

GREATER THAN

"GREATER THAN OUR RELIGION"

MATTHEW 9:9-17

This Week's Core Competency

Trinity – I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 13:14, *May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*

We believe the God of the Bible is the Only True God. Monotheism distinguished Old Testament Judaism from Egyptian, Assyrian and Babylonian galleries of gods. Christianity's belief in only one true God challenged the Grecian and Roman divine pantheon. So strong was the early Christian commitment to the one true God that Romans often labeled Christians as "atheists" because they worshipped no visual representation of gods in any form, whether emperor or idol.

Monotheism dispels the illogical confusion of polytheism. When there are many gods, the human eventually becomes all-powerful in the choice of devotion. If one god does not work, another can be chosen. Soon the chooser becomes the all-powerful. But strict monotheism is not without its own logical problems. If God is one, then how or whom does God love? If God is love, but God has to create someone to express love, then is not God incomplete? "The words 'God is love' have no real meaning unless God contains at least two Persons. Love is something that one person has for another

"Be careful when you pursue truth, because you just might find him."

– Jefferson Bethke

person. If God was a single person, then before the world was made, He was not love" (C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 160-161).

The Christian understanding of Trinity upholds the logic of monotheism and attempts to examine the wonderful complexities and expansiveness of the one true God. God is one, but is also multi-faceted and complex. One God, eternally existing in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is fully complete and without need of anything outside of His iGodness.i God is so great we cannot divide Him. Yet He is so complex we cannot limit Him to a singular description.

This brings us to Jesus. Much of modern scholarship makes the claim that Jesus never understood himself to be God nor declared himself as such. It is true that the Gospels never record Jesus saying specifically, "I am God, worship me." Making such a statement to a Jewish monotheistic community would have been extremely dangerous. While Jesus did not explicitly make such claims, he did implicitly display his divine nature and attributes numerous times. So strong were these demonstrations of deity that many concluded that Jesus had to be more than human.

Another claim modern skepticism makes is that Jesus may have displayed divine attributes, but never presented himself as the "pre-existent" Son of God. Jesus may have thought he became God or his followers may have sought to exalt him into deity-status after his death. A pre-existent Son of God is seen by skeptics as a later development or the creation of the Christian community. Some would say that the Gospel of John is an example of this later idivinei understanding of Jesus while the other gospels present Jesus as just a man, a prophet.

cont. pg. 2

There are many examples and expressions of Jesus in the synoptic gospels that point to a pre-existent, eternal Son of God. One of these many indicators is the ‘I have come’ statements of Jesus (Mk. 1:24,38; 10:45; Mt. 5:7; 8:28; 9:13; 10:34,35; Lk. 12:49; 19:10). One of these is found in our passage for this study. When Jesus says he has come (Mt. 9:13), he is saying more than that he has just arrived at a new geographical location. His coming implies that he is coming from somewhere, specifically from God, to carry out or perform some special task as God. In Matthew 9, Jesus says he has come not for the righteous, but for sinners. This coming is in the image of a healing doctor or a joyful bridegroom. Both images are associated with the divine in the OT and point to a pre-existent Son of God (Ex. 15:26; Isa. 62:4-5). ‘Both angels and the Synoptic Jesus declare that they have come with a purpose. So the reference to the decision and purpose expressed in Jesus’ statements of coming with a prior intention to save, teach, judge and so on points to a coming from somewhere. The obvious conclusion is that this ‘somewhere’ is heaven, which entails the corresponding idea of preexistence’ (Simon J. Gathercole, *The Preexistent Son: Recovering the Christologies of Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, 147).

Jesus is God, for all eternity. He is part of the complete and complex Godhead. He left the privileged space of heaven, humbling himself and became human to carry out the plan of God as God and man. (Phil. 2:6-11). Jesus did not become God, but has always been God. Jesus is greater than any understanding of religion because he pre-dates all religions at all times. We experience the wonders and mysteries of God through our devotion and worship of Jesus. How important is Jesus to you? How much more important is Jesus than your rules regarding religion?

