

ONE
DEGREE
OFF

Theology

**What If The Church
Has Been One Degree Off**



For 2,000 Years?

By: Bob Sjogren

One Degree Off Theology
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Chapter 1

One Degree Off

Victoria settled into her first class seat. She knew it was going to be a long flight. In the best weather, Atlanta to Tokyo was at least a 14 hour flight.

A flight attendant appeared and took her jacket. She also asked her if she wanted a drink.

“Water with lime for now,” she said.

Passengers were still boarding, but that was a minor inconvenience compared to the large space she had for sleeping. She got out her laptop and began some work while the plane was still on the ground.

“Here’s your water with lime” the flight attendant said with a smile.

“Thanks,” Victoria replied while barely looking up.

Before she knew it, all of the passengers had boarded. And then something happened that she’d rarely experienced. The captain came out and greeted the first class passengers.

“Hi, everyone here in first class, I’m Captain Scolaro and we’re expecting a fairly smooth ride to Tokyo today. We’re expecting a 14 hour and three minute flight from wheels up to wheels down. If there’s anything we can do to make your flight more enjoyable, just let one of our expert Atlanta-based flight attendants know, and we’d be glad to help you out.”

As the captain turned to go back to the cockpit, he stopped and then returned to the first class passengers.

“By the way, in case your interested, this will be my first time doing this route. I’m so excited. I may be one or two degrees off, but I’m sure we’ll get you there on time.”

With that, he turned and retreated back to the tip of the aircraft.

Victoria hadn’t been paying too much attention. She turned to one of her fellow passengers with a quizzical look.

“What did he just say?”

Her fellow passenger responded with the same quizzical look. “He might be one degree off.”

Victoria gave a greater look of disbelief and then began to think about it.

One degree off, one degree off? As a civil engineer, her mathematical mind began to do some internal calculations.

She knew that one degree off at 100 yards, you’d be five feet off. And after a mile you’d be 92 feet off.

Let me think, I just saw the distance from Atlanta to Tokyo when I was determining how many miles would be credited to my Sky Miles account. Now, how many miles was that? She closed her eyes and tried to focus.

Then her eyes opened wide.

Atlanta is 6,854 miles way from Tokyo. At 92 feet off per mile, that would put us roughly, her mind was racing, 120 miles away from Tokyo.

Her mind envisioned Tokyo on the map. Tokyo is right on the edge of the island it sits on and is only 60 miles from the opposite side. *We would have to land in the ocean.*

Victoria grabbed her laptop, put it back in her briefcase and then rushed up front looking for the nearest flight attendant.

“Get me my coat and stop the plane,” she screamed. “I want to get off.”

Just One Degree Off

Being off by just one degree over a long period of time can make a *big* difference.

In you were in a rocket going to the moon, you'd be 4,169 miles off (nearly twice the diameter of the moon).

If you were one degree off going to the sun, you'd miss by over 1.6 million miles (nearly twice the diameter of the sun).

If you were traveling to the nearest star, you'd be off course by over 441 billion miles (120 times the distance from the earth to Pluto, or 4,745 times the distance from Earth to the sun).*

Sometimes I wonder if our Church's theology is off by just one degree. And if it is, has it been off for 2,000 years? If that were the case, it would make a HUGE difference in what we are supposed to believe.

In determining whether or not we are one degree off, we need to start with the basics—why did Christ come to the earth?

I have asked that question to many people around the world. And the answer is almost always the same: to die for our sins. Though this is true, does the Bible give us any other reasons as to why Christ came?

All Things

Paul wrote these words in Colossians:

*For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.
(Colossians 1:19,20)*

Did you notice the word "things"? I was once doing a Bible study with a group of young professionals in America, and I said, "Excuse me, did you just say 'things'? I thought Christ reconciled people, not things. What version are you reading from?"

This dentist told me his version so I asked, "Anyone else got another version?"

* <https://whitehatcrew.com/blog/a-mere-one-degree-difference/>

Each professional enthusiastically told me each of their versions. We went through each one, and each version said “things.” They got the point.

Christ died for “things on earth.” Things on earth equate to plants and animals and rocks and water and fish, etc. Why would Christ die for those?

Probably because these things are not the way God originally designed them to be. This corrupted state resulted from the choice Adam and Eve made to eat the forbidden fruit.

