

# Taking God Seriously



Discovering God's Word  
Bible Study Series

# Taking God Seriously

Learn why you should take God seriously in your life

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Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

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**About the author:** My name is Eric Krieg. I am a disciple of Jesus, a Bible student, a truth seeker, and an evangelist. My interest is in using the Bible as my only guide in my faith. My desire is to help others understand the message of the Bible and pursue true, New Testament Christianity.

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**My plea:** It is my hope and prayer that you are searching for the truth that is contained in God's word, the Bible. My desire is to help you understand and obey these truths God has revealed in the pages of His word. It is to that end that I write this material. Please observe all of the Scripture references and evaluate whether the conclusions I have drawn are in harmony with God's word. If they are, I ask that you make honest application of those truths to your life and obey God's instructions.

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# Taking God Seriously

In colder climates, the winter weather brings many opportunities for recreational activities: Sledding, building snow men, skiing, and ice skating – to name a few. However, with these opportunities for fun and recreation also comes danger. For instance, local governments will often post signs to remind pleasure-seeking residents of the dangers inherent in some activities. For instance, signs urging residents to “Beware of thin ice” (if taken seriously) ought to remind folks that ice covered reservoirs, ponds, etc. often look suitable for walking or skating, when the ice is actually deceptively thin.

Still, many residents who are seeking short-sighted pleasures will often ignore the warnings and authority of the local governments and choose to fulfill their own pleasures anyways. As you can expect, many people (thinking that nothing bad will happen to them – or thinking that they know better than the authorities) will go ahead and step onto the ice. Sadly, some fall through the ice, getting trapped under it, and drown before help can arrive. However, even worse is the knowledge that these tragic incidents and the heartbreak for their families could have been avoided if they would have only taken the conditions and the warnings seriously!

Perhaps we are all guilty of pursuing short-sighted pleasures from time to time that have longer term consequences. Perhaps we didn’t take our education seriously when we were young and missed out on opportunities to work in a field more desirable to us. Perhaps we didn’t take our parents seriously about some of their guidance and suffered the consequences. Perhaps we didn’t take the

responsibility of driving an automobile seriously and became involved in an otherwise avoidable accident that resulted in harm. Perhaps we didn’t take a job seriously and got fired. Perhaps it’s something else.

Surely, every situation in your life calls for its own degree of seriousness. However, the most important area for you to consider is: Do you take God seriously? As great as the consequences are in any of the examples I have given, the consequences for failing to take God seriously far surpasses them all! Still, there are many people who go through their earthly lives focused on fulfilling their own earthly desires and fail to take God seriously!

The single purpose of this study is to help you appreciate the importance of taking God seriously and develop the proper degree of fear for God so that you will take Him seriously in your life!

## *Learning To Take God Seriously*

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Let me begin this study by encouraging you to think about the need to take God seriously – and to understand the fear of God.

### **Recognize the importance of taking God seriously**

You need to take God seriously! You need to know that there are serious consequences reserved for those who fail to take God seriously – and wonderful blessings reserved for those who do take God seriously!

**(1) Anything less will not produce religion that pleases God.** “Religion” is a word used to identify the attempts an individual makes to worship and serve God or a god. However, the Scriptures are quite clear that just being “religious” is not enough to please God. For, there are many types of religions that will not worship or serve God in a way that takes Him seriously!

For instance, in Romans chapter 1, Paul describes individuals who knew the truth about God because God made Himself known to them through

creation (Romans 1:19-20). However, Paul says that “although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened” (Romans 1:21). He goes on to describe how they “changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man – and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things” (Romans 1:23). Therefore, God gave them over to live according to their own short-sighted pleasures! Then, at the end of all their wickedness was spiritual death (Romans 1:32).

