



1. Genesis 2 (there is a second creation account)

The Bible opens with “in the Beginning God created.” It is said that if you don’t believe that, the rest is meaningless, and I believe that. There is however two creation accounts. Chapter one talks about the creation of the universe and world in general terms. Then we have chapter two. This chapter is like a zoom lens and focuses on humans.

Some people think that dinosaurs existed in the first chapter and after their extinction the second chapter begins. They call this the gap theory. There is time between chapter one and two. Is there, where is the dinosaur, and why the two accounts? People base their faith on answering these questions.

I look at it this way: God gave us little information on creation. Too bad really but that is all we have. Someone said we would have solved a lot of issues with another 200 words. Maybe but that’s not the point in Gods eyes. The fact that he “created” is the issue. If you don’t believe that then the rest (no matter how much) is useless.

2. Genesis 4 (the first murder)

Gen 4:8 is the first murder in the Bible. A man named Cain was jealous of his brother Abeles relationship with God. God was not happy with Caine’s heart and offering to the Lord. You know Abel was the good son that always did right I bet. This bothered Cain hated that so much that he killed and buried his brother in a field.

I think the most interesting part of this story comes in two verses on either side of the murder. One: is verse 7 **“If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it.”**

Isn't that the truth over anger and sin? We scoff at the word sin but it is the difference between having a good day or bad. This was written thousands of years ago and yet it's still true today.

The second thing is verse 9 **"Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?"** Two famous lines found right here in Genesis 4. I have said that verse to people many times. The problem with anger is "yes" we are our brother's keeper. If we treat the people around us nice things generally go well, not always but usually. Most people believe in Karma. Good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad.

3. Gen 6 (Noah and the flood)

The story of the Flood is made famous by a man named Noah building an ark: putting in the animals two by two. Many have tried to prove and disprove this story in the Bible. I find that chapters 6 thru 9 of Genesis are more fascinating than searching for the Boat. Take for instance: it had never rained before the flood. Doesn't it make sense that the water from above (an oceans worth in the creation account) could have caused a flood? Also there are several accounts of a great flood at that time by the Egyptians and the Babylonians.

What is also cool is the Nephilim. In chapter 6 there is a strange story of these people called the "Sons of God" that mated with human women and bore them super children. Who and what were these Nephilim? In verse 3 God told Noah that no one will live past 120 years. In the long run of our history that is true today.

Genesis 7 and 8 tell more details of the flood. The term 40 days and nights is seen in several other places in the Bible. Numbers like 40 hold special meaning in the Bible more than being an accurate number. If you saw 40 it was a marker of importance.

Chapter 9:11-12 says that there will never be another flood and a rainbow will be a sign of that promise: so far so good with that. These little stories behind the flood are very cool. There was more going on than just a story.

4. Genesis 11(Where God split us up into different nations)

There is an interesting chapter in the Bible called the Tower of Babel. In a way it is the last of the ancient stories. The first twelve chapters of the Bible seem to span over 2000 years. Basically the rest of the Bible spans another 2000 years. This 11th chapter of Genesis changes the way we read the Bible.

In chapter 11 God decided that people were getting too smart, confident, and powerful. These people tried to build a tower in the city of Babel that could reach the heavens. As they were building this tower God came down and was concerned that they

were growing too fast. He decided to scatter people all over the earth and give them different languages. We have never fully recovered from that moment on. Understanding each other is our strength but misunderstanding is our downfall as we have seen through the centuries.

Three things stand out in this chapter: one is in verse 6. God says that as one people there is nothing we can't do. People tend to be individuals and love their own bubbles. It is our downfall. The second is in verse 7. God changed our communication and scattered us. Before this time, there does not appear to be wars in the Bible. Individuals sinned but groups of people did not. Nations and tribes sinned after this chapter.

Thirdly the age of people continued to fall after the flood chapters. Death became faster and faster as time went on. This chapter introduces the idea of individual nations for the first time. In the first 11 chapters we are not really concentrating on the daily lives of people in detail. From chapter 12 of Genesis on we see a shift towards the details. We follow people's lives like Abraham, David, and Moses. I find it amazing that 2000 years could be packed into eleven chapters. The Bible is partly all we have recorded of ancient history.

5. Gen 16 (Where Islam begins)

I am not an expert on Islam. I am sure they have different opinions on the origins of their religion. In Biblical circles Genesis 16 is where Islam begins. It all begins with Ishmael the son of Abraham. This is the spot in the Bible where a separation appears. The Nation of Israel also begins with Abraham who eventually bears another son named Isaac. In this chapter we will concentrate on the first born son Ishmael. The trouble between Israel and the Middle East centers on this chapter. Who is born first; who is the heir to Abraham; and who is God's chosen family?

Ishmael is not born into the family that God promised. He is conceived through a slave girl named Hagar. She runs away at one point and God prophesied that this child of hers would be great, a wild donkey, and at odds with his own people. This is a very cool and sad chapter. Ishmael was never fully accepted into the family of Abraham. This family is thought of as the first family of God. Yes we have Adam and Eve and Noah, but Abraham is considered the cornerstone family.

Later Abraham has a real son with his own wife Sara. His name is Isaac. The split between the line of Ishmael and Isaac is the beginning of the Middle East conflict today. Islam is at war within itself, and at war with Israel. On each side is a belief of who is the real son of Abraham. The line is drawn there because Abraham was promised the land. The belief is that who gets the land gets the title of God's first family.

6. Genesis 35 (the name of Israel founded)

Sometimes we are so far removed from history, a city like New York or Rome is a place we have always known. Israel is a country most of us have always known, but for some the word "Israel" has more meaning than just a city. The name Israel comes from a man named Jacob in the Bible. God sometimes renamed people when their lives changed. Peter used to be Simon and Abram became Abraham. In most cases the change in name has greater meaning than the old one.

The name Jacob means "to follow" but the name Israel means "triumphant of God." Around the time when God changed Jacobs name the twelve sons of Israel where born. These boys became the twelve tribes of Israel. The nation of Israel is very very old. They have been around before Moses and David. Egypt was still ruled by the Pharaohs. The area that all this takes place is called Bethel. This area is a hotbed of spiritual action. It is close to Jerusalem, Bethlehem, the Jordan River, the Dead Sea, the Plains of Armageddon, and so much more.

Many alters and grave sites are marked and recorded in this chapter. The land in the Bible is a big deal. The Middle East conflict revolves around this area and beyond. Who owns the rights to the promised land of God? Mt Nebo is near this area. I was there where God showed Moses the Promised Land. I could see Bethel from there. Israel is much more than just a name of a city in Africa.

7. Exodus 14 (Moses Parts the red sea)

As kids we all were told the story of Moses. He is the guy that parted the Red Sea in the Bible. Many of us watched the Movie the Ten Commandments with Charlston Heston. I wonder how many people have actually read the story in Exodus 14. It is a really cool story. The real Red Sea is hard to find. Nobody really knows where it is. The Bible Red Sea is really called the Sea of Reeds. In those days there were a few of them called that.

The best part of this chapter is God. He tells Moses to camp with his back to the sea. God purposely put them in harm's way. There was no place to run if Pharaoh attacked them and God knew it. God hardened Pharaohs heart so that he was mad enough to chase the Israelites and kill them. God set this whole scene up.

The fun part comes after God sets this up. As Pharaoh and his army are bearing down on them, the Israelites (rightfully) freak out on Moses. A pillar of Cloud blocks the army and Moses raises his hands and the Red Sea parts. This is Moses finest moment as he shows his faith in God.