After they ate the fruit, God pronounced four curses.

First, the snake had to crawl. Secondly, the woman would have pain in childbirth. A third result was that man would have a problem tilling the soil. And there was a fourth curse.

And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you. (Genesis 3:17, emphasis added)

The ground was cursed.

To curse something means to inflict harm or punishment upon it.

I want to challenge you that the plants and animals that Adam and Eve saw before they ate the forbidden fruit were far more glorious than they are right now. Right now, they are in a state of being cursed. Though many are beautiful now, they are not as glorious as they once were.

And Paul is telling us that Christ came to die for them.

Paul also tells us that Christ came to die for “things in heaven” as well. His death affects the planets, the asteroids, the stars, the solar systems—the entire universe.

Why? Because it seems that they were a part of the curse as well.

Paul references this concept again in the book of Romans.

For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. (Romans 8:20-22)

Creation has been subjected to “frustration and futility,” as the Amplified Bible writes it. It is in a state of “decay” (corruption) and is “groaning.”

Though you and I can’t hear it, everything around us is screaming, *“This is not the way we were originally designed to be! We want to get back to the way we were originally designed to be. We want to glorify God in the right way.”*

And since we humans were made from the “dust of the ground” (Genesis 2:7), our bodies are in that same state of “decay.”

Now if you are younger than 30 years of age, you have no idea what I’m talking about. You think you’ll live forever—as I thought when I was that age! But those of us who have lived beyond that age realize that our bodies are getting older.

Our bodies don’t work the way they used to work. My shoulder hurts when I turn my arm a certain way. I’ve got plantar fasciitis—which means my feet hurt after standing up for a long time. I also can’t run like I used to because my legs begin to hurt. I’m getting old.

It won’t be that way in heaven. When we get to heaven, the curse will be broken. The new bodies we’ll get in the new heaven and earth will last *forever!* No more aging. No more decay. We will literally have the “fountain of youth” which is the way God designed it from the very beginning—yet which was lost when Adam and Eve ate the fruit.

So Christ came to reconcile to himself “all things.”

Following this line of thought, we now have three reasons why Christ came to die. He came to die:

- For people (we've got that part down really well)
- For things on earth
- For things in heaven

Because of this, we should ask ourselves two questions.

First, was there anything else that he died for? And secondly, which one is *primary*?

For God's Glory

Paul does give us another reason why Christ died. We find it in his letter to the Romans.

For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that... (Romans 15:8,9^a)

Catch the importance of those three words "in order that." Paul is saying that there is a reason why Christ came. There is a purpose and he's about to give us the purpose clause.

For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles... (Romans 15:8,9^a)

Okay, it has something to do with Gentiles. A Gentile is a non-Jewish person. So if you're not a Jew, you are a Gentile. (Welcome to the Gentile club!)

What about the Gentiles, Paul? What does this purpose have to do with them?

Again, notice what Paul does not say. (Sometimes it is very important to highlight what the Scriptures do not say in order to feel the full impact of what they do say.) This verse does not say,

*For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles... **might not go to hell.***

You may have thought that this was the purpose for which Christ came. But the text doesn't say that. Why?

The answer is simple. *Christianity is not primarily about avoiding hell.* Let me repeat that because it is so important. *Christianity is not primarily about avoiding hell.* Paul says that there is a bigger purpose for why Christ came. Let's read what the text actually does say.

*For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles **might glorify God for his mercy.** (Romans 15:8,9^a)*

You and I are saved for a purpose. We are saved that we might glorify God for his mercy. That is what we were originally designed to do and that is why Christ died—to restore us back to our purpose of glorifying God.

Wow, now we've got four reasons why Christ came:

- To die for our sins
- To reconcile all things on earth
- To reconcile all things in heaven
- To glorify God

Again, we must ask the question, "*Which one is primary?*"

Chapter 2

Primary Versus Secondary

Finding the primary reason why Christ came can be hard to figure out. The answer is found in looking at the words of Jesus—but you’ve got to be careful how you study them.

You see, what Jesus says to his Father and what Jesus says to humans are two different things. It’s not as if he is contradicting himself. Rather, he is emphasizing different thoughts to the individual hearer.

As I was thinking through this, one day it finally dawned on me that to Jesus we are like little children—even the eldest of us. Let’s say you’ve got a man or a woman who is 95 years old and mature in Christ. How is that maturity compared to an infinite God who has been alive forever? That person is like a baby compared to God.

