

LOSING MY RELIGION

"LAW, LIBERTY & LIFE" GALATIANS 2:11-21

This Week's Core Competency

Identity in Christ – I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God. John 1:12, *Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.*

The believer's *identity in Christ* flows out of his *union with Christ*. The mystical union of Christ to those who believe is frequently spoken of by Paul. To the Romans he writes, "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him" (6:4-8). To the Colossians he writes, "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God" (3:1-3). He writes as if our mystical union with Christ and its implications should be self-evident to us, but to my mind, it's one of those hard-to-understand theological things contained in his letters (cf., 2Pe 3:16).

It is apparent that all that the believer has spiritually is based upon Christ's being within.

— Millard J. Erickson

Paul alludes to our identity in Christ in Galatians 3:20—a verse memorized by many, understood by few. "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." What the apostle says is difficult to understand because it appears to fly in the face of common sense. Clearly I was *not* physically crucified with Christ two thousand years ago, and I now *do* continue to live, so how am I to understand Paul's words? Clearly he has *spiritual* realities—realities nonetheless—in mind.

Our union with Christ is accomplished by the Holy Spirit when we believe. According to 1 Corinthians 12:13, "we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink." In other words, we were united to the body of Christ the moment we believed, and by virtue of the fact it is Christ's body, we were united to him and are now "in Christ" or "in him." One commentator explains: "What does it mean to be 'in Christ'? It means to be so united to Christ that all the experiences of Christ become the Christian's experiences. Thus, his death for sin was the believer's death; his resurrection was (in one sense) the believer's resurrection; his ascension was the believer's ascension, so that the believer is (again in one sense) seated with Christ 'in the heavenly realms' (so Eph 2:6). This thought is particularly evident in Paul's use of the perfect tense in speaking of his having been crucified with Christ. The perfect refers to something that has happened in the past but whose influence continues into the present" (James Montgomery Boice, "Galatians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 10:451).

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On the implications of our union with Christ, another explains: "The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus now have real effects in our lives . . . Paul sees this present death and resurrection with Christ as a way of describing and explaining the change that the Holy Spirit brings about in our character and personality when we become Christians. It is as if the Holy Spirit reproduces Jesus' death and resurrection in our lives when we believe in Christ. We become so unresponsive to the pressures, demands and attractions of our previous, sinful way of life, that Paul can say we are 'dead' to these influences, because we have died with Christ (Rom. 7:6; Gal. 2:20; 5:24; 6:14; Col. 2:20). On the other hand, we find ourselves wanting to serve God much more, and able to serve him with greater power and success, so much so that Paul says we are 'alive' to God, because we have been raised up with Christ: 'We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life' (Rom. 6:4). 'So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus' (Rom. 6:11; see also 1 Peter 1:3; 2:24). Because we died and rose with Christ, we have power to overcome personal sin more and more (Rom. 6:12-14, 19); we have come to 'fullness of life' in Christ (Col. 2:10-13); in fact, we have become a 'new creation' in him (2 Cor. 5:17, with vv. 14-15), and should therefore set our minds on things that are above, where Christ is (Col. 3:1-3)" (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 842-43).

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

Galatians 2:11-21

11 When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. 12 Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. 13 The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. 14 When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?"

15 "We who are Jews by birth and not 'Gentile sinners' 16 know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we,

too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

17 "If, while we seek to be justified in Christ, it becomes evident that we ourselves are sinners, does that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not! 18 If I rebuild what I destroyed, I prove that I am a lawbreaker. 19 For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. 20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. 21 I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"

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

- * Box the beginning quotation marks in vv. 14, 15, 17 and the ending quotation marks in v. 21.
- * Circle "When" in v. 11.
- * Circle "certain men" in v. 12.
- * Box "but" indicating *contrast* in vv. 12, 15.
- * Circle "circumcision group" in v. 12.
- * Circle "other Jews" in v. 13.
- * Underline "hypocrisy" (2x) in v. 13.
- * Bracket "I said to Peter" in v. 14.
- * Box "yet" indicating *contrast* in v. 14.
- * Bracket "live like a Gentile" in v. 14.
- * Underline "'Gentile sinners'" in v. 15.
- * Circle "justified" in vv. 16, 17.
- * Circle "sinners" in v. 17.
- * Highlight v. 20.