The Sea floor is completely dry as they cross to the other side. God then lifts the cloud away and lets the army continue to kill the Israelites. The dummies enter the sea floor and God lets the ocean crash on them. When I was in Egypt they said Ramses II died from wounds and salt water drowning. Who knows, but this story is very cool.

8. Exodus 18 (the beginning of the court system)

I bet you didn't know when the first courts were established? Did you ever think it was in the desert? Did you ever think that Moses in the Bible was the very first judge? We can go further and say that the court system today is based on this very first account in the second book in the Bible: Exodus.

This is a mysterious chapter because at some point Moses has sent his family away while he dealt with Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea. This helped set up our first court system. God appointed Moses to judge over the Israelites in matters unresolved. The problem came to a head when Moses father-in-law returned his family to him. The father-in-law noticed that Moses was impossibly busy judging millions of people (full time job). The problem could be solved if Moses had help.

Moses decided to set up a group of well-respected men to judge on small matters. Two things I found interesting in this event. One is that these seventy men became what are called "the Sanhedrin." This group eventually (thousands of years later) sentenced Jesus to death. The second thing is that did you notice that God did not tell Moses to set up this group of judges. God also did not say anything at all about these turn of events. Maybe Moses did the wrong thing?

Final thought is that our courts have levels of authority just like Moses set up. Our courts began with adopting many of the laws in the Bible. Many of our laws are at-least based on the Bible. Today we have taken God out of our government and courts. Did you notice once again God has been silent on these events? Maybe like Moses we should have talked to God first when it comes to justice and the courts.

9. Exodus 20 (the Ten Commandments)

I know that most people on the planet have heard of the famous Ten Commandments. Our laws are based on these principles: do not murder and so on. Did you know that these commands are not told as a command? God does not use the words "I command you." They are generally referred to in the Bible as the "law of Moses." There are more than ten laws of Moses but they are all based on the original ten. God gave Moses these ten on Mount Sinai in Egypt.

I have climbed this mountain and it is a tough hike to the top. There is a monastery at the bottom that has (supposedly) the Burning bush that God spoke to Moses

from (it was not burning when I saw it). God uses the Phrase “you shall not” in these ten commands. I tend to look at these commands as guidelines rather than orders from God. God is consistent with free will throughout the Bible. The ten laws are the best of the best. Good, honest, holy living is found within these laws. Paul (a New Testament writer) says we cannot fully keep these laws. He says it is impossible because they show that we fall short of God. He is right in saying so.

The first five are laws to honor God himself. They are “you shall not”: make an Idol; worship an idol; use the name of God in a wrong way; work every day (means you need to take a day off); and honor your Mother and Father. These first five respect God and what he has given to us.

The second five honor and respect others. “You shall not”: murder, cheat on a loved one; steal; lie; or be jealous of other people’s things. Ironically the people swore they will follow these laws or die. The point was that without Gods help following these laws we would surely die in our sin. It’s less about following and more about needing God

10. Leviticus 25 (the beginning of banking)

We mock the Bible because of its age and because of the primitive generations discussed in it. Many people say we are more sophisticated now. If we were honest, we might have to admit that the Bible has given us good guidelines for how we treat others. Leviticus is a book that many won’t read and many scoff at because it is dry reading, yet much of who we are in the business world comes from this book.

This chapter 25 and book of Leviticus are the beginning of much of the business practices we hold today. This chapter talks about how we do business in an honorable way with people. This chapter asks us to not cheat others in regards to real-estate and commerce. What is a shame is that we have not followed Gods advice. He has said treat business with honor and respect, yet we tend to cut corners and charge too much.

Some other interesting facts in this chapter are about the land. God wanted the land to rest every 7 years. We still do that in the farming community today. God knew this was good for the land. One other thing is the redeemer theme. God made it clear that are not to hold people as slaves, in debt, or take away our inheritance forever. At some point slaves are to be free; debt is to forgiven, and inheritance be returned. We don’t have slaves today, but we are enslaved to bills and debt. Some governments do control us. Much of what we do and what we owe is forever out of our control. God never wanted it that way.

11. Numbers 6 (The Benediction of the Lord)

This is a very cool thing in a worship setting. Even if you don't believe in God this church tradition can be interesting. The word benediction means "good word." There are several of these special sections in the Bible. The most famous is found in Numbers 6:24-26. In a worship service these set of verses are said at the end of a service as a blessing or "good word" to the people as they leave.

Some people call these verses a prayer or a traditional saying from a priest. In Numbers 6 God asks Moses to tell his brother (priests) to repeat these words to the people. They are considered a blessing from God. I like this explanation. A Prayer is from earth to heaven. We talk to God and he listens. With a benediction it is the other way around. God has given his prayer or words to us. It is from heaven to earth. The priest is simply reciting the blessing God is giving to his people.

Here it is: **"The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace."** It's like saying "have a good day" to someone. I know people hear these types of blessings all the time. Maybe we should say them more outside of church too.

12. Numbers 22 "Very cool"! (The talking Donkey)

This might be the coolest chapter in the entire Bible. Yes we have a talking Donkey in the Bible. Many people say the Book of Numbers is old and boring, boy do they have that wrong. There is some of the most fun scripture right here in Numbers including this chapter 22: the talking donkey.

A Oracle in the Bible named Balaam is told by God to do certain things. Balaam does not listen so God confronts him through a talking Donkey. I just think this is the funniest thing. Some people have mentioned that even a dumb ass can talk. I like this section because it makes the Bible real to me. Real Pat, donkeys don't talk? What I mean is that the Bible is not only a list of rules, commands, and laws. There are interesting human stories that sometimes defy explanation. We see humans react in interesting ways within these stories.

Balaam hears the Donkey talk and does not flinch. He replies to the animal and they come to an understanding. The whole scene with the donkey seeing an angel three times and turning away from the road is hilarious. Balaam beating his donkey is very funny too. Maybe when a dumb ass talks we should listen. Maybe when God tells us to go a certain way we should listen. Anyways I love stories like this.

13. Deuteronomy (The Shema: the beginning of one God)

This is a very interesting call in the Bible. Moses is telling the people a very important thing about God. In Christian theology it is centered around who Jesus is. The Shema is one of the scriptures we use to show that God is one God. In those days there were many Gods. It was unusual for a people to say they worship one God only. Christians point out that Jesus is God, the only God.

The Shema is **Deuteronomy 6:4** “**Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!**” You might have heard this cry in the Middle East from the towers in movies. That is one of the things they are saying. Wait a minute Patrick did you just say that Jesus is God too? That is the whole debate in religion: is Jesus who he claims to be: God? Christians say we have three people as one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Shema helps in explaining this by starting with one God. When you read the whole Bible you can see that there are distinctly three main characters Father God, the Son Jesus God, and Holy Spirit God acting together as one. They have three distinct roles but they are still one God. Hence **the Shema: the Lord is one.**

14. Joshua (the strange story of a wall)

What if your enemy was in your way. Imagine if you will that God told you that you will beat them if you march around their house once a day for seven days. You can't say a word, but only blow horns as you march. On the seventh day you will do the same thing seven times and then and only then you can shout. Would you be crazy enough to do that and would you be shocked if the walls fell down flat?

That is the story of Joshua and the Jericho wall. In a history class I learned that there might have been as many as six Jericho's built in that area. All the archeological markers don't fit the time or the artifacts. One time period has the ability to build walls but the pots dug up are wrong. Another time has no walls but the artifacts fit the right time period. What really happened to Jericho? Yet, there were clearly many Jericho townships in that area throughout the centuries. This is a cool but a mysterious chapter in the Bible.