And then it hit me that when I talked to my children when they were little, it was totally different than when I talked to my wife. When I talked to my wife, we shared an adult conversation. When I talked to my children, I spoke in simple words that centered on them.

Children versus Adults

A simple example of this is a father who has cancer speaking to his young child. He talks about the specifics with his wife. But to his child he simply says, “Daddy has a boo-boo and has to go to the hospital for a little while. Mommy’s coming with me. But while we’re gone, your favorite aunt will be here to take care of you. Isn’t that exciting?”

From this I learned that if I really wanted to know the primary reason as to why Christ died, I should probably look at what he says to his Father, *not what he says to his disciples or the crowds.*

And the best context for this conversation occurs right before Christ is about to die.

In John, chapter 12, Christ is about one day away from going to the cross. He and his disciples are celebrating the feast of the Passover. He is talking to his disciples. Here we get a rare glimpse into the heart of Jesus, seeing that he really doesn't want to die. He knows it is going to be painful. He knows how much it is going to hurt. And he tells his disciples that he really doesn't want to do go through with the excruciating death.

"Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour." (John 12:27)

He's basically saying, "Guys, I don't want to do this, but it's the very reason I came. I've got to go through with it."

Now, the very first word in verse 28 is key. It is the word "Father." Why is that so key? Because it reveals that Jesus has switched his conversation from his disciples to his heavenly Father.

What He Doesn't Say

Now keep in mind the context. He is about to experience one of the worst methods of dying that any human can endure. It is death on the cross.

This death happens, not because of the three nails that pierce your body, but because in hanging there for hours, your muscles begin to be paralyzed. As a result, you can't breathe easily. And over time, you slowly suffocate to death. It is one of the worst forms of death any human can endure; thus, crucifixion has since been internationally outlawed.

Jesus is about to suffer punishment and death of the most extreme torture—one of the worst deaths any human can endure. And now we see him talking to his heavenly Father about this death. Here is the question.

Is Jesus going to be talking to his Father about the *primary* reason he is going to die, or a *secondary* reason?

I'd guess that you would agree with me that Jesus is going to talk about the primary reason he is going to die. Why would he address anything less?

So what does he say? Or more importantly, what does he *not* say? (What he doesn't say speaks volumes.)

He doesn't say, "*Father, save these kind, wonderful, worthy people from hell, they don't deserve it.*"



I know, shocking isn't it? In fact, he didn't even mention us.

"*But I thought it was all about us,*" you might be thinking. Yes, most are taught that every Sunday, but it's *one degree off*.

So what does he say?

Father, glorify your name. (John 12:28^a)

Primary Purpose

I want to challenge you that the primary purpose for which Christ put himself on the cross was to bring his Father glory. I say this because glorifying the name of God was what he talked to his Father about.

This means when the glass shards at the end of the whip pulled pieces of his flesh out of his back, he was thinking, "*Father, restore the things on earth to the glory they had before sin came in.*"

It means that when the crown of thorns was forced onto his head, piercing the skin and causing blood to flow everywhere, he was thinking, "*Father, restore the things in heaven to the glory they had before sin came in.*"

It also means when the nails pierced his hands and feet he was thinking,

“Father, restore humans so that they can once again glorify you.”

Christ died primarily for the Father’s glory.

But if you go to the average church in any where on this earth, you would assume that it was all about us. That’s because every time Christ’s death is mentioned from the pulpit, you hear that he died for us—and nothing else is ever mentioned. Therefore one would assume he died only for us.

One degree off for over two thousand years—let’s look at how it has affected our Christianity.

Chapter 3

Two Different Christianities

Now if you're bummed because you've been thinking all through your life that Christ died for you, I've got good news!

He *did* die for you. *What you've learned is not incorrect, but it is incomplete.* But that incomplete part is what has made our Christianity one degree off.

And if our founding church-fathers have been thinking that way for two thousand years—that one-degree off has made a big difference. And that difference has resulted in two totally different Christianities that are present in our churches today.

The first Christianity says, "It's all about me." The second Christianity says, "It's all about God."

The first Christianity says, "God lives for me." The second Christianity says, "I live for God."

The first Christianity says, "God is going to make me famous." The second Christianity says, "I'm going to make God famous."

