harold H. Titus, Marilyn S. Smith, and Richard T. Nolan. *Living Issues in Philosophy*. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1995, page 118.
- ²⁹Donald E. Baldwin. *Introduction to Philosophy*. Irving, Texas: ICI University Press, 1999, pages 101–102.
- ³⁰Woodworth, page 202.
- ³¹Groothuis, 1988, page 102.
- ³²Groothuis, 1986, page 33.
- ³³Shirley MacLaine. *Dancing in the Light*. New York: Bantam Books, 1985, page 313.
- ³⁴Nash, 1992, page 132.
- ³⁵*A Course in Miracles*, Preface, page ix.
- ³⁶Shakti Gawain. *Creative Visualization*. New York: Bantam Books, 1982, page 120.
- ³⁷MacLaine, 1983, page 107.

³⁸Ibid., page 120.

³⁹A. W. Tozer. *The Knowledge of the Holy*. San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 1961, page 98.

⁴⁰Ibid., page 107.

⁴¹Nash, 1992, chapter 9.

⁴²Nash, “Faith and Philosophy,” 1998, page 43.

⁴³Ibid., page 44.

⁴⁴Pumsky Curriculum, Units 1, 8. Eugene, Oregon: Timberline Press, Inc., 1987.

⁴⁵Jack Canfield, in an article entitled, “Education in the New Age”: *New Age*, Vol. 3, No. 9 (February 1978) page 36.

⁴⁶Dinkmeyer, Don C. *DUSO*. Circle Pines, Minnesota: American Guidance Co., 1982.

⁴⁷Ken Tye, *Network News*: “Bringing a global perspective to the classroom.” Quoted by Eric Buehrer in *The New Age Masquerade*. Brentwood, Tennessee: Wolgemuth & Hyatt Publishing Inc., 1990, p. 51.

⁴⁸Dick Sutphen, *What Is*, Vol. 1 No. 1: “Infiltrating the New Age into Society.” Quoted by Eric Buehrer in *The New Age Masquerade*. Brentwood, Tennessee: Wolgemuth & Hyatt Publishing Inc., 1990, p. 69.

⁴⁹Millard J. Erickson. *Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1985, page 956.

⁵⁰Henry Clarence Thiessen. *Lectures in Systematic Theology*. Revised by Vernon D. Doerksen. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979, page 275.

⁵¹Tozer, 1961, page 98.

⁵²Daniel B. Pecota. *Soteriology: A Study Guide*. Irving, Texas: ICI University Press, 1976, page 128.

⁵³Thiessen, 1949, page 289.

⁵⁴Erickson, 1985, 967–968.

NOTE

Other subjects are also available, such as:

- *The Great Questions of Life*
- *Your New Life*
- *The Right Path*
- *Who Jesus Is*

You may obtain these subjects from the local office address on page 2.

INSTRUCTIONS

After you have completed the For You to Do Page, please remove them from your book and send them to us with the names and addresses of your friends who would also like to receive *I Am God*.

We look forward to receiving your response. May the joy and love of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

1. Study the lessons well and carefully review them. Then answer the questions. (Remove these and any other pages from the book with responses or addresses you wish to send to us.)
2. When you have marked all your answers, please remove the ANSWER PAGES from this book and send them to the address found on page 2.
3. Do not return the lessons. They are for you to keep.
4. Write the address given on page 2 clearly on an envelope. Be sure to put your return address and postage on the envelope. Then insert the selected pages and send them to the address provided.
5. If you do not receive a reply within one month, it means that we have not received your letter. Please write to us again.

■ FOR YOU TO DO

- 1 Which of these statements best describes your perception of your own worldview? (*Circle the letter preceding your choice.*)
 - a I have no clearly-defined worldview.
 - b I have combined ideas from several worldviews into one which suits my lifestyle.
 - c I realize from what I have read here that there are some definite contradictions in my worldview.
 - d I am certain my worldview is clearly defined, logically consistent, and passes the tests of reason, experience, and practice.