This is what I like the best. They Israelites did not grumble in this story like they had before. The walls came down flat but the houses inside did not. They were asked to spare no-one and keep nothing for themselves. All the precious metal were to be put in the God storehouse only. The people inside Jericho never shouted back at them for seven days (that must have been nuts).

Finally God wanted them to save the prostitute that helped them earlier in the story. This story says a lot about God and those who have undying faith in him.

15. Joshua 20 (the beginning of prisons)

This chapter might not look like a prison but I think the idea came from here. This is called the city of refuge. Australia was set up as a penal colony or maybe a city of refuge. I suppose prisons are for those who commit crimes. The cities of refuge were for people who made mistakes and their actions were considered a crime. They were fleeing from avengers of the victims. The city of refuge was a safe place to hide.

In Egypt I heard a story about two sets of people: the northern and southern families. I think it was the southern families that had a death pact of sorts. If one of their own was killed, the family would not rest until the criminal was killed to avenge the family honor. Only the grandmother could rescind the call to avenge. In Joshua 20 God told the people who committed a crime by accident to flee to a safe place: a city of refuge.

In this chapter the only way to be forgiven was to have the avengers or judges die before you did. I find it interesting that God didn't command the people to forgive and forget. God knows people and they really never forget. Jesus says we are to forgive as God has forgiven us. Yes, but even Jesus knew that it takes time within human hearts to forget. So we have prisons to keep criminals in but in some ways it's to keep the avengers out. I don't think prisons are cities of refuge but that's what we have today.

16. Judges 4 (the beginning of The Women's Liberation Movement)

Everyone says the Bible is a male dominated book. Are you sure about that? There are countless stories driven by women. We have Eve and the Serpent; Mary Mother of Jesus, and Rehab the Spy hider. There also is a really cool section in Judges about a woman called Deborah. God appointed judges to rule and protect Israel. Did you know he also picked a woman judge? Deborah led an army to defeat an enemy named Sisera.

The cool part is what happened after that. You see I think this is the beginning of Woman's liberation. A woman was put in power to lead the men to war. Also there is a wife named Jael. After Deborah's army won the war Jael received the fleeing commander Sisera into her tent. They were supposed to be friends. He asked her to hide him. This woman took matters into her own hands.

While the man slept she silently came up to him and drove a peg through his head into the ground. Women can make decisions and they can be nasty at times. These women did what was needed to be done to protect those around them. They might be the first strong women for the Liberation movement.

17. Ruth (the first chick flick)

Sometimes the Bible can be steamy like a chick flick. Ruth is a love story with twists and turns. First is the girl Ruth. She marries into a family only to have her husband die. Naomi her mother in law had her husband die also. Naomi asked Ruth to go back to the country she came from but she refused. Her love for Naomi was too great. Isn't this a great story?

Naomi decides to head back home to the place of her youth. While there Ruth meets an older man named Boaz. They fall in love and it becomes an entangled web. Ok let me try and explain without making it complicated. Naomi has no husband but is related to Boaz. She encourages Ruth to be attractive to Boaz to get his attention. Boaz falls for it and finds Ruth lying at his feet at night (very steamy).

The only way Boaz can be her husband is if another relative refuses to marry Ruth. In a courtroom scene Boaz smartly uses smooth words to redeem the land belonging to Naomi's dead husband thus receiving Ruth as well. The end is very interesting. Ruth ends up being a mother in the line of David and line of Jesus. For a good story in a chick flick what more do you want.

18. 1 Samuel 17 (The first WWE Match)

It can be said that a boy named David was small and not much to look at. It can be equally said that a giant man named Goliath was a pillar of fear to his foes. Imagine if you will two mountains with a valley between. On one side was the Israelite army and on the other the Philistine.

Every day for 40 days this giant came out from his mountain and taunted the Israelites to fight. The Israelites were afraid of this man. As the story goes the little boy David was sent to the battle to report on the progress. What he found was a bunch of chickens. David decided to get into a royal battle with this giant because he believed he had God with him.

The giant came into the ring (valley) with an armor bearer holding a shield. Goliath had a bronze helmet and massive spear and chain mail on his body. I could just imagine the rock music and long hair as this man came out with two beauties by his side. He was standing there like Apollo Creed in Rocky.

The other side was this little boy. They tried to put armor on him but it was way too big. The men hide behind the rocks as they told David (good luck). David entered the battle smelling like a sheep herder. He stood there with a sling in his hand and five smooth stones, yet, he was confident that God was on his side. This WWE match last all of 5 seconds. David used his sling with one stone and clobbered the giant in the skull. The giant fell down flat and David cut off his head. Their royal rumble was a bust in the media because of bad ratings.

19. 2 Samuel 11 (The first political scandal)

David is considered the greatest king in Israel history. He was also considered a great leader and warrior. Did you know he also has the title of the first political scandal? This chapter opens with an important statement: this was a time when kings went to war but David stayed behind. Ya I bet he did. People never talk about it but I believe David knew fully what he wanted: a woman on the other rooftop "Bathsheba."

I also believed that in reality David raped her and made her pregnant. This is not a love story. Bathsheba was married to a warrior named Uriah. This is the big scandal part. David stays home and sleeps with Uriah's wife. She becomes pregnant. David calls for Uriah in order to get him to sleep with his wife and cover it all up. The honorable Uriah feels guilty for leaving the war and refuses. David in a panic sends Uriah back into battle to the front lines where he was killed. The cover-up was complete or was it.

20. Esther (the first thriller)

The story is an ironic thriller. There is the bad guy Haman and the heroine Esther and her dad Mordecai. This is a great little story. I feel the movies on this book have never done it justice. This story centers on jealousy, love, and betrayal.

It opens way before this book. Haman is a descendant of the Agagite. They were slaughtered several centuries before by King Saul of the Jews. Haman had it in for the Jewish people. The king in this story wanted everyone to worship him. The dad Mordechai refused to do that. Haman took this opportunity to kill all the Jews because of this insult to the king.

In the meantime the king always was looking for new concubines. His wife was banished so he was looking for a wife too. Esther joined his posse of women and the king fell in love with her. The villain Haman was building a hangman's gallows for Esther's dad in the days that followed. Esther became brave and asked the king to stop the gallows and the killing of the Jews. In the end

Haman was hanged by his own gallows and the day was saved by Esther. What a great thriller!

21. Job (God and Satan chat)

I think God and Satan only talk in the Bible twice. The first is in Genesis when God pronounces judgment on Satan for deceiving the woman. The second is found here in the Book of Job. Job is a very old book. Historians place this book from anywhere between Genesis to the Prophets. That means it's most likely between 7th century and 4th century BCE, and that is a long time between to place it. Job is very, very old.

I want to point out a few things that might interest you. One: is that Job is considered one of the best literary writings ever. The wisdom, interaction between characters, and great sayings has been praised by writers and critics alike. The second impressive thing is the interaction between God and Satan in chapter one. There are several things about this kibitzing back and forth I want to talk about.

First: is that it says Satan came before God to give account of things. Was God in heaven? Was Satan allowed into heaven to see God? Why do Satan and God even talk? Finally why does Satan have to give account? These are just some of the questions from this chapter. One man told me Satan had special status compared to sinners, so he could see God in heaven. Really? There is a great mystery about the past in these verses. I believe there are a great many things we just don't understand or know about how this world really works.

So God and Satan can discuss things. They can negotiate the lives of people. God is willing to let us dangle for a time. It says in the New Testament that God allows things to happen that we can bear. It also says that all things go through the hand of God. This is good news and bad news. It's good because God is in control, but it's bad because he allows Satan to roam this earth. This chapter in Job gives us things to ponder.