The first Christianity says, "God thinks the world of me." The second Christianity says, "I think the world of God."

The first Christianity says, "God is going to advance my kingdom." The second Christianity says, "I want to advance God's kingdom."

The first Christianity says, "God is a means to an end." The second Christianity says, "God is the end."

Cats and Dogs Are Different

As you can tell, these two Christianities are very different. And it's hard to remember them. But I've found an easy way by looking at the differences between the pets I have in my home: my cat and my dog.

You see, when I drive home and pull into my driveway, my dog gets extremely excited! She jumps out of her doghouse and runs around in circles barking with excitement waiting for me to open the driver's door. Once I open it, she puts her front paws up on my seat and then I scratch her behind her ears. When I do this, her tail wags a thousand kilometers per hour.

I know my dog loves me.

When I walk into the same room where my cat is, no matter how long I've been gone—he won't even look at me. In fact, he won't even acknowledge me. If he does anything, he looks at me with an angry look as if I've interrupted his sleep. If there is any interaction between us, he jumps down and rubs his head up against my leg. That's his way of saying, "I own you, pal. Get me some food."

That's the best I get from my cat.

The two animals are very different. That's why there's a joke about them. The joke goes like this:



A dog says, "You pet me, you feed me, you shelter me, you love me—You must be God."

A cat says, "You pet me, you feed me, you shelter me, you love me—I must be God."



Two Different Theologies

This simple joke helps us easily remember the two different Christianities.

Cat theology is focused on what God can do for us. Dog theology is focused on what we can do for God.

Cat theology says, "God lives for me!" Dog theology says, "I live for God."

Cat theology says, “God is going to make me famous!” Dog theology says, “I want to live to make God famous.”

Cat theology says, “God thinks the world of me!” Dog theology says, “I think the world of God.”

Cat theology says, “God bless America!” Dog theology says, “America bless God.”

Cat theology says, “God wants to bless me.” Dog theology says, “I want to bless God.”

Cat theology says, “God is going to advance my kingdom!” Dog theology says, “I want to advance God’s kingdom.”

Cat theology is here because we’ve been one degree off for two thousand years. For two thousand years, most believers and theologians have assumed that Christ died primarily for our sins. And it was easy to fall into this trap—because we have focused on the words Jesus has spoken to us, rather than to his Father.

To help you understand how far one degree has taken us from the correct theology, consider how a Cat thinks. Here is a Cat’s logical progression of thought.

FOR ME

“Now let’s think through this realistically,” says the Cat. “Jesus left the Father’s glory FOR ME. He suffered FOR ME. He died FOR ME. He’s gone back to heaven to build a mansion FOR ME. He’s up there interceding FOR ME. And he’s coming back a second time FOR ME.”

“Gee,” says the Cat. “I wonder who God lives for? He must live FOR ME!”

Now a Cat seeks to be very biblical. So a Cat looks at Ephesians 5:1 (“Be imitators of God...”) and concludes, “If God lives FOR ME, and I’m supposed to imitate God, I should live FOR ME too!”

And then it dawns on a Cat. “Oh, I get it. He wants me to live for myself in a Christian context! I’m supposed to go to church and help

with the choir and maybe help teach Sunday school. But deep down inside, I'm doing all of this FOR ME!"

As a result, we have many Christians who are living for themselves inside the church. We normally call these Cat Christians hypocrites—or immature. They act one way on Sunday but end up living a totally different life Monday through Saturday.

For His Glory

A Dog sighs when hearing the way a Cat thinks and says, "Cat, you missed it completely."

"Jesus left the Father's glory *to glorify his Father*. He suffered *to glorify his Father*. He died *to glorify his Father*. He's gone back to heaven to build us mansions *to glorify his Father*. He's up there interceding *to glorify his Father*. And he's coming back a second time *to glorify his Father*."

Dogs want to remain biblical as well and they, too, know of Ephesians 5:1. But their thinking goes like this: "If I'm supposed to imitate God, and Jesus lived to glorify God, he's left me an example to follow. I should live to glorify God as well—no matter what the cost."

Chapter 4

Extreme Cat and Dog Theology

Being one degree off for two thousands years has brought about a Christianity which is very selfish. This theology primarily focuses on what God can do for us and results in a Christian lifestyle that is little to no different from that of non-believers.

Let me show you how this comes about.