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God’s word to put yourself in touch with him.

Matthew 9:9-17

9 As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector’s booth. “Follow me,” he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.

10 While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew’s house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. 11 When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?”

12 On hearing this, Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. 13 But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

14 Then John’s disciples came and asked him, “How is

it that we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?”

15 Jesus answered, “How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.

16 “No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. 17 Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.”

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Underline the word "there" in 9:9. Write the city it references above it.
- * Circle each occurrence of “sinners” in this passage.
- * Draw a box around each occurrence of “disciples” in this passage.
- * Draw a line connecting the two questioning groups found in this passage.
- * Draw a line between the two recipients of the questions in this passage.
- * Double underline the word “sick” in 9:12. Draw an arrow to the people it identifies.
- * Double underline the word “mourn” in 9:15. Draw an arrow to the activity it describes.
- * Draw lines between symbolic words in 9:16 that are similar to images in 9:17.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. According to Matthew 9:9, where did Jesus just come from and what was the significance of Matthew's location?
2. What did Matthew's action in Matthew 9:9 involve?
3. Why would the Pharisees be upset about Jesus' dinner companions?
4. What claims were being made by Jesus in his response to the Pharisees (Mt. 9:12-13)?
5. What are some flaws in the logic behind the question about fasting in Matthew 9:14 (consider Mt. 6:16-18)?
6. What was Jesus implying with his bridegroom illustration?
7. What connection do you see between Mt. 9:9-15 and Mt. 22:36-40?
8. What does the "old" (garment and wineskin) represent in Matthew 9:16-17?
9. What do the "unshrunk cloth" and "new wine" represent?
10. Is Jesus arguing for discarding the "old" or is he arguing for something else (Consider Mt. 5:17-20)? Explain.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of its message to clarify your understanding of the passage.

The book of Matthew can be understood as a collection of narratives about Jesus (Mt. 1-4, 8-9, 11-12, 14-17, 19-21, 26-28) separated by a collection of the formal and longer teachings of Jesus (Mt. 5-7, 10, 13, 18, 22-25). There is some overlap between narrative and instruction within Matthew, but the arrangement of material generally follows this pattern of stories interrupted by sermons.

Matthew 8-9 unfold a section of the Gospel that highlights the miraculous and authoritative activity of Jesus throughout Galilee. Ten miracles are displayed in these two chapters, showing the power of Jesus over disease, demons, dangers and even death. There are also reports of many others coming to be healed by Jesus (Mt. 8:16-17; 9:35). Jesus further expressed his authority by making three calls to follow him (Mt. 8:18-22; 9:9; 9:38). Numerous times Jesus faced powerful opponents, whether they be storms, demons, pig herders or religious leaders. Jesus' authority, power and wisdom bested all competition. Jesus was truly greater than all opposed to him.

In Matthew 9:9-17, we encounter two opposition accounts that pitted Jesus directly against popular religious leaders of his day. Despite Jesus' display of great power on an impressive number of occasions, Jesus' authority as a religious teacher was placed in jeopardy. Skeptics questioned Jesus' unclean associations and his avoidance of religious discipline. The power of Jesus could not be denied, but perhaps it could be disqualified. If Jesus were deemed ceremonially unclean or religiously undisciplined, then his powers could not be from God, or so his opponents reasoned. Jesus, unfazed by these challenges, schooled the pious elite in things more important than the petty rites of their religion.