22. Psalms (The Lord's Prayer)

There are two Lord's prayers that are the most famous in the Bible. Even non-Christians have heard these prayers. Jesus says an example prayer in Matthew 6. In the Old Testament another prayer written by David in the Psalms chapter 23. I have heard this prayer as a little kid. I have seen this displayed on posters and wall decorations.

I know some people will say there is only one Lord's Prayer (the one by Jesus). I think they miss the point of David's prayer here in Psalm 23. Jesus prays about "how to pray", but David is praying about God from his heart. It's like Jesus prayer is from God to us but David's is from us to God. They are both really good ways to pray.

I call Psalm 23 a Lord's Prayer because we use it in church all the time. The world does not know the Bible very much but they always quote this Psalm. This Prayer tells us about the Lord God in heaven. David had a hard life yet he chose to write this positive Psalm. We can use this passage to comfort us and give us hope just as it did for David. Read Matthew 6:9-13 and compare it to Psalm 23. If the Bible is all God's word then these two are saying the same thing. Look to the Lord: a Lord's prayer.

23. Psalm 119 (Longest chapter in the Bible)

Have you ever described something a million ways? Psalm 119 is David's way for describing his yearning and love of God's word. This is a really big prayer in my books. There are 176 verses. What is astounding to me is that there is no defining verse that everyone knows. There are some good ones but not a famous one.

That said this is one big donkey chapter in the Bible. I found it easy to read and it was fun. Did you know that if people open the Bible to look or answers they usually hit Psalm 119. It's about the middle of the book. David uses several different words to describe the Bible he is reading (Moses Law, possibly the first 5 books of the Old Testament). He uses words like law, word, precepts, commands, statues, decrees and several more.

I had a friend that thought he might look holier if he memorized this Psalm. 99% of people have trouble with one verse let alone 176! I don't think he did it. The story of this chapter is the love of what God's word means to our lives. David describes 176 ways he needs and loves the Word. I can imagine David having a moment where he had to pour this Psalm out on paper. I bet he wrote it in one night and was amazed and freaked at the final product. One last thing: it begins and ends with David saying he loves and needs God's commands. Great work David on this one!

24. Ecclesiastes (the truth about time)

If people lived by one set of statements Ecclesiastes would be good enough. There is a time for everything. This is God saying there is a time for peace and for war. I

think the most important thing we have been given is time. This chapter is good at bringing us back to the basics of life. What are you going to do with time?

What a word the title of this chapter is. It means gatherer, teacher, or preacher. The Wisdom here is unbelievable. This chapter is famous because of its look at time. It has been quoted probably more than most verses in the Bible. There is a time for everything. One of the cool statements is that God will use time to judge but it's not by our clock but his.

What I like best about this chapter is that Solomon had everything. Some people think he still was the richest person who ever lived. He may have had more women than any man has ever had. God blessed him but he realized he was under the influence of time. That was the one thing he could not own, it owned him. Read this chapter and be amazed at the wisdom from this man.

25. The Song of Solomon (The First steamy sex story)

Actually I suppose there might be other steamy sex stories in the Bible if you go back into the Book of Genesis. The Bible is full of sex if you look for it. There is Jacob, Leah and Rachel: a devious love triangle. How about Potiphar's wife and Joseph: she tried to seduce him. We can't forget King David having his way with Bathsheba and the scandal it caused.

The Song of Solomon can be called the Song of Songs, writings, or part of the wisdom books of the Bible. What it's also known for is its steamy words that describe a woman and sex. It's funny that it's right before the Prophet books. These writings are a description of a love affair between two people, the kingdom and God, and prophecy if you think about it. This book is rarely talked about in church circles.

If you read the Bible: sex is a part of the whole theme. We have Adam and Eve, the Holy Spirit and Mary, and the relationship between God and Israel. It's not Playboy sex bunnies, but it is an intimate relationship. Read the Song of Solomon and appreciate the descriptions of the relationship. Far too often we don't pursue our mates like the Bible describes. Maybe that's why so many couples split or feel less than fulfilled.

26. Daniel 3 (four men in a fiery furnace survive)

There are two types of Prophet books in the Bible: Major and Minor. The first set is the 5 Major ones like Isaiah. Some say they divide the Prophets into two groups: Pre and post Babylon capture. Others say it's based on importance or size. Daniel is small compared to the other Major Prophets but its impact just might be the biggest.

Let me quickly set the stage. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon raids Jerusalem and countryside of the Jews (6th century). Some of these Jews survive and live in Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar makes a golden statue onto which people were to worship the king. Three men Shadrach, Meshack, Abednego refused to

worship Babylon Gods or the King. So in a rage the King has the men thrown into an extremely hot furnace. This is where the story gets hot.

As the men were thrown into the furnace the hot flames burned up the guards that threw them in. The King was stunned when he saw four men walking around in the furnace instead of the three they threw in. The King then ordered the men out of the furnace, and three came out totally unharmed or singed. The King then ordered that all who worship their God will be free to do so.

The story is cool. The extra guy inside the furnace has said to be Jesus. From time to time a servant of the Lord appears in the Old Testament. He appears to Abraham, Jacob, and Joshua. He just might have appeared along with these three men in the furnace. They call him the Pre-incarnate Christ. This Book of Daniel is called God's judgment. Most of prophesy about end times comes from Daniel 7. Maybe the fourth guy in the fire makes sense.

27. Daniel (Surviving a lion's den)

If I said this story in the Bible is the most famous is that your opinion too? The adventure of Daniel in the lions cave has sparked movies, songs, and veggie tales videos. Is it the most popular? Is it more popular than than Noah, Adam, and Eve, or even David and Goliath?

The book called Daniel is supposed to be a prophetic book but there are so many stories. The story of Daniel is a continuation of worship in Babylon. Within four chapters the King Nebuchadnezzar was replaced with his son Belshazzar, yet two chapters later we are introduced to King Darius. This whole time Daniel is being summoned over and over by these kings.

In this particular story Daniel has a particular diet and a particular worship to the Jewish faith. The king had laws against following another faith. Bad men report to Darius about Daniel and demanded justice. The King really liked Daniel and tried to reverse the law but in Babylon that was almost impossible. Daniel was given the full punishment of the law and thrown into the lion's cave to be eaten.

The next day the King rushed to the cave to see if the Jewish God saved his friend. To his delight Daniel was alive and unharmed. The king then threw all the bad men and their families into the cave. The lion's immediately had dinner. The king praised Daniels God and allowed him to worship in his own way.

28. Daniel (might be the greatest prophesy chapter)

As I read this chapter I had to chuckle. This dream/ Prophecy sits inside a tumultuous time in history. This was a time of many wars and kingdoms changing hands. War was on the minds of people. Daniel (the book) is a collection of stories and dreams. The dreams terrified the kings and interpreters. Daniel was just as freaked out as anyone.

This chapter has been used by many a Biblical scholar and end times protagonist. When will the end come for the earth? This chapter talks about the end of something. It also talks about the establishment of heaven on earth. There are kingdoms of iron teeth and bronze armor. Battles will happen and kingdoms will fall. Horns will rise and horns will perish. This can be a scary chapter.

Daniel 7 is interesting and full of speculation. We can and do make any scripture fit what we want it to say. Is this end times prophesy? I don't know but on this side of history it's easy to pin the ancient one on God and Jesus. It's interesting this chapter does not mention the Jewish messiah (the savior).

Much of the Bible is written with the current situation in mind: references to ancient places, kingdoms, and towns. We have very very little concrete history to back up the truth of Daniel 7. What does it mean for us? Considering it was written in a time of war, it points to a war like time. The people in the Bible always look towards hope and restoration of the kingdom. The Jewish people have always been under siege. Daniel at face value might point to relief from Babylon and other nations at that time more than Russia, China, or whomever in our day 2500 years later.