When a Cat looks at the cross of Jesus, here is what a Cat is thinking:

“As I meditate on the cross, I learn that Jesus suffered for me. And since there is not going to be any suffering in heaven and there won’t be any tears there either, I must assume that *since Jesus suffered for me here on this earth, he must not want me to suffer here on earth as well!* This is great! I love this Jesus. He doesn’t want me to suffer.”

As a result, Cats have set up a goal in life that is almost identical to the goal of the non-believers around them. They know they have been born. They know they are going to die. So they want to get from birth to death in the safest, softest, easiest, most comfortable fashion possible. They use all of their time and energy toward that goal.

If they are ever challenged by the church to do something that might cause them to suffer or sacrifice, they cry out, “Get thee behind me, Satan!” They will never sacrifice or suffer for God’s kingdom. They think, “God could never want that for me. He loves me. He died for me. That could never be God’s will for my life.”

Dogs look at the cross very differently. Here is what a Dog is thinking while meditating on the cross:

“Wow, Jesus suffered to reveal his Father’s glory. This is a valuable example that I should follow. I should be willing to suffer for God’s glory as well.”

A Dog’s goal in life is simple: “I live to glorify God, no matter what the cost.” Dogs use their money toward that goal, they use their free time toward the goal, and they use their lives toward that goal. Everything is about glorifying God.

Now Dogs don’t wake up in the morning saying, “Praise God, I can’t wait to suffer!” Jesus didn’t want to suffer either—he even told that to his disciples. But although, like Jesus, Dogs don’t want to suffer—they’re willing to suffer, if that is what the Father wants. They won’t run away from it.

This concept is backed up by Peter in his first letter.

For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. (1 Peter 2:20-21)

Dogs are willing to suffer. Cats are not.

Getting To Heaven

The desire to live for ourselves in a Christian context results in more differences between Cats and Dogs, beginning with the very understanding of what salvation means.

You see, a Cat gets saved by *walking away from hell*.

If hell is on the right, and heaven is toward the left, Cats are facing hell, walking backwards toward heaven. They are walking *away* from hell. In their hearts they are saying, “I don’t want to go to hell. I don’t want to go to hell.”



They are focused solely on themselves.

This goes against what Jesus tells us in Matthew:

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. (Matthew 13:44)

Dogs, like this man, find a treasure. They are not focused on themselves at all. And they are willing to sell everything to buy that treasure. That is what our Christianity is supposed to be like.

As a result, Dogs walk *toward* heaven.

They have discovered a treasure. They have found a God who is not only beautiful, he is beauty itself. They have found someone who is not only powerful, he is almighty! They have found someone who is not only glorious, he is glory. They have found a treasure.

As a result, they walk *toward that treasure*. They are not worried about hell. They are not focused on themselves. They are focused on the treasure.



Because of this huge difference in views on getting to heaven, we have many Christians who have no joy. They are relieved—they “prayed the prayer” so they’re not going to hell—but they have no joy. Mild depression may even characterize these Cat believers because they are focused far more on their problems and their worries than on God’s kingdom and glory.

Devotional Times With God

Another difference between Cats and Dogs is seen in the time they spend with God.

During a Cat’s devotion, a Cat focuses on what God can do for them. Much of their devotion is spent talking to God about all of their

worries and all of their problems.

- God, my parents abused me and I'm so depressed, help me.
- God, I'm sick. You've got to heal me.
- God, I need more money.
- God, I need my boss to know how great I am.
- God, you need to fix my marriage.
- God, you need to make my children obey and honor me.
- God, the teaching at church is so boring, please fix it.
- God, why aren't you blessing me like you promised?

And if they're not talking to God about their problems, God becomes like a celestial Santa Claus. They begin to intercede for all of the nice things that they want in life.

- God, I want nicer clothes.
- God, I need a new pair of shoes.
- God, I want a new car.
- God, I want a better job.
- God, I want a nicer home.

"I, I, I" and "my, my, my." We are praying about ourselves in our devotional time with God.

I do wonder if God ever gets bored with us acting like children in our time with him.

A Dog's devotion is very different.

A Dog will first and foremost enjoy God, simply for who he is. They worship God, not merely for what he has done for them, but primarily for the awesome God that he is.