First, the Pharisees questioned Jesus' legitimacy as a religious teacher because of his fraternizing with tax collectors and sinners (Mt. 9:10-12). Jesus had publically called Matthew from the busy lanes of trade-route commerce to leave his tax bench and follow him. Matthew followed Jesus, leaving behind his profession and livelihood. Unlike fishermen who could easily return to their nets, Matthew would be able to return to his trade of graft once he followed Jesus. That evening, most likely at the home of Matthew, Jesus joined a large gathering of tax

collectors and others deemed "unclean" to celebrate Matthew's new path. Somehow the Pharisees learned of Jesus' participation with those far beneath their own superior spirituality. Perhaps their disgust with Jesus was so elevated that they did not approach Jesus, but instead complained to his disciples.

Jesus overheard the disdainful remarks of the Pharisees and challenged the learned to "go back to school" and review the deeper truth of God's desires. Quoting Hosea (6:6), Jesus explained that legitimate religion is more about mercy than sanitizing before sacrifice. Hosea challenged a people who loved their temple rituals, but despised the heart of God. Like an unfaithful bride, the people of God looked good on the outside, but were far from God in their hearts. For Jesus, bringing the unclean (sinners) closer to God was more important than keeping oneself from the uncleanness of others. A clean and sterile hospital is worthless if it has no doctor who is willing to risk contamination in order to save the diseased and dying. As the divine Messiah, Jesus came not to applaud the sanitary, but to apply the salve of mercy to the wounds of the fallen and broken.

Second, followers of John the Baptist, perhaps more devout or sincere than the Pharisees, came to Jesus and asked him why he did not follow the serious discipline of fasting. Pharisees fasted twice a week along with other fasts (Lk. 18:12). Fasting was the opposite of feasting and deemed difficult. Often fasting was connected with mourning or sadness about one's condition or spiritual state (Mt. 9:15). Sinners were more inclined to feasting and parties. Rarely would they fast. Did Jesus have such a low view of God that he did not humbly seek God's favor through the pains of self-denial?

Jesus did not condemn John's disciples for their question. John's disciples based their question upon public observations of Jesus. Jesus taught the importance of fasting in private with no public display of fasting (Mt. 6:16-18). How they concluded he was not fasting reveals their own misunderstandings about fasting. Jesus questioned the timing and purpose of fasting. Jesus used the imagery of a wedding to show why fasting was such a ludicrous consideration at that time. A Jewish wedding was a community event that involved days

of preparation and participation. Everyone celebrated the good fortunes of the groom and bride. Feasting, dancing and joy were the essentials of wedding culture. To fast at a wedding would be absurd! Jesus stated that the bridegroom has come. Jesus presented himself as the divine Messiah Bridegroom who has come to take his followers as his bride. Because he came as promised, it was time to shout; not time to silently suffer and anticipate future deliverance. Jesus foreshadowed his own death. His followers would fast then.

Jesus used other images to illustrate the purpose of his coming. He mentioned two: old cloth and old wineskins. These represented the practices of the Pharisees. "Old" signifies not only age but wear and tear. The Pharisees not only worked hard to keep the 600+ laws of the Old Testament, but they also sought to keep all the traditions of their teachers. These traditions, not found in the Old Testament, but cataloged in the Oral Tradition of Judaism, known as the written Mishnah. In order to keep a law, Pharisees often created dozens of traditions to be practiced as ways to prevent someone from breaking a specific law. In order to "keep the Sabbath," for instance, dozens of restrictions and were to be observed. Many of these traditions were complicated and burdensome. Keeping traditions also incited people to pride of law-keeping performance. Before long, many followed the traditions more than they followed God. The old cloth and the old wineskins were compelling images of worn out traditions that were trying to protect the righteousness of God from human error.

When Jesus came, He announced that he came to fulfill the law (Mt. 5:17-20). In his first miracle in this section (Mt. 8-9), he instructed the healed leper to show himself to the priest and offer a gift "as Moses commanded" (Mt. 8:4). Instead of trying to protect people from committing violations of law, Jesus came to provide freedom from sin and the ability to love God and love neighbor. Jesus' answer to the two objections of Mt. 9:10-14 was to love the unlovable and to lovingly celebrate the presence of God rather than observe self-imposed restrictions. Jesus was making a way to righteousness rather than creating a fence of fear to prevent law-breaking.