- 2 Read 1 Samuel 28 and 1 Chronicles 10:13,14. These passages illustrate the seriousness of occult participation by King Saul.
What happened to Saul when he sought help from a medium?
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.....

- 3 Which of these statements do NOT agree with biblical teaching concerning humans seeking to contact the spiritual world?
 - a There are many spiritual entities around us.
 - b We are all spiritual beings with an eternal soul.
 - c Channelers are spiritual mediums who speak to people.
 - d Spiritual experiences are useful when they reveal the mysteries of the universe.
 - e We need to access the spiritual world by any possible means.

4 Based on the material in this section, circle the letter preceding each statement below which reflects a Christian's position concerning ethics.

- a** People are accountable to God for their actions.
- b** To determine whether a certain act is morally right or wrong, one must consider the facts of the situation and do what seems best for the greatest number of people.
- c** The Bible is the believer's standard of right and wrong and its teaching is to be obeyed.
- d** Morality is in some instances a cultural factor, but there are also universal values.
- e** Since truth is relative, moral values are subjective and therefore subject to change.

5 Read Psalm 103 and answer the following questions:

a The Psalmist has given some characteristics of God that repeat what God said in describing himself (Exodus 34:6,7). What are they?

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b To whom is God compared in this passage?

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.....

c What other characteristics of God are revealed in this passage?

.....
.....

6 Read each Scripture passage and indicate the attribute or attributes of God it emphasizes.

a Ezekiel 39:7.....

b Psalm 90:1,2.....

c Psalm 102:24–27.....

d Isaiah 43:1–5.....

e 1 John 4:9,10.....

FOR YOU TO DO

7 Read the following Scripture passages and write down what each one indicates the sinner must do to repent of sin and receive the miracle of salvation: Matthew 10:32; Luke 12:8; Romans 10:9,10; 14:11; Philippians 2:10,11; 1 John 1:9; 4:15; 2 John verse 7.

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8 Consider what we have said concerning the experience of salvation thus far, then write brief explanations of what the Bible says about each of these:

a My part in receiving salvation:

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b God's part in providing salvation:

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- 9** Let's review the steps that brought Ben to experience the miracle of salvation. Which one did Ben NOT do?
- a** He realized he was a sinner in need of help.
 - b** He felt shame, guilt, and sorrow for his sin.
 - c** He confessed his sin to God and asked for His forgiveness.
 - d** He acknowledged that Jesus Christ was his Lord and Savior (that is, by faith he believed Christ died for his sin or paid the penalty for his sin once for all. He accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior. He acknowledged that he would make Jesus Lord of his life).
 - e** God saved Ben and restored him to full fellowship with himself; Ben received forgiveness and the gift of eternal life.
 - f** called upon the stars to show him the way to go.
- 10** Jesus said,
- a** "There are many ways to God."
 - b** "I am the way, the truth, and the life."
 - c** "There is no need for salvation as there is no sin."
 - d** "There is not one God; all people are gods."

RESPONSE PAGE

YOUR NAME _____

MAILING ADDRESS _____

Thank you so much for studying these lessons called *Is Jesus God?* If you have enjoyed studying this subject please write about the blessings you have received on the following lines.

We would also request that you tell us how you feel about Jesus Christ. Have you come to believe in Him as your Master, Lord and Savior? If you have trusted him to take your sins away, please tell us about it.



DEAR FRIEND,

After you complete the nine lessons of *I Am God*, we are planning to send you more lessons about God’s plan for your life.

If you will send us the names of your friends who you think might enjoy receiving *I Am God*, we will send them a copy also.

May the blessings of God be yours.

Thank you.

NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF YOUR FRIENDS

FULL NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

AGE.....

GRADE LEVEL OR PROFESSION

FULL NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

AGE.....

GRADE LEVEL OR PROFESSION

FULL NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

AGE.....

GRADE LEVEL OR PROFESSION