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. *Contextually* speaking, when did Peter come to Antioch?
2. Explain the *contrast* in verse 12.
3. Peter stopped eating with Gentile Christians. So what?
4. "The circumcision group"—what can you say about them?
5. *Twice* Paul referred to what Peter and those who joined him did as "hypocrisy." Explain.
6. Paul accused Peter of living "like a Gentile and not like a Jew." What did he mean by that?
7. Jews and Gentiles in the church at Antioch had one important thing in common. What was it?
8. Paul recoiled at the notion that "Christ promotes sin." Why would anyone think that?
9. Put what verse 19 means in your own words.
10. **Discussion:** Talk about the relationship of verse 20 to the Core Competency, Identity in Christ.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

In Galatians 2:11-21 Paul continues to defend his independence as an apostle and the divine origin of his law-free gospel by appealing to an incident involving Peter that apparently occurred following his meeting with church leaders in Jerusalem recorded in 2:1-10. The apostle describes what Peter did in Antioch and his reaction to it in verses 11-14. In his further remarks to Peter or perhaps to "them all" in verses 15-21, he affirms that justification is by faith apart from obedience to the law of Moses. On the significance of this section of the epistle, one commentator writes: "The verses that conclude this chapter contain capsule statements of some of the most significant truths of Christianity. In particular, Paul clearly states the doctrine of justification by grace through faith and defends it over against the traditional objection that justification by faith leads to lawlessness. The words 'justify' and 'justification' occur in these verses for the first time—the verb, three times in v.16 and once in v.17; the noun, in v.21—as Paul now begins to develop the message that is central to the letter, to his gospel, and indeed to Christianity generally. This statement flows out of the situation at Antioch and anticipates the fuller argument of the same doctrine occurring in chapters 3 and 4. 'After working through the rest of the Epistle, one turns back to [these verses] and finds in [them] the whole truth in embryo,' as Ramsay states" (Boice, 448).

What Peter did is easy to understand, albeit not so easy to excuse. Having learned not to "call any man impure or unclean" (Ac 10:28) and having realized that "God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right" (v. 34), Peter freely enjoyed table-fellowship with Gentile Christians in Antioch. But when unnamed men from James arrived in the city, he "began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles" (Gal 2:12). Apparently, he was intimidated by them. What's more, he was joined in his hypocrisy by other Christian Jews in the church and by Barnabas, of all people! Paul's calls what they did "hypocrisy" because they all knew better. They all agreed that justification was by grace through faith apart from the works of the law. In the opinion of one author, "Their motives, probably, were worthy, even though the course of action they took was confused" (Richard N. Longenecker, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 41, *Galatians*, 79). Perhaps they

did not want to alienate certain Christian Jews in the church at Jerusalem who believed that Gentiles ought to become Jews and live like Jews to be Christians. Perhaps they did not want to put a stumbling block in the way of the gospel's outreach to unbelieving Jews. In any case, Paul "saw their withdrawals as not only confused but also hypocritical. More than that, such withdrawals were disastrous for the outreach of the gospel to Gentiles and for the unity of the Church" (79). What they did involved more than mere social conventions; *theologically*, it flew in the face of Paul's law-free gospel. What they did entailed profound consequences—unintended or not. One commentator explains: Having been happy to live like a Gentile among Gentiles, Cephas had now turned around and begun to practice Jewish-style social separation. This in effect amounted to saying to Gentile Christians, 'Unless you conform to the Jewish way of life we cannot have social relations with you.' This was practically compelling them to 'judaize'" (F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, NIGNT, 133). So in front of them all, Paul calls Peter out, "You are a Jew, yet you have been living like a Gentile, not like a Jew. How, then, can you try to force Gentiles to live like Jews?" (GNT). Whether Paul's words to Peter stop there (cf., NET) or continue to the end of verse 21 (cf., NIV) is debated.

In verses 15-16, Paul declares *three* times that justification is by faith. First he says, "We who are Jews by birth and not 'Gentile sinners' know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ" (v. 15). Again he says, like Gentiles, "We, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law" (v. 16a), reiterating a third time, "because by observing the law no one will be justified" (v. 16b). Paul is not deprecating the law for "the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good" (Ro 7:12). As one writer explains: "What is deprecating is the performing of [actions prescribed by the law] in a spirit of legalism, or with the idea that their performance will win acceptance before God; cf. 3:2, 5, 10; also Rom. 3:20, 28" (Bruce, 137).