Jesus described himself as the new cloth and the new wine that could not be hemmed into an old, worn-out collection of traditions. New wine would expand and grow. Old traditions would burst at the new life and growth of Jesus and his Kingdom. Jesus' own teachings and practices were his new wineskins. Jesus announced his presence as superior to that of the worn-out attempts at Pharisaical rule keeping. Jesus was not about breaking God's laws. But he certainly was not shy about breaking man-made traditions that kept people from truly following God and keeping His commandments (Mt. 22:36-40).

Religion is good when it helps us love God and love our neighbor. Religion is bad when it keeps us far from loving our neighbors (Mt. 9:10-13). Religion is worse when it exalts our disciplines beyond our enjoyment of God's presence (Mt. 9:14-17). God and His desires should always be greater than our religious rules and rites.

The Message of the Passage

Jesus is greater than religious restrictions and repetitive rituals. Don't let religion restrict you from loving your neighbor or compete with your love for God.

day 4 **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you through his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on the three "living questions" below to apply what you have learned this week.

• **Journal your answers to the following living questions:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v.9 **there** Most likely the city of Capernaum. This town was central to Jesus' Galilean ministry and was even considered his town (Mt. 9:1), even though Jesus grew up in Nazareth (Mt. 2:23; 4:13). This city on the Sea of Galilee was critical to Herod Antipas' rule. "Capernaum was a great meeting place of roads. In particular the great road from Egypt to Damascus, the Way of the Sea, passed through Capernaum. It was there that it entered the dominion of Herod for business purposes and no doubt Matthew was one of those customs officers who exacted duty on all goods and commodities as they entered and left the territory of Herod" (William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Vol. 1, 331).

v.9 **tax collector's booth** Could be "a custom-house" for the collection of the taxes, tariffs, or customs for goods or traffic into and out of Galilee. "Detested not only by Jews but by other nations also, both on account of their employment and of the harshness, greed, and deception, with which they prosecuted it" (Online *Thayer's Greek Lexicon*, entry on *Telanon*).

v.9 **follow** Also found in Matthew 4:20; 8:19, 22. "A present imperative that calls for a lifetime of discipleship. Matthew's immediate obedience is just as startling. Luke 5:28 adds that he "left everything" to follow Jesus. Matthew probably left more than perhaps any other of the disciples. As a tax collector he would have been fairly wealthy, and while the fishermen in the group kept their boats (John 21:3) and probably went back to their fishing from time to time, Matthew could hardly return to his former occupation" (Grant Osborne, *Matthew: Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on NT*, 335).

v.11 **sinners** Sinners were those who were publically wandering from God's righteousness (Luke 7:37; 19:7). Matthew included prostitutes (Mt 21:31) and Gentiles (Mt. 18:17) in combination with tax collectors. These combinations are negativity in the extreme. "The Pharisaic approach to being pure before God involved active separation from sinners. On the analogy of communicable ritual uncleanness, one avoided contamination from contact with morally suspect elements of Jewish society as much as possible" (John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 386).

v.12 **doctor** "The proverb calls to mind the biblical metaphor of God as physician. The rabbinic explanation linked this to the power of the Torah. Healing from sickness lay in listening to and putting into practice the words of the Torah (Exod 15:26, 'for I the Lord am your healer'). Matthew emphasized the power which went out from the teacher himself. When Jesus here takes the initiating role, he does something which is reserved for God, or the Torah" (Eric Ottenheijm, "The Shared Meal," *Novum Testamentum* 53 (2011), 14).

v.13 **learn** "But when Jesus introduces his quote from Hosea with 'Go and learn' in the context of a response to a challenge, he is insultingly suggesting his interlocutors' ignorance of the point of Scripture: he implies that perhaps they have never even read Hosea. Hosea addressed a people satisfied with their ritual but displeasing to God (cf. Hos. 6:3-6: 8:2-3)" (Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 298).