Also, the book of Revelation describes five situations in which some who even professed to be “Christians” failed to take God seriously! In Revelation 2-3, Jesus addresses seven churches in Asia Minor. As He does, He finds only two of these churches were conducting themselves in ways that please Him (the churches at Smyrna and Philadelphia). Besides these, he finds a church that was going through the motions of serving Him that had actually lost its fervor (Revelation 2:1-7), a church that had compromised true doctrine for error (Revelation 2:12-17), a church that had allowed wickedness to infiltrate the church (Revelation 2:18-29), a church that had a name as if it was alive but was actually dead (Revelation 3:1-6), and a church that was not all the way for or all the way against Christ (Revelation 3:14-22). All these churches had two things in common (though their exact circumstances differed): They all were failing to take God seriously and they were not pleasing to God!

**(2) It will impact every area of your service to God.** There are many decisions that you will make during the course of your life. But, I want you to understand that the decision whether or not to take God seriously will impact every area of your life and every decision that you make! Consider some examples with me.

You hear the gospel’s message preached. You learn about the opportunity God has given you to be saved from the eternal consequences of your sins through Jesus Christ. You learn that God requires you to hear His word (Romans 10:17), believe in Jesus (John 8:24), repent of your sins (Acts 17:30), confess Jesus Christ (Romans 10:9-10), and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts

2:38). How seriously you take God will be the difference in whether you are obedient to these instructions or not!

You hear what God teaches about how to worship Him acceptably. Particularly, you study the Bible and find out that He has never authorized Christians to use a mechanical instrument in their worship to God (see Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16). How seriously you take God will be the difference in whether you respect God’s authority or whether you act in an unauthorized way!

You learn about the importance of being a member of a local church that is only teaching and practicing what is authorized by the New Testament. You also learn about God’s expectations that you faithfully assemble with the local church and that you never willfully neglect the assemblies of the local church (Hebrews 10:24-25). How seriously you take God will be the difference in whether you put God first to assemble faithfully or whether you allow other things to come before these assemblies!

## **Develop the fear of the Lord**

If you want to please God and you desire to take God seriously, you must fear Him! Consider Ecclesiastes 12:13-14: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man’s all. For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.”

**(1) The fear of the Lord involves two elements.** The fear of the Lord, clearly, is part of the entire duty/purpose of mankind. Therefore, it is important for us to consider what it really means to fear the Lord. As you do, we should notice that there are two essential elements involved: Reverential awe and terror. The fear of the Lord is not complete without *both* of these elements being in place in your life.

First, you must develop a reverential awe of God. You must truly develop an adoration for who God is – to recognize how far above mankind God is, to recognize what He is capable of doing, to recognize all that He has done, and to recognize that there is none other like Him! Recognize that the “heavens declare the glory of God; And the

firmament shows His handiwork” (Psalm 19:1). Thinking about all the wonders of God’s creation ought to cause you to stand in awe of God!

Second, you must develop a terror of God. Hebrews 10:31 says, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” Hebrews 12:29 says that God is a “consuming fire.” You must recognize that God means what He says and says what He means. You must recognize that God has promised consequences for those who refuse to live their lives according to His instructions. All of this should cause you to be terrified of living your life in a way that is contrary to His law!

**(2) The fear of the Lord requires a spiritual focus.** Most people will live their earthly lives without ever developing the fear of God. They may be religious and understand some of the basic truths (and perhaps all of the truths) we will consider within this lesson. However, most will not allow these things to transform their lives and truly live in the fear of God. 2 Corinthians 7:1 says that you should cleanse yourself “from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” Therefore, the fear of God will truly impact your entire life – if you allow it to do so! If you so allow it, it will help you to pursue holiness and righteousness. But, the fear of the Lord will require a spiritual focus.

Romans 8:5-8 says, “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

Most people will live their lives with a focus on physical things (temporary as they are). They will put their own physical pleasures and the pursuit of physical things ahead of how God wants them to live. They are much like those who step out onto the ice, despite the warnings of danger! Their desires for pleasures are calculated as being worth the risk – or they somehow believe they are above the consequences! However, their short-sightedness may

very well result in the end of their physical lives. Then, in a much more serious way, those who live for short-sighted earthly pleasures and treasures refuse to listen to the warnings God is giving them – telling them about the everlasting punishment waiting for those who do not live for Him!