- God, I praise you for you are holy.
- God, I worship you because you are the Creator of the Universe.
- God, I love you for your creativity in making plants and animals so different.
- God, I exalt you, for you are the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.
- God, I praise you for your sovereignty.

- Lord, I love you for your kindness and mercy and grace.
- Lord, I love all the different colors you have created.

And when Dogs do intercede, their prayers are far more about God's kingdom than their own kingdom.

- Lord, help us to take care of the homeless and the hungry in America.
- Father, help us to love those who feel unloved by you.
- God, allow our churches to teach that life is about you—it's not about them.
- Father, help us as a church advance your kingdom, not our kingdom.

Do Dogs intercede for themselves? Yes. But it is positioned in the context of advancing his kingdom. They know that his kingdom is a higher priority than their own kingdom. They also know that God has promised to meet all of their needs (Philippians 4:19). They rest in their Father.

Chapter 5

What His Glory Offers

Why do we keep pointing to the glory of God? Why is it so important?

I think our answer can be found in the verses of Revelation.

And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" (Revelation 4:8)

I have learned much from these four living creatures and you can too by asking yourself two questions.

Free Will?

First, do you think they have a free will? In other words, are they being forced to worship God?

God's Word doesn't give us an answer, but if we think through the two options, we can learn something very insightful.

Let's start off and assume that *they do not have a free will*. What does that tell you?

When I ask that question to my audiences, they pretty much always give the same answer. "It tells us that God is a dictator who only wants to be praised." I agree with this, but I push them further by asking, "Yes, but what does it tell you about God's glory?"

They pause for a minute, thinking about it, and then finally someone answers.

“His glory must not be very great!”

And that is exactly the answer I am looking for. Somehow these four living creatures would rather be off playing video games or shopping or doing something else because God’s glory isn’t that satisfying. His glory isn’t that captivating. His glory isn’t that awesome.

But...

If they do have a free will, what does that tell you about God’s glory?

It tells you that God’s glory is so amazing, so awesome, so satisfying, that they never want to leave it. It satisfies them down to their very soul. And that is a key lesson we can learn from the four living creatures.

God’s glory satisfies our very souls.

That is why we want to be satisfied with his glory and point others to his glory. His glory satisfies like nothing else. And unlike anything else that tries to satisfy our souls (drugs, alcohol, sex, etc.), God’s glory never fades away or gets old. His glory remains enthralling forever!

Living Creatures

But there is another valuable lesson we can learn from the four living creatures and it deals with a second question.

Do you think the four *living* creatures have cells in their bodies as we do in ours?

Most conclude yes. And if that is the case, what can we learn from the fact that they worship Him 24/7? (The text gives no indication that they take tea breaks or stop for breakfast, lunch or dinner.)

We conclude that God’s glory also satisfies the very cells of our bodies! His glory meets all of our physical needs.

This is reinforced by the fact that Moses went up into the mountain and met with God for forty days and nights without food or water and came down radiating God’s glory! (Exodus 34:29)

So God's glory satisfies our very souls and satisfies our physical bodies. Not only does it satisfy us more than sex or drugs or alcohol or food or family—it lasts forever! It is infinite in scope and will never run dry.

This is why we constantly want to point people to God's glory.

This too is why it is so important to be spending time alone with God worshipping Him and reading His Word. In doing this, we heal our souls and help our bodies at the same time.

Two Sins

Knowing this, God made a statement to the Israelites through the prophet Jeremiah. In this indictment, he says two things.

*For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.
(Jeremiah 2:13)*

What is the first sin? They have forsaken God. What does that mean?

In simple terms it is saying that they have chosen someone or something to be more satisfying to them than God. Maybe it was sex. Maybe it was power. Maybe it was drugs or alcohol. But they are communicating clearly to all of creation that God's glory isn't that amazing. His glory isn't that satisfying. His glory is just mediocre.

What is the second sin?

They are digging for themselves cisterns (or wells) that leak. They may be putting the water in, but over time, that water leaks out and they have to do it over and over again.

What are some of the things that people put into their broken wells?

- Sex? Yes.
- Drugs? Yes.
- Alcohol? Yes.
- Material possessions? Yes.

- Marriage? Yes.
- Family? Yes.
- Ministry? Yes.
- Church? Yes.

And in this analogy, God is comparing a spring to a broken well. I hope you can clearly see the differences.