29. Jonah 1 (Swallowed by a fish)

This fish story might be one of the most famous. Of all the stories like Noah or the parting of the sea, Jesus chose to mention this one. So many people have argued about the truth of this story. Can a man be swallowed by a fish? Duh it's the Bible: people rise from the dead, turn into pillars of salt, and get swallowed by a fish.

We have heard about this story but have you read it? It is really only one chapter long and gives little information. Jonah is a man God chose to preach to the city of Nineveh. He chose to ignore that calling and travel in the opposite direction. Jonah is asleep during a big storm on a boat. The men throw Jonah overboard to calm the seas. It worked yet God provided a big fish to swallow Jonah and save him.

What's interesting is Jesus. They say that Jesus saves (Jonah was saved) Jesus mentions one miracle from the Old Testament (Jonah). Jesus is asleep during a storm just like Jonah Jesus died (swallowed by the grave) and rose again in three days. Jonah was swallowed by a fish for three days and then spit out alive. Jesus basically says if you can't believe in the Jonah story you can't believe in him either. Very interesting indeed!

30. Malachi (The reason to give 10%)

Maybe you have heard about giving 10% of your money. In church circles it's called the Tithe (10%). I have heard many sermons on this chapter. Pastors have a list of scriptures they use to entice people to give more, love more, and feel more compassionate. This chapter talks about giving a tithe but God is not ordering, enticing, or co-horsing anyone to give.

Many studies have said that saving 10% is a good thing. I am sure giving 10% to charity is great too. The whole point of this chapter is to give with the heart. This chapter talks about respect of the Lord. The Israelites worked the law of God but did not practice the law of God. We still do that today as we are measured by what we give.

Call it karma if you want. The more you think about others the more blessings seem to come our way. That should not be the reason we do things. Murphy's Law runs wild when we're selfish and mean. This chapter might ask us about the Tithe, but in reality it is asking us about our hearts.

31. Matthew 2 (Jesus is not a baby with the wise men)

Welcome to the New Testament. We have been traveling through interesting facts in the Old Testament until today. The book of Matthew is the beginning of a new chapter in God's plan for his creation. This book opens with a genealogy pointing towards Jesus as the Messiah (savior) to come. This book is written in an interesting way with themes explained in three's; comparisons to Moses; and 60% of this Gospel is used in Mark and Luke.

This brings me to the birth of Jesus. Matthew 2 might be the most read chapter in the Bible. This is where we get information about Jesus birth, the wise men, and the Bethlehem story. The wise men (Magi) did not get to Jesus until he was around two years old. These men usually were in groups of twelve or more, not just three. They entered a house not a stable. The Gospel of Luke gives us a deeper story surrounding the birth. The King Herod ordered all children killed less than two years old to eliminate Jesus. The young family is told by God to live in Egypt until the danger passes. In Matthew 2 this is the last mention of Joseph.

32. Matthew 5 (the ten commandments part Deux)

In the Old Testament are the famous Ten Commandments. In those days it was called the Law of Moses. The people regarded the law as the way to live before God. The laws themselves were a mirror to see your sin. It wasn't so much

about following the laws but to know you were not God. Nobody could measure up to the law. This brings me to Matthew 5. Jesus got up on a mountainside just like Moses and gave new teachings not laws. They are called the Beatitudes that mean “goodness’s or holiness’s.”

These Beatitudes are considered by many to be the new Ten Commandments. The problem again is that people think they can follow these statements. These are just another mirror that reflects our fallen nature. Nobody can keep these any more than the real Ten Commandments.

There are about 8-10 statements by Jesus depending how you split them up. They all begin with “Blessed.” Most of us have heard them before at one time or another. Did you know that they are more than just teachings? Matthew records instances and examples with in the other chapters that reflect these teachings. It is done in three’s.

In that day the people were all about Moses and the laws of a Jew. There were many more laws added since Moses died 613 to be exact. The people had forgotten the spirit of the law to plainly just be good. Matthew portrays Jesus as a type of Moses on a mountainside giving laws. It would be something the reader would get at that time. The statements by Jesus are simple but impossible to follow. They sink deeper into our hearts. After these statements Jesus go on to talk about 14 things we need to work on like anger and cheating. It would have been nice if these were just another 10 laws but then the people would have 623 and no heart.

33. Matthew 28 (The Go and tell chapter)

In church circles there are several scriptures that are key to who we are as Christians. Matthew 28 is one of those places that define what God wants from us. Throughout history God has revealed himself in different ways. It might be through a pillar of fire or a prophet. They say in present times God reveals himself through two main things: the Bible and People. The Great commission is about the people and the Bible.

Jesus has died on a cross and the group following him has disbanded. Early one morning a group of women go to the tomb to finish the burial process. They are met by an Angel who has rolled away the stone covering the tomb. It is amazing in those days that Jesus reveals himself first to women because they were not high on the pecking order. We get to see the angel say to them to go and tell the disciples that Jesus is resurrected. In this chapter we read that the Jewish

officials are concerned and a rumor is spread that they paid off the guards to say Jesus body was stolen.

The final part of this chapter focuses on the disbanded men. They are finding themselves in the presence of Jesus and he gives them his last teaching. To go and tell and teach all he taught them in the last three years. The Great Commission is to spread the good news that the officials tried to hide. They guarded the tomb but that did not stop God. They paid off officials but that did not stop God. Throughout history men have tried to stop the message to go and tell, it has not been successful. Jesus Commission succeeds because it uses people to teach the word of God to everyone that God is alive.

34. Gospel of Mark (Mystery and intrigue)

This 16 chapter book on Jesus is very interesting. There is this thing in Christian terms called the Synoptic Problem. Basically it's why Mark is shorter than Matthew and which was written first. This book is very apocalyptic with themes like Kingdom of God, Son of Man, a stern Jesus, and dumbed down Apostles. This is a different view on Jesus life.

Who is this writer called Mark? Who knows! There are several Marks in the New Testament. We really have no clue who wrote this book. There is a theory that a mysterious "Q" writer was the basis for Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Much of Mark is shared in Matthew and Luke. Why would Matthew expand on Mark or Mark shorten Matthew if they shared? The Mystery "Q" tries to explain this.

Then we come to the ending in this book. Traditionally the oldest Manuscripts of Mark do not have scripture past 16:8. Mark 16:9-20 seem to be added later in the second century. They don't seem to fit the rest of the book. Many Bibles omit these verses. The problem is the original ending. Basically Jesus dies and three days later the women find an angel in the tomb. They are so frightened that they flee and say nothing to anyone. It's sort of an ending without a climax (hence someone put one in).

If you read Mark I feel the ending fits well. This is an apocalyptic book. The references to the Son of Man and Kingdom of God are found in the Prophet books of the Old Testament. This is clearly written to knowledgeable Jews that get the references. The dumb Apostles show that we are helpless to stop the advancing kingdom through Jesus. Jesus is seen as judging and stern as he is in the book of revelation. The ending fits because the end will be frightening and

abrupt for those who don't believe. Mark is mysterious and moody with a solemn message of repentance because the Kingdom of God is near.

35. Luke 2 (there are about 800 words telling about Jesus to twelve years old)

The Gospels of Jesus: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are a very interesting group of books telling the same story in four different ways. The First three books are called the Synoptic Gospels because they share quotes, stories, and information. Today we are interested in the book of Luke.