Don’t be so short-sighted! Put your focus on the long-term Heavenly treasures (the treasures that will never decay, be lost, or stolen, Matthew 6:19-21)! This spiritual focus is the only one that will truly reflect upon the reality of God and follow His laws seriously, recognizing the eternal consequences of failing to do so and recognizing the eternal blessing of following Him.

**(3) The fear of the Lord is developed when you truly learn who God is.** How often do you think about God – *seriously*? How often do you consider who He really is, what He wants you to do, what He has done for you, and what He has promised to those who obey and disobey Him? Do you ever treat Him with the seriousness He is due? Or, do you have your own god – called “God”? That is, do you believe in a Higher Power and Sovereign Creator of the universe; but, you have exchanged the Bible truths about God for a different god (one who fits what you want God to be)?

You see, the proper fear of the Lord is only developed whenever you truly understand what the Scriptures teach about the God of this universe! So, as you consider the need to develop the fear of the Lord and take God seriously, you need to consider who God really is, taking each of those truths seriously.

## ***Taking God’s Nature Seriously***

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If you want to take God seriously, you must take God’s nature seriously. There are some things God has revealed to you about His nature that are essential for you to understand.

### **God is eternal**

You need to understand that God had no beginning and that He has no end. Revelation 4:8

praises God as the one who “was and is and is to come!” He is, at every point in time, the great “I AM.” He always exists and has always existed. Furthermore, this eternal God is changeless. James 1:17 says that there is “no variation or shadow due to change” (ESV) with God!

Now, please appreciate *why* you must take God’s eternal nature seriously. If God was *not* eternal, it would mean that God was a created being (just like everything else that has been created). If He was not eternal in nature, He would not possess power over all things – because someone/something would possess authority over Him!

### **God is all-powerful**

Coupled with the fact that God is eternal, you need to understand that God is all-powerful. That is, He possesses limitless power. That there is truly nothing outside of God’s power to accomplish is demonstrated by His power to create the universe and all things therein. Romans 1:19-20, for instance, demonstrates that God has revealed the fact that He is God and His “eternal power” through the things He has made! Therefore, as you look at the marvelous works of God’s creation, you can come to the knowledge that all of these things did not happen by accident. Instead, they demonstrate the great power of the Almighty Creator!

Read the Genesis account of creation (in Genesis 1) to contemplate the power of God. He is the one who was able to say, “Let there be light” and there was light (Genesis 1:3). He is the one who was able to divide the waters from the waters. He is the one who was able to cause dry land to appear and gather all the waters together. He is the one who was able to create grasses and herbs. He is the one who was able to create the sun, moon, and stars. He is the one who was able to create the birds that fly in the sky. He is the one who was able to create the fish in the sea. He is the one who was able to create every living thing that moves on the earth. And, He is the one who was able to create mankind in His own image – the man from the dust of the ground and the woman from the rib of the man.

Now, please appreciate *why* you must take God’s omnipotence (His nature of being all-

powerful) seriously. Throughout the Scriptures, we see that God is capable of doing whatever He determines to do – despite how unlikely or improbable it seems to mankind. He demonstrates that He is able to punish His enemies. For instance, this all-powerful God was able to bring a world-wide flood upon the earth to destroy the wicked, rain fire and brimstone on the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, cause the earth to open and swallow those who had rebelled against Him, and cause a great fish to swallow a man who disobeyed Him. In addition, God demonstrates that He is able to save those who are faithful to Him. For instance, God saved the family of a faithful man from the destruction of the flood, He saved His people from great armies of men and delivered great (and improbable) victories into their hands, He spared the lives of three faithful men who were cast into a burning furnace, and He spared the life of a faithful man who was cast into a den of lions. You must absolutely know (whether you are His enemy or whether you serve Him faithfully) that He is the Almighty God!