In verses 17-19, Paul denied vehemently the implicit charge that his law-free gospel implies "Christ promotes sin" (v. 17). The fact that Jews who quit trying to obtain righteousness by observing the

law recognize that those who sin *under the law* are no better off than those who sin *apart from the law* (Ro 2:12) hardly means that Christ promotes sin. And to those who would argue that his doctrine of justification by faith is dangerous, for if a person can be counted righteous simply by believing, why should he bother to live a morally upright life? Paul replies, "Nonsense!" In fact, the apostle argues that quite the opposite is true. "Any one who, having received justification through faith in Christ, thereafter reinstates law in place of Christ makes himself a sinner all over again—and Christ cannot be held responsible for that" (Bruce, 142). He makes himself a sinner all over again in that he demonstrates once more his inability to keep the law, and furthermore, he nullifies the law's true intent, which is to "lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith" (Gal 3:24). The truth is, as Paul sees it, "through the law [believers] died to the law so that [they] might live for God." Paul debunks *legalism* in these verses by demonstrating that believers are justified by faith not by observing the law.

In verses 20-21 Paul debunks *nomism* by demonstrating that believers live by faith not by observing the law. By virtue of their union with Christ, they died with him and now *spiritually* speaking no longer live. It is Christ who lives in them, living his life through them. One commentator puts it this way: "He [Paul] has died to law so that he might live for God, but this is true only because he has been joined to the Lord Jesus Christ by God the Father. Jesus died; so did Paul. Jesus rose again; so did Paul. The resurrection life he is now living he is living thorough the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ within him" (Boice, 451). And another adds, "Having died with Christ in his death, the believer now lives with Christ in his life—i.e. his resurrection life. In fact, this new life in Christ is nothing less than the risen Christ living his life in the believer. The risen Christ is the operative power in the new order, as sin was in the old (cf. Rom. 1:17, 20)" (Bruce 144). Who would be so foolish as to set aside the grace of God, thereby suggesting that Christ died for nothing?

The Message of the Passage

Justification is obtained by faith, not by observing the law, in that believers died to the law so that they might live for God by faith in his Son, not by observing the law.

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

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges 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. 11 **When** "The Antioch episode most likely took place after Paul and Barnabas returned to Syrian Antioch from their mission to Cyprus and southern Galatia as recorded by Luke in Acts 13:4-14:25, during the time when 'they stayed there [at Antioch] a long time with the disciples' as told us in Acts 14:26-28, and before the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15:1-29" (Longenecker, 71).

v. 11 **wrong** Lit., "stood condemned" (ESV). "Paul's judgment on Cephas's conduct is exceedingly severe" (72). The NIV's "in the wrong" doesn't do it justice. Peter made no honest mistake (cf., Ac 10:9-11:18). "The difficulty was that he gradually gave in to pressure exerted by the legalizers, even though he knew what was right. In other words, Peter played the hypocrite" (Boice, 10:446).

v. 12 **certain men** I.e., "they" (v. 12b) and "those who belonged to the circumcision group" (v. 12c); cf., "the circumcision party" (ESV); "those who were pro-circumcision" (NET), i.e., "the group of Jewish Christians who insisted on circumcision of Gentiles before they could become Christians" (The NET Bible, 43^{tn} on Gal 2:12); "those who were in favor of circumcising them" (GNT). "They were from the group that believed Gentiles needed to undergo circumcision before they could become Christians [i.e., Judaizers]. They were not 'from James' in the sense that James endorsed their views; he did not (v. 9). Perhaps they came from the same church [i.e., Jerusalem, 2:1, 9] as James" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Galatians," 2015 ed., 26, www.soniclight.com). Perhaps the Jewish Christian party in Jerusalem threatened to break off fellowship, or perhaps Peter feared how the unrestricted table fellowship of Jews and Gentiles within the Christian community at Antioch would appear to non-Christian Jews of Palestine (75).

v. 13 **hypocrisy** "Paul calls their action [*hupokrisis*], 'play-acting', because it did not spring from inner conviction" (Bruce, 131). They knew better.

v. 13 **even Barnabas** "The pathos that reverberates in the expression [*kai Barnabas*] ('even Barnabas') is gripping, for Barnabas had been Paul's advocate at Jerusalem (cf. Acts 9:26-28), mentor at Antioch (cf. Acts 11:25-30), and esteemed colleague in the evangelization of Cyprus and southern Galatia (cf. Acts 13:2-14:26)" (Longenecker, 76). "Barnabas was the last man of whom such action would have been expected. This was effectively the end of their close association: the personal dispute over John Mark which Luke records in Acts 15:36-39 would not have caused a parting of their ways had it not been for this more serious difference" (Bruce, 132).