There are slightly different views on Jesus birth. Matthew shares with Luke about the Birth. Mark ignores the birth and childhood all together. Luke on the other hand gives us about 800 words about Jesus up to twelve years old. There is a deeper look into the Jesus story by Luke. I find it amazing that this Jesus who is so influential and controversial has so little known about his 33 years on this earth.

In Luke 2 we quickly recount the birth told to us by Matthew. Everything about Jesus is Jewish. He is circumcised 8 days later and presented in dedication to the Lord at the temple. His parents sacrifice a pair of pigeons and turtledoves just like they were supposed to in the Old Testament. Three types of People told Jesus parents something about their child. There were Shepard's, Simeon the righteous man, and the Prophet Anna.

Finally we get the only glimpse of Jesus before he is 30. The boy Jesus at 12 years old is going to the Passover with his parents (another Jewish custom). He decides to remain behind without his parents knowing. They traveled far from the city before they realized he was missing. They found Jesus in the Temple teaching the teachers about God. There is an odd exchange between the parents and Jesus about not sneaking off. Jesus replies that he was in his father's house. The house of God was the temple. That's it and after this chapter we only know Jesus after he turns 30.

36. John (is a buddy but not part of the first three Gospels)

How would you tell the story of your leader? I suppose you would give royal commission to one great author to write the biography. Instead, in the Bible, we have four persons writing four different stories about Jesus. The first three Gospels share information. Some of the wording is exact. These three persons

certainly must have shared from themselves or a common source. The interesting part is in each; important pieces are shared and also left out. It's like you can't have one without the other to complete the story.

Now the book of John is a totally different cat. John does not directly share the same stories. The picture we get of Jesus is a collaboration of four views. Each one tells what they saw from their point of view. John just happens to see things the others either did not or didn't bother to write down.

Without John, our doctrine on who Jesus really was would be quite different. The Holy Spirit, Jesus is God, and famous verses like 3:16 would be missing or most likely viewed differently. What is interesting is that we don't really know who wrote these gospels. The names have been given to the authors but it's more by tradition than fact, yet here they are telling the same story differently.

Why do three writers share information and one does not. The story and timeline is close in all four. They share the same Jesus but just from different angles. Some did not want this book of John in the Bible. Without John we would have a different Jesus because this writer is telling us different details about the same Jesus. If God inspired this biography, then he chose four persons to write one story. John binds together what the other three writers were trying to say.

37. John 3 (Most famous verse in the Bible)

What is the most famous verse in the Bible? For some it's Genesis 1:1 **"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."** Maybe it's Matthew 28:19 **"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."** Whatever you chose, it seems to have meaning personally.

I think though, that John 3:16 is the most famous. When I first went to church someone told me this verse to help me believe. It is used over and over again to show people the truth about God. During the Blue Jays first world series run I saw a guy holding up a sign that read "John 3:16." I did not believe in God, so I ran home and looked it up in that little red Gideon Bible. It said **"For 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."**

The sad part is that many Christians know this verse but not much else about their Bibles. Many un-believers scoff at people quoting scripture like John 3:16 in their faces. What makes this verse so famous? I think its two things. One is that it tells you plainly that God loves you. We have heard that statement many times from nutty Christian people. Non-Christians tend to roll their eyes at that one.

The second is that life can seem finite. We live, we drink, and tomorrow we die. This verse tells us a life beyond death is as simple as believing. If it were

that easy many more people would accept rather than reject this verse. The reason people reject the claims of John 3:16 is because it's just that simple. There must be a catch. The catch is this: "What makes a guy hold up a sign during the World Series." Hello, there is a baseball game going on and duh your there. Why quit your job and go across the world to preach in dangerous countries. It's as simple as this verse: when God's invite invades your soul something changes you can't explain. Maybe that's the real reason John 3:16 is so famous for over 2000 years.

38. John 11:35 (Shortest verse in the Bible)

I found this chapter very interesting. I call it the emotional chapter. Jesus friend Lazarus has become ill and Lazarus sisters Mary and Martha call on Jesus to come quickly. Jesus seems to be so uninterested. He stays where he is for another two days.

Then Jesus says to his disciples "hey why don't we go visit Judah again." They are shocked because those people over there wanted to take their heads off. Thomas says to Jesus "gee let us all go so we can die with him." I find this whole scene strange and funny.

Finally Jesus makes his way to Lazarus house to see him while he is ill. Oop's Lazarus has died, Jesus was too late. Martha went out to meet Jesus knowing he could have healed her brother. She is choked. Jesus seems relaxed and says "he will rise from the dead." It's like Jesus is comfortable within himself. He is God right, Lazarus is just sleeping in Jesus mind, and death means nothing.

Then another strange thing happens. Mary the other sister comes out to Jesus and she gives him the gears too. Is Jesus still cool about it? No, his human emotions overwhelm him as he sees the broken hearts. Verse 35 says "Jesus wept." Christians love to know their verses and this is one people remember. Not for the compassion of Jesus or the strange dealings of Jesus and Lazarus, but because it's cool to know the smallest verse.

The funny thing is that after Jesus heals Lazarus, the Jews plan to kill Jesus for his miracles. Many times Jesus wept for his Jewish heritage and the world. This chapter shows that Jesus is not afraid of death. It also shows his two conflicting sides. He was fully man and fully God. No wonder he wept.

39. John 14 (the Trinity chapter)

People always ask how we know that there is the Holy Spirit, God the Father, and Jesus the Son. Yes there are many scriptures that talk about God, but most of them come from John 14. This chapter does not prove to people that God is three (the trinity) but to Christians it does.

Jesus is asked to show them the Father in heaven. Jesus replies that you have seen him already within himself. Jesus makes a famous statement "**I am the**

way, the truth, and the life; nobody comes to the Father except through him.” Jesus then goes on to talk about one other person “the advocate.” This advocate is also called the Holy Spirit. This chapter to Christians begins the discussion about the Trinity. A confusing theory of one God but three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

The use of the Holy Spirit in the Bible is sprinkled throughout from Genesis 1 to Revelation. This chapter of John 14 is almost the granddaddy of them all. Much of what Christians believe about the relationship between the Spirit, God the Father, and Jesus is found here. This Spirit is a teacher, conduit, and equal with God. All God is and knows flows through the Spirit to us. Without this chapter Christianity would be different.

40. Acts (people die for Jesus)

One thing is fascinating about Jesus: people are willing to die for him. In some organizations people will die for the leader by committing suicide or becoming a martyr (killing others in the name). Jesus had people die for him by telling what he taught. It is the people around those persons that kill them. Why are people so willing to kill Jesus followers just by the words they say about him?

In the Gospels Judas betrayed Jesus. He gave him up to the authorities and they crucified Jesus on a cross. Jesus died himself for the things he said. Judas killed himself because he gave Jesus up. In Acts 7 a man named Stephan talked about what Jesus stood for, and it got him killed.

There are stories in the New Testament that talk about crowds trying to stone some of the characters. Is the words and meaning Jesus stood for worth or justified to stone a person to death? What could someone say that would be so awful that death is worthy? Stephan is called the first martyr for Jesus. He stood before the church and accused them of killing Jesus. They killed him for his words.

I really think others died before Stephan for the words of Jesus. Judas obviously had a problem with the words of Jesus. I think he might have tried to put Jesus in a spot to act as God and become the messiah that saves the people from Rome. Judas miscalculated and killed himself. Jesus himself died for the words he said. The other thief on the cross beside Jesus believed in the words from Jesus and he died. Stephan only wanted to say words that challenged the church to do better. He used the teachings of Jesus and died for his actions. It's a strange world we live in when words can kill.