### **God is ever-present and all-knowing**

Not only is God capable of doing what He desires to do, God has perfect knowledge of all things and sees everything that is done. You need to know, therefore, that nothing escapes God’s attention. In Psalm 139, the Psalmist questions, “Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?” (verse 7). His conclusion is that there is no place He can go that will escape God. Instead, He knows that God has perfect knowledge of him (and of all mankind). He says, “O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up. You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, And are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, But behold, O Lord, You know it altogether” (Psalm 139:1-4). Proverbs 15:3 simply states it this way: “The eyes of the Lord are in every place, Keeping watch on the evil and the good.”

In addition to God’s perfect knowledge of the things you do, understand that God has perfect knowledge of all that is right. Romans 11:33-36, for instance, praises the great wisdom and knowledge of

# Taking God's Goodness Seriously

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God, saying that there is no one who is qualified to be the counselor of God! Isaiah 55:8-9, then, states that (in comparison with mankind) God's thoughts and ways are much higher than man's!

Now, please appreciate *why* you must take God's nature of being ever-present and all-knowing seriously. First, realize that God knows your heart (Acts 15:8) and God knows your works (just as He knew all the works of the congregations in Asia Minor, Revelation 2-3). One day, this God (who has perfect knowledge of how you are living your life) says you will stand before Him in Judgment and you will reap what you have sown (2 Corinthians 5:10; Galatians 6:7-8)!

## God is holy

Another essential attribute to understand about God is that God is holy. To be holy is to be separated from everything that is evil. 1 John 1:5 says that "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all." There is absolutely zero amount of error or wickedness in God. He is completely full of righteousness! Therefore, even great spiritual beings in Heaven are pictured endlessly proclaiming the holiness of God in Revelation 4:8 when they were saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!"

Now, please appreciate *why* you must take God's holy nature seriously. Immediately after declaring that there is no evil in God (in 1 John 1:5), John wrote, "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth" (1 John 1:6)! Therefore, whenever you conduct your life in a way that is contrary to God, you separate yourself from Him and the spiritual life He offers (Isaiah 59:1-2; Romans 6:23)! Furthermore, you must appreciate that God's holiness is the standard of holiness – and He reveals exactly what He wants from you in His written word (the Bible). 1 Peter 1:15-16 says, "but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy.'"

If you want to take God seriously, you must take God's goodness seriously. There are some things God has revealed to you about His goodness that are essential for you to understand.

## God's physical blessings

God has blessed you *physically*. Take a few moments to think about every physical thing that you have that is essential to your life or that you enjoy. Think about your food, drink, clothing, shelter, family members, comforts, modes of transportation, etc. Now, read James 1:17: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning." So, every physical thing you have that is good and perfect has come from God!

Now, please appreciate *why* you must take the goodness of God in providing you with physical blessings seriously. Consider Romans 2:4: "Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?" Therefore, you have been blessed in the ways you have been blessed physically so that you will be led to repentance! God is using these physical blessings to help you realize your dependence upon Him and to offer you a glimpse into His goodness – so that you will determine to live your life for Him and use your physical blessings in His service!

## God's spiritual blessings

However, more significant than the physical blessings God has provided are the spiritual blessings He has made available for you in Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." The spiritual blessings God offers are expounded upon throughout Ephesians 1. They include being made holy and without blame (Ephesians 1:4), the adoption as sons (Ephesians

1:5), redemption and forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:7), and an eternal inheritance in Heaven (Ephesians 1:11; 2 Timothy 2:10)!

Then, in Ephesians 2, Paul further explains the opportunity God has given you to be saved and why you needed to have this opportunity made available. He says that you “were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others” (Ephesians 2:1-3). Therefore, you were living (and perhaps are still living in a way that was contrary to God’s holiness). Then, he continues to say, “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)” (Ephesians 2:4-5). Jesus Christ was sent by God from Heaven to come to earth and give His life on the cross so that you could *not* experience the eternal spiritual consequences of your sins (i.e. eternity in Hell) and that you could live eternally with God in Heaven (John 3:16)!