v. 14 **live like a Gentile** I.e., no longer follow Jewish customs, especially with respect to the dietary laws (v. 12; cf., Ac 10:28; 11:2). "This in effect amounted to saying to Gentile Christians, 'Unless you conform to the Jewish way of life we cannot have social relations with you.' This was practically compelling them to 'judaize' (Bruce, 133).

v. 15 **'Gentile sinners'** "Sinners of the Gentiles" [*ex ethnon hamartoloi*] seems to be a colloquialism used by Jews with reference to Gentiles" (Longenecker, 83). "This characterization at once focuses attention on the sharp distinction between Jew and Gentile, for what made the Gentiles sinners in the estimation of the Jews was not only that they did not observe the law but also that they did not even possess it and consequently lacked the possibility of obtaining righteousness through it" (Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, NICNT, 113).

v. 15 **justified** "Justify" (*dikaioo*; noun, *dikaioo*; adjective, *dikaioo*) is a forensic term borrowed from the law courts. It means 'to declare righteous or innocent.' The opposite of 'to justify' is 'to condemn' or 'to pronounce guilty' . . . In this sense, justification does not express an ethical change or influence (though ethical changes follow); rather, it expresses the judicial action of God apart from human merit according to which the guilty are pardoned, acquitted, and then reinstated as God's children and as fellow heirs with Jesus Christ" (Boice, 448-49).

v. 17 **sinners** Cf., "Gentile sinners" (v. 15). In a nutshell, since Jews and Gentiles are justified by faith, Jews implicitly acknowledge they are "sinners" when they seek to be justified by faith in Christ rather than by observing the law (see Bruce, 140-41), but this doesn't mean that Christ promotes sin.

v. 19 **rebuild what . . .** "Paul insists that to revert to the Mosaic law as a Christian is what really constitutes breaking the law, for then the law's true intent is nullified" (Longenecker, 91). As one commentator explains, "When a person returns from the point of view of faith to that of the law, he is only increasing his sin. In other words, he is demonstrating anew that he cannot keep the law. Hence a return from faith does not mean a diminution of sin at all, but rather a renewed surrender to it" (Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia*, NICNT, 103). "Verse 18 gives the hypothetical negative proof: *actual transgression inevitably follows when the Law becomes the authority in the believer's life*" (Constable, 30, italics added).

v. 20 **crucified w. Christ** "He may be referring to an *actual participation* of the believer in Christ's death and resurrection conceived on the basis of the mystical union of the believer with the Lord (cf. Rom 6:4-8; Col 2:12-14, 20; 3:1-4). This view is the hardest to understand, but it is the one involved here" (Boice, 451, italics added).

Family Time

Parents, our summer series in *PantegoKids* is called **True or False?** Like the adults, we will be studying the book of Galatians to discover how to live out true faith. *Our kids' lessons, however, will not textually align each week with adult teaching. Core competencies will also likely be different. We will be memorizing Galatians 5:22-26.*

Dads! It's your week! As we look forward to Father's Day, I want to say a HUGE thank you to all the dads out there who are lovingly and diligently training your little ones in righteousness! You are the foundation of our families and you are appreciated! I ran across an article from Belinda Elliot this week that sums up the value of dads. She says, "If you are a father, please consider the important role that you play in your family. Your daughters are forming views of themselves based on how you relate to them, and your sons are watching you to learn how to act as a man. God has chosen you to be the father of your children. He could have placed them in anyone else's care, but He chose you. Allow Him to teach you how to be a godly father. If you are looking to Him for guidance, He will equip you to be the best dad that your children could ever have." Praise the Lord for our earthly dads! And, thank you God for being our Heavenly Father!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Galatians 5

1. According to Paul in verse 6, what is the only thing that counts?
2. What single command sums up the law (v. 14)?
3. What are the fruits of the Spirit?

What Do You Think

Paul says in verse 24, that we crucify the sinful nature with its passions and desires. How do you think we do that?

What R U Going To Do

Choose a fruit of the Spirit that best reflects your dad or some other man in your life and either write a poem or draw a picture to tell him about it. Ex: "Grandpa is the most patient man I know because he spent a long time teaching me to fish." Then draw a picture of you two fishing. Give it to him for Father's Day!

MEMORY TIME

Post the kid-friendly Core Competency and the Memory Verse throughout the house.

Core Comp

Love - I love and forgive others no matter what.

Memory Verse

Galatians 5:24 – Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

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

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
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

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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.



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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.