41. Romans 8 (the greatest chapter in the Bible)

This chapter is probably quoted more often than you might think. It opens with a bang saying “**there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.**” Then in verse 9 we have the writer Paul saying those with the Holy Spirit in them are

children of God. Sure this is doctrine of Christianity central, but it is a hopeful chapter too.

Around verse 24 Paul likes to reflect on hope and the job of the Holy Spirit. For those who decide to believe in God and his son Jesus brings a hope; hoping that the Promises of God are true. Lucky for us the Holy Spirit works between heaven and earth on our behalf.

Verses 28 and 29 are the grand daddies in the Bible. What do we hope for? That all things work out for the good of those who love God. There is controversy here over the word predestined. Folks, we are all predestined to be in heaven if we chose God over the insanity of Satan.

Verse 31 is famous that if God is for us who can be against us? Verse 35 says who will separate us from the Love of Christ Jesus? Paul says he is convinced in verses 38 and 39 that nothing in this world can separate us from the Love of God within Christ Jesus. Christians always talk about faith, hope, and love with this guy names Jesus. Romans 8 are where we get that understanding, but we also experience that very thing in our daily lives.

42. 1 Corinthians 7 (We are called to who God made us to be)

This whole chapter can be so controversial: who can marry, who can get divorced and so on and so on. I feel that those inside strict religious circles and those in strict un-religious circles miss the point.

Verse 17 says **“Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him.”** This whole chapter gives us examples of many situations where we find ourselves. Each situation is not exclusive or an order. At times Paul gives us a command and at other times not. The command or not is not the issue or the point. We are called by God to do great things and even believe at different times in our lives than others.

Where we are is where God needs us. So often we are asked to serve outside who we are. The results are often disastrous. So your spouse becomes a Christian, is that worth divorce! So your spouse does not want to believe in God, is that worth divorce! I don't belong there anymore because I'm a Christian, but is that the mindset what God had in mind for you?

What this chapter means is that God made you for a time such as this. What I mean is that abused people can protect abused people. The educated can relate to the educated. A postal worker like me can talk to posties. All I have experienced and all I have learned is jammed deep inside the person God made. I have been molded, crafted, and planned for a moment such as this. That is what Paul is saying in Chapter 7. God wants us right where we found him, not hidden inside the Christian community. Living with God in the lives we have and that is an interesting fact.

43. 1 Corinthians 13 (The Love Chapter)

I have read many types of poetry. I have read several stories that depict love in various ways. 1 Corinthians 13 talks about love in a way we don't usually see in our world. We look at love in relationships, sex, and kindness. The writer Paul expresses love inside our own hearts.

What is love? In a way love is truly unconditional. We look at someone and just know we love them. I have met someone and loved them right on the spot. How is that love if I haven't even received anything from them? This chapter explains that. Love begins and ends inside our hearts.

When I love, I give my deepest gift: myself. I unconditionally am willing to sacrifice all for that person. In a way I would climb, crawl, and beg to have them. I love them. Some people say that love is not real. They just can't see love because in this chapter Paul describes unseen love in our hearts. When we choose to love; we let go of ourselves and willing give it to someone. That type of trust and gift is not easily taken back. Love is more than we think and know.

44. Galatians 5 (What a Christian should look like)

Sometimes people who don't believe in God say "that is not very Christian" to a believer. If they have never read the Bible or attended church then how do they know what a Christian looks like? Well for most people they have heard stories. Most of the Bible is handed down through stories. They tell the story of what God has done.

What God has done is make replicates of himself. It says in the beginning God made us in his own image. Later on the Holy Spirit came and dwelt within believers. This Holy Spirit works within them to represent God. Christians are guided, taught, and molded by the Holy Spirit. I think most people have heard about the God of Love. They wonder sometimes, out loud, why they don't see that love in Christians.

Galatians 5 has a list of what you should see in Christians. Yes, I know Christians are not perfect, but these traits should be seen within those who call themselves Jesus followers. **Gal 22-23 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."**

Trust me I know that these traits don't appear in me from time to time, but I pray they exist in me. Sometimes people have unrealistic expectations of me as a Christian. I am also human. I am not Jesus or ever will be Jesus. God asks Christians to act like him and to shed light and love towards others. Challenge people you know that are Christian. They need to act more like God than like themselves from time to time. Point out the interesting facts in Galatians 5.

45. Ephesians (The craziest verse in the Bible)

The reason I call this the craziest verse is because everything a Christian believes hinges on it. Eph 2:8 **“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.”** As people, we want to put a price on everything. We buy love, cars, and favors. People say “I owe you or you owe me” in all we do. God says he let his son die as a price for all we have done, are doing, and will do.

In our human thinking this is just plainly not possible. They say everyone has a price. People don’t die for free. Really? Don’t fallen soldiers die for their country? Even Christians have put a price on all they do. Some of them believe we must serve God to be saved. Other people say “I’ve been good enough to get into heaven.” Another denomination believes we are saved by displaying miraculous acts like healing people with our hands.

I know a man who believes he willfully does not sin anymore. I guess he believes he does not need saving anymore from God. He has arrived at sinless perfection.

What makes this verse and the whole chapter nuts is that it’s all by Gods hand and not by our doing. As humans I don’t think we can comprehend or accept that. We must do something to get this gift. I was a good boy to receive from Santa or my parents. God does not freely give gifts of salvation to bad boys and girls does he? If a bad person believes in Christ and God’s Grace then is he saved?

This is crazy isn’t it? In the “God Father movie” Tony has placed mob hits on other bad men in the mob. In the meantime he is worshipping at church. Do his hidden actions mean he does not believe in Jesus? Someone said God’s Grace makes allowances for our sin. If God and his Grace are bigger than us: what can we do to earn that type of love?

46. 1 Timothy 3 (Great leadership principles)

Why do we think Church people should be nice? The Bible actually has instructions on how to act in the church, but it’s also for the leaders in the church. The Timothy books in the Bible are used as guidelines for Christians and their leadership.

What is interesting is how we apply these instructions. We look for those who manage well. That is not a bad thing but in all things there are exceptions. This works inside and outside the church. Timothy can be used in all organizations. I know nice people who cannot lead. I know businessmen who can lead outside the church but do poorly inside. Everything is not always as it seems.

Some people are artists, cashiers, and many other menial jobs, but they are passionate leaders of a cause. Business men or women do not always make the best leaders. People that appear to run a good family might have hidden flaws we

never see outside their homes. Paul's instructions are good. They are meant to keep the church safe. In business, they can help keep honesty and integrity alive and well.

Everything in life is perception. A person looks happy, successful, and clean. We all know that many of us have demons we never share. Timothy is a good guide but it's the questions we don't ask that do us the most harm. A checklist is different than a guide. A guide leads towards something. A checklist disregards anything not on the list. Use the Timothy books to live well but don't worship the words but rather be inspired by them. Kindness cannot be legislated.

47. 2 Timothy 3 (Words in the Bible are Special)

Many people in the Christian world say read the Bible. Why? It's just a book made by trees isn't it? Well yes it is, but the spirit of God is somehow woven into the pages. That seems ridiculous. True, but I must confess there is something special about the Bible.

Friendships are made and broken over this book. People get happy and angry over this book. Can you say that about any other book? In 2 Timothy 3, Paul says the words in the Bible are useful for teaching, correction, and training in righteousness. The Bible is a mystery that changes people attitude the moment they are given the holy book.

Here is something interesting: the last book in the Old Bible is Malachi. It ends with a warning to respect God and know the end is near. Well the end has been near for over 2000 years. It seems that it isn't going to happen. If 2 Timothy was the end of the new Bible it would appear to talk the same way: the end is near. Interestingly enough the real end is Revelation 22 and it says the same thing as timothy: be mindful of the word.