Now, please appreciate *why* you should take the goodness of God in providing you the opportunity to partake of all spiritual blessings in Christ seriously. Certainly, the love, grace, and mercy God has demonstrated to you in giving you the opportunity to be forgiven of and saved from your sins ought to cause you to be thankful to God and want to live your life entirely for Him, in His service. As Paul discussed the love, grace, and mercy of God, he said that Christians are God’s “workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). Later, in Ephesians 4:1, Paul pleads that you “walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.” Titus 2:11-14 describes how the grace of God brings salvation and that it should teach you to deny “ungodliness and worldly lusts,” teach you to live “soberly righteously, and godly in the present age” as you look for the return of Jesus

Christ (who gave Himself for you in order to redeem you from all your sins, purify you for Himself, and count you among His special people who are “zealous for good works”). Therefore, all of these passages demonstrate that the goodness God has shown for you spiritually (in giving you the opportunity to be saved from your sins) ought to cause you to give your life entirely in the service of God (2 Corinthians 5:14-15; Galatians 2:20)!

## ***Taking God’s Wrath Seriously***

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If you want to take God seriously, you must take God’s wrath seriously. There are some things God has revealed to you about His wrath that are essential for you to understand.

### **God is a severe God**

Many will readily admit that God is a loving God who is full of goodness, grace, and mercy (as we have just studied). Certainly, this is true. However, many of these same people will deny that God is a severe God who will punish those who do not obey Him. They are commonly heard to say that “the God of the New Testament is different from the God of the Old Testament.” They suggest that God was severe and demonstrated His wrath against people in the Old Testament; but, say that God’s wrath does not burn against those who do wickedly today. Instead, He is a forgiving and merciful God who will overlook the sins people commit.

However, they miss the fact that the New Testament speaks of God’s severity. It does so in Romans 11:22: “Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.” It does so in Hebrews 12:29: “For our God is a consuming fire.” It does so in Matthew 10:28: “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” It does so in Revelation 21:8: “But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire



and brimstone, which is the second death.” It does so at many points throughout the New Testament!

Now, please appreciate *why* you should take God’s severity seriously. This is just as much a part of God’s nature as His goodness (see Romans 11:22 again)! God is trying to show you His goodness. He has given you the opportunity to partake of His salvation-bringing grace (Titus 2:11). He wants you to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). He is patiently enduring the wrongs you have done against Him so that you can repent rather than perish in your sins (2 Peter 3:9). However, God’s patience and your opportunity to change your life will expire some day. And, in Matthew 7:13-14, Jesus demonstrates that most people will experience God’s severity.

### **God’s wrath is promised to be revealed to His enemies**

Who will experience the severity (wrath) of the Almighty God? Understand that God will judge the world in righteousness one Day by Jesus Christ (Acts 17:31). On this Day, Romans 2:5-11 says that God will, “‘will render to each one according to his deeds’: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness — indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God.”

Therefore, those who are focused on fulfilling their own desires rather than living to fulfill God’s desires will be subject to His wrath! On the other hand, those who have diligently lived their lives according to God’s desires will be given the everlasting blessings of Heaven! So, the wrath of God in sentencing individuals to eternal punishment in Hell fire will come upon those who are His enemies – while the blessing of eternal life in Heaven will come upon those who have faithfully served God!

Now, please appreciate *why* you should take the promised wrath of God seriously. You must certainly understand that Hell is real (just as real as Heaven is) – and that you will spend your eternity in one of these two places. How you have lived your life on this earth will be judged by Jesus Christ (using the criteria of His word, Revelation 20:11-15). Now, please consider what 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 says will happen to God’s enemies whenever Jesus returns: “in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.” Therefore, appreciate that if you do not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ, you are an enemy of God and are subject to the wrath of God on the Day of Judgment. In Matthew 12:30, Jesus says, “He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.”

## ***Taking God’s Law Seriously***

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If you want to take God seriously, you must take God’s law seriously. There are some things God has revealed to you about His law that are essential for you to understand.

### **God has all authority**

Any understanding about the Law of God begins with an understanding of the authority of God. And, if you want to understand the authority of God, you need to recognize that authority involves having both the power and the right to control. Therefore, God possesses all authority because He is the only one who has both the power and the right to control all things! Matthew 28:18 demonstrates that all authority has now been given to Jesus Christ.