v.14 **fast** "The fasting in question here is perhaps the voluntary twice-weekly fast alluded to in Luke 18:12, not the obligatory fast commanded in connection with the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:34; Num. 29:7-11), which Jesus and his disciples evidently keep. ... Just as it would be wholly inappropriate for the groomsmen to fast while they are with the groom, so it is inappropriate for Jesus' disciples to fast while he is with them" (David Turner, *Matthew: Baker Exegetical Commentary*, 254).

v.15 **bridegroom** "A Jewish wedding was a time of special festivity. The unique feature to it was that the couple who were married did not go away for a honeymoon; they spent their honeymoon at home. For a week after the wedding open house was kept; the bride and the bridegroom were treated as, and even addressed as king and queen. And during the week their closest friends shared all the joy and the festivities with them" (Barclay, 336).

v.16 **unshrunk cloth** "Jesus has not come just to patch up the old religious traditions; rather, he offers a new garment. He does not specify the garment, but if his key statement about entrance to the kingdom in 5:20 is linked with the required wedding garment in the parable of the wedding feast (22:11-13), we can conclude that Jesus is pointing to the righteousness of the kingdom of heaven" (Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew: NIV Application Commentary*, 369).

v.17 **wineskins** "New forms are needed for his kingdom, and new practices must accommodate the new life of discipleship to Jesus. This does not supersede or abolish the Old Testament, which Jesus has come to fulfill (Mt. 5:17), instead, it indicates that discipleship to Jesus supersedes rigid legalistic adherence to traditional practices of Judaism" (Wilkins, 369).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

As parents we train our kids to be disciplined in various areas of their lives. We teach them how to keep their room clean (though somehow as teenagers they completely forget this skill). We teach them daily hygiene habits like brushing their teeth. We help them develop good study habits by creating a workspace and making sure they have the supplies they need to be successful. We take them to dance practice and sports practice and music lessons. But sometimes we overlook teaching them spiritual disciplines. Here are a few tips on helping them take intentional steps in their spiritual journey. (1) Help them establish a regular routine to be in God's Word. Buy a devotional book or a journal if that helps. (2) Pray with them and give them opportunity to pray. Kids learn to pray by listening to other people pray. (3) Point out the majesty of God in creation. Turn on worship music in the car. Serve others. All these teach our kids what a life of worship looks like. (4) Meditation and memorizing scripture are lost disciplines in our technology driven culture. Teach kids to be still and focus. (5) Don't forget to fellowship with other believers. Community makes us better as we sharpen one another. Our faith in Jesus is not about a list of rules but about a relationship with Him. Let's train ourselves to know Him more!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Matthew 9:9-13

1. What did Jesus say to Matthew?
2. What did Matthew do?
3. Where did they go?

What Do You Think

1. Why do you think the Pharisees were upset that Jesus was eating with "sinners"?
2. What do you think Jesus meant when he said it is the sick who need a doctor?

What R U Going To Do

Make a weekly chart. Put columns for reading your Bible, praying, and working on memorizing Psalm 23. Place a check mark each day when you do these things. Bring it to church next week for an additional 3 tokens.

Core Comp

Trinity - I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Memory Verse

Psalm 23:3 - He restores my soul. He guides me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse _____, completed *Scrolls* _____, brought Bible _____, brought a friend _____.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name _____ Grade _____ Parent's signature _____

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

Tom Bulick (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than forty years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) for twelve years before accepting the position of Spiritual Formation Pastor at Pantego Bible Church. He and his wife Ruth have been married forty-eight years and have one son, Zach.

Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.

Eric Wright (Th.M. Dallas Theological Seminary) guest author.



8001 Anderson Blvd.
Ft. Worth, TX 76120
1-866-PANTEGO
Fax 817-275-6403
www.pantego.org

The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.