God can warn us the end is near but his purpose is to grow and not destroy. The Bible is sometimes called the living Word. Why? It's because the spirit of the words grow and teach rather than destroy and tear down. 2 Timothy 3 also warns us against holy people using the words the wrong way to make themselves look good. The Bible reminds us that saying you are holy does not make you holy. This book can help mold and change you into a deeper person. That's what these special words were meant for.

48. Hebrews 1 (the angel chapter)

Angels are always the subject of controversy. Some people think they have a guardian angel while others think we become angels. Angels are a lot different than we think. In Hebrews 1 we get a glimpse of what an angels role is on earth. In the Bible angels are servants and nothing more.

In Genesis we see an Angel of the Lord coming to instruct Joshua. Many times people are asked to not fear an angel. They really look horrible and frightening. Angels are servants just like what we read in Hebrews 1. Paul is an Old Testament Scholar, so he knows what angels are really all about.

Paul points out in this chapter that Angels are created for divine service to those who inherit the earth. I think that's where people get the guardian angel thing. The problem with that is it's service from God towards guiding us. God uses them to move his will on this earth. Angels appear to instruct and warn people about their walk with God.

Angels are beings that worship God. They are warriors in the service of the heavenly armies. People do not become angels when they die. The Bible points out we are greater than angels. God has plans for us that exceed that of angels. There is a perfect story in Numbers 22 that tells of a talking donkey and an angel. The angel is used to move Balaam the Prophet in the right direction through his donkey. This is a very funny and serious story. Angels do what God tells them to do and not what we tell them.

49. Hebrews 7 (Who is Melchizedek anyways)

This mysterious man has people questioning themselves. Is he human or not? In Hebrews 7 Paul attaches Jesus to the "Order of Melchizedek." What is that? Well in Genesis 14 Abraham is approached by a priest named Melchizedek. Abraham is blessed by him and has to give a tithe (1/10th).

There is a famous Psalm 110. David talks about a coming king who will be in the "Order of Melchizedek." He is above human kings according to the Psalm. Paul is saying the same thing in Hebrews 7 and says it's Jesus. Melchizedek means "king of righteousness." Is he a king, priest, or something else?

Some have suggested that this king is a name like "your honor" or "prince". Melchizedek might stand for an important spiritual leader in that day like a Pope. Jesus has a name like that too "Emanuel." It means "God is with us." These names and titles are very common in the Jewish writing.

Melchizedek appears to Abraham and then leaves. David obviously gives importance to the "Order of Melchizedek" in the Psalm. This is in my mind a tradition. Moses brother Aaron is the first assigned priest by God. In those days the line of Aaron and the Levites were the only priests, and then comes along Melchizedek.

He is not in the line of Aaron or Abraham. The interesting part is this: Jesus is not either. His parents are but not Jesus. That's why he had to be born of a virgin. Carried and born by Mary but not from Mary or Joseph's genes.

Melchizedek is thought of in the same way. The tradition is that the “Order” is king or priest for life. Paul in Hebrews 7 is attaching Jesus to that “Order.” We don’t really know much of anything about Melchizedek, but the Jewish people have given him great reverence for about 4000 years.

50. Hebrews 11 (The Faith Chapter)

In a way this is the craziest chapter in the Bible. This is the faith chapter but there is so much going on. Paul goes through the Jewish history telling of the faith some had. In School I had to know this was the faith chapter. In a way this is also a historical confirming chapter. Many of the old stories are confirmed in these verses.

The other side to this chapter is who Paul talks about. Paul mentions Abraham, Moses, Rahab, and Jacob. Abraham disobeyed God and had a Child out of wedlock, yet he has faith. Moses killed a man, yet has faith. Rahab was a Prostitute, yet has faith. Paul interestingly mentions Jacob not as his new name Israel, but as faithful Jacob. Paul calls himself the chief of sinners yet he had faith.

There is another list of people here that is very interesting. Barak, Gideon, and Samson were Judges but each had flaws. Samson was a womanizer. . David committed adultery. Samuel picked the wrong king. I’m sure Paul could go on and on. God does not pick perfection so why do we?

The end of this chapter says in verses 39-40 **“Yet all these, though they were commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised, 40 since God had provided something better so that they would not, apart from us, be made perfect.”** What did God give them?

The answer is faith through their sin. Sometimes church can paint a picture that sin is outside the church. I can tell you that sin is very much alive in a church. God’s children grow in faith because they fail. They come to realize that they need God to succeed. These people all had terrible faults but God loved them still, and grew their faith. This chapter is cool because we are all listed here if Paul could be given more space.

51. Revelation 2-3 (The Church Chapters)

The Bible is really a numbers book. We have themes of 7’s and 40’s. Throughout the scriptures we have many other number combinations like 12. For example there is 7 days in creation; 40 years in the desert; and 12 nations of Israel. Conversely we see Jesus in the desert 40 days and nights. There are twelve Disciples, and 7 Lampstands in Chapter 2 of Revelation. It means something.

I think they might mean this: when you see a number it is important in the Bible. Gideon in Judges 7 was told to use only 300 men to win the war. The number was significant. Here in Revelation 2 and 3 we open with Jesus announcing himself as the one who holds seven stars and is among the seven

lampstands. To the readers in Jesus day this was very important. When reading this they would say “oh that one.” If you notice the chapter does not even mention Jesus name but we know it’s him by the seven references.

This is an interesting chapter because Jesus is also talking to seven churches. Seeing a number means to take notice of these words more than others. These churches were real. The ruins can be found today. The cool part is how different each church is. One is rotten while another is good. The most quoted ones in books and church are the ones that look good but something is wrong.

Today we try and preach about being one of those churches. We seem to think we would know ourselves. Jesus even says in these verses “you do not even know who you are.” So we have three interesting facts. One is the numbers. Two is the types of churches and what they represent in that day and ours. Thirdly this is the last time we read about churches in the Bible. What does that mean? Maybe we don’t want to know because an end time’s storm approaches right after.

52. Revelation 20 (The thousand year mystery).

Not the best plan to end these 52 interesting facts in the Bible on a down note. I should have gone one chapter forward where all is rosy. I just find this thousand year thing interesting. How is it that Jesus came is back to reign for a thousand years and then gives Satan another kick at the can?

It seems strange. Why give Satan another chance. Really there is no chance at all. God will win and this chapter says so. Maybe it’s about the people. Who is in and who is out? It seems that only some dead will rise after the rapture. Now I know these words are weird. Rapture: to some it’s when we Christians go to heaven. The argument is on whom, when, and how it will happen.

So where do the thousand years fit in. some say it’s now while others say later. Some religious groups think it has past while others are preparing for it. Who is right and who is wrong? These thousand years paints a daunting picture of who is in and out. In is quite similar to Jesus really. He asked twelve men to follow him yet all abandoned him and one even betrayed him. That only took three years compared to a thousand.

What does God have to say about this? Well there are many scriptures you can point towards the end times. There are not too many that point towards a thousand year reign. Some say he (the messiah) will rule. So little is said about the rapture, end time, and the lake of fire. There is a small mention from Jesus on the end of days in Matthew 24. It’s not pretty and is the thousand years included in what Jesus is talking about?

Either way these thousand years are interesting. Why not ten thousand? Why does Satan get another shot? Why do those who love Jesus fall away after a thousand years. So many questions and so little time. Is a lifetime enough time to believe? Maybe you need a thousand years. I don't think pastors really ever preach on this because it's not happy stuff. I find it interesting that three years with Jesus was not enough to make a friendship. The Bible seems to suggest that a thousand years is not enough for some either.