Now, please appreciate *why* you should take the authority of Jesus Christ seriously. Jesus Christ, possessing all authority, will judge you one Day. 2 Corinthians 5:10 says, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”

Furthermore, the words that reveal the law of God (in the pages of the Bible) will be the criteria by which He will judge your life – whether you were faithful to Him or unfaithful to Him (John 12:48; Romans 2:16; Revelation 20:11-15). Therefore, Colossians 3:17 describes what your commitment should be concerning the authority of Jesus Christ: “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” To do everything “in the name of the Lord Jesus” is to do everything by His authority. So, everything that you do, think, and say in your life must be subject to Christ’s authority – doing what He wants you to do!

### **God has revealed a law**

You need to realize that God has revealed a law for you to live your life by. This law is contained within the pages of the New Testament (as the Old Testament law was nailed to Jesus’ cross, Colossians 2:14). It is called the “law of Christ” in Galatians 6:2. It is called the “perfect law of liberty” in James 1:25 – because it has no flaws and because it offers freedom from sin (not because it lets you do anything you want to do!).

There is only one system of religious belief, teaching, and practice that is acceptable to God (as revealed in the pages of the New Testament). Paul says that there is “one faith” in Ephesians 4:5. He says that those who want to serve the Lord must “stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel” in Philippians 1:27. Jude says that “the faith...was once for all delivered to the saints” in Jude 1:3. This one faith (revealed in the pages of the New Testament) outlines what God commands from you concerning how you become a Christian and how you are to conduct your life once you become a Christian. It also outlines how God wants to be worshiped, describes the church Jesus purchased with His blood, and teaches us about how local churches must function in order to be approved in His sight.

Now, please appreciate *why* you should take the law of Christ seriously. When you stand before Jesus Christ in Judgment (as we’ve already discussed), you will not be judged by your own ideas, man-made religious traditions, your own conscience,

the will and ways of the majority, or any other man-made standard. Instead, whether you spend eternity in Heaven or in Hell will depend upon whether or not you have submitted (yielded) your life to God’s law (as revealed in the New Testament). If you have lived your life in rebellion against His law, you will be punished eternally – even if you only choose to rebel in one area. James 2:10 says, “For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.” However, if you live a life of full submission to God’s law and authority, you will find forgiveness of your past sins and you will be granted eternal life in Heaven! Matthew 25:46 says that the unrighteous/unfaithful will “go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” after the Judgment is complete!

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## **Conclusion**

Can I simply challenge you to take God seriously – in every way? If you refuse to take Him seriously now, you will spend an eternity of regret. Like the one who refuses to take the warnings of thin ice seriously, gets trapped under the ice, and drowns surely experiences regret when the ice breaks and the consequences are experienced, someday you will experience the consequences of failing to take God seriously. Only, then, it will be too late. You will hear Jesus say the words, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41).

You don’t have to spend an eternity of regret! You can choose to take God seriously *today*! 2 Corinthians 6:2 says, “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” Don’t procrastinate. Don’t wait another day – not even another minute. Live your life like nothing else matters! Jesus said, “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works” (Matthew 16:26-27).

As we close this study, please consider a poem that was written to convey the idea of being

found unprepared when your life ends. While I realize that the author (Jenni Prestininizi Crolius) has taken some “poetic license” in painting these pictures, I want you to read this and consider (based on what the Scriptures teach) what you will be thinking in “The Beginning of Forever” – if you failed to take God seriously during your earthly life.

“I woke up one night from the heat in my room, I felt an unexplainable, deep sense of gloom. Slowly my eyes opened to see something strange had happened to me. No longer was I lying safely in my bed, but was standing among many I knew to be dead.

I recognized friends and neighbors around and there was an old woman in a heap on the ground. I felt my fear begin to rise as I looked into a pair of sad eyes. The eyes belonged to a man in white, His face was shining with an excellent light.

I remembered His side had been pierced by the spear, and in His scarred hands was the book feared. As He turned the page I approached the throne. I tried to recall the truth I’d once known. I was taught as a child to love God and obey, but once on my own, I wandered away.

The Lord’s heart broke as He brushed a tear with His hand, and He said to me simply, ‘I don’t understand. Once you loved My word and kept My laws, now you’re in the world’s hands – what’s the cause?’ I cried aloud and tried to pray, but my Savior’s hand motioned me away. I knew what He’d say and I cringed at the thought – but still the words came, “I know ye not.”

I begged for a chance my story to tell, before the Great Judge sentenced me to hell. ‘I would’ve attended Thy worship more, if only the preacher hadn’t been such a bore. The singing was almost always off key; and the public prayers did nothing for me. Why, once I shook a visitor’s hand, introduced myself and acted quite grand; but a brother who had observed the scene had nothing to say of my being so keen.

So, you see Lord, right then I made up my mind on all these hypocrites I’d not waste my time. But all along I’ve loved You in my heart – and, after all, that’s the important part.’ When I’d finished my

speech, the Lord hung His head and I could tell He hadn’t liked what I said. With tears in His eyes, He looked up at me, and said, ‘I never asked much of thee. I offered My life on Calvary’s hill, I died for YOU, as was My God’s will. If you had loved Me like you say, you would’ve been faithful – a small price to pay. But you chose to walk in the way that’s wide; you straddled the fence, never choosing a side. Now you beg mercy, yet it’s too late – you’ll never pass through the beautiful gate.’

I could see on His face that His heart broke for me and I opened my mouth for one last feeble plea. He wouldn’t listen, He had closed His ears; I knew now how worthless were my wasted years. I had no choice but to part from my Lord, I turned to His left without one more word.

I stood amidst many I’d known on this earth, who all now felt their great lack of worth. The wailing and crying was impossible to bear; the darkness was thick and hot was the air. We walked down a path that was very wide – me and all others who in sin had died. I looked over my shoulder when we were almost there and I saw the Great Lord rise into the air. He took with Him the few who faithful had been, and I cried to know I’d never see Him again.

My body was different and yet I felt pain – I heard myself scream again and again. At last we were in the devil’s den – the place of torment our eternity to spend. I thought of my life and the things I had done, I relived in my mind each sin one by one. The gift of life that once had been mine, I trampled under foot time after time.

I sat among those who on earth I would flee – I’d be with them forever, what cruel irony. As I wandered the fiery streets of hell, I knew the truth only too well. I couldn’t blame my brothers in the Lord, for they often tried to teach me the word. It wasn’t the fault of my family – in fact, the entire blame lay all on me.

‘Let me try again!’ I heard myself shout; I searched and searched but there was no way out. As I saw pain and fear in my companion’s eyes, the panic within me started to rise. I had to get out, I wanted to be free – I started to run, I tried to flee.

There was no escape and then suddenly, Satan himself stood looking at me.

I offered an excuse on my behalf, but he cared not to hear it; he started to laugh, I hated him so and I hated myself. As he added my soul to his victory shelf, my mind was weary from my futile endeavor; crying I sat down – the beginning of forever.”

## ***Study Questions***

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How seriously do you take God? Explain.

### **1. Learning To Take God Seriously**

What is the importance of taking God seriously?

What does it mean to fear the Lord?

### **2. Taking God’s Nature Seriously**

Why must you take God’s eternal nature seriously?

Why must you take God’s omnipotence seriously?

Why must you take God’s nature of being ever-present and all-knowing seriously?

Why must you take God’s holy nature seriously?

### **3. Taking God’s Goodness Seriously**

Why must you take the goodness of God in providing physical blessings seriously?

Why must you take the goodness of God in providing spiritual blessings seriously?

### **4. Taking God’s Wrath Seriously**

Why must you take God’s severity seriously?

Why must you take the promised wrath of God seriously?

### **5. Taking God’s Law Seriously**

Why must you take the authority of Jesus Christ seriously?

Why must you take the law of Christ seriously?

**\*Will you take God seriously? Explain your reasoning.**