What do you have to do to drink from a spring? All you need to do is to get down and drink from it! There is no work. There is no effort. You just need to get down on your hands and knees and drink!

What do you have to do to create a well? You have to work—and work hard. You have to get a shovel and dig. You have to break up the ground or rocks in order to go deeper into the ground. It is hard work.

And what is the result? You either have to go to the river to put water in it or gather the rain off of your roof and channel it into it. But then once you've got it filled, it leaks!

Sex was great with the one person, but now you want it again with someone else. The drugs made you feel high, but you came down and so you need some more. You got a new phone, but two months later you found another one that is even more amazing and now you're not satisfied with what you bought. Marriage is wonderful, but your spouse can do something that makes you so mad. Kids are great, but why don't they obey you perfectly like you want them to? The ministry is fantastic, but you could always be doing more and growing faster—and there should always be more money.

There is never enough. Your well leaks.

We all need to learn that only God and his glory will satisfy us completely and forever. That is why he wants us to live for his glory.

Jealous God

And that is why God is a jealous God.

For you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God. (Exodus 34:14)

If God allowed you to be satisfied with second best, or tenth best, or 100th best, he wouldn't be a very loving God. Because he loves you, he wants the very best for you—and that just happens to be himself. So in order to make you as happy and satisfied as you can be, he points you to himself.

In order for God to be a loving God (and give you the very best), he has to be a jealous God. If he were not a jealous God, he would not be very loving.

The word “holy” simply means dedicated to God. God is “holy, holy, holy.” This means three times God is dedicated to God. He is dedicated to his glory three times over. Why?

Because he knows it is the only thing that satisfies the deepest longing of our hearts and our bodies and all creation!

God is a jealous God for our sakes!

Chapter 6

Cats Have A Feel—Good Theology

I just returned from having lunch as I write this chapter. When I went into the kitchen I thought, “Hmm, what do I want to eat?” I looked in the cabinets and then in the refrigerator. I finally decided on what I wanted. I took sushi, a green pepper, hummus and grapes out, and left the rest. Those were the items that would make my stomach feel good today.

This is how many Cat Christians read their Bibles. They look at their Bible and select verses and passages that are going to make them “feel good.” They never read other verses because they either don’t make sense or won’t make them feel good.

If you were to look at some of the favorite verses that many Christians memorize, you’d find out that they are focused on the areas of comfort and security.

Cats love to memorize passages like Psalm 103:11–13:

For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him.

But ask them if they’ve ever memorized 1 Peter 2:20-21, which speaks about being called to suffer.

For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure,

*this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. **For to this you have been called**, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. (1 Peter 2:20-21, emphasis added)*

They'll answer, "No, I've been called to suffer? Are you sure? I don't like that verse. I don't think it applies to me."

They love to meditate on Matthew 11:28-30:

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

But ask them if they've meditated on Exodus 34:14:

For you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.

They'll say, "God is jealous? And that's His name? Are you sure? That doesn't make sense—nor does it make me feel good. I don't want to worship a jealous God."

They'll gladly memorize and try to act out Jeremiah 29:11-13:

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."

But they don't know how to act out Matthew 5:23-24, which talks about reconciling differences before you come to the Lord.

So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

They see Psalm 40:1–3 as true in their lives:

I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord.

But they rarely see the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18–20 as true in their lives:

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

“What?” thinks a Cat. “If I did this, I’d have to leave my home and my job and learn a whole new language and that just doesn’t make me feel good. I’m sure that must not apply to me.”

Why don’t they memorize these other passages? It’s simple. Those passages don’t make them feel good. And Cat Theology is a feel-good theology made up of feel-good passages.

This steady diet of feel-good passages leads them to error in other ways.

Selective Cheers!

When I was in West Africa in the early 90’s, I spoke to a large number of pastors in Liberia. I taught them the basics of what you have read so far in this book. When I was done, the emcee got up and began to end the meeting. He ended the meeting by saying a “cheer” that the pastors knew to respond to.

He began with, “God is good!” They replied, “All the time!” “All the time,” he returned, and they finished, “God is good!”

When I heard this chant going on, I realized how Catish it can be. The

chant could be saying, “God is good (to me) all the time! All the time, God is good (to me.) So I jumped up and walked toward the emcee. “Let’s try a new chant,” I asked. “How about this one? God is jealous—All the time. All the time—For his Glory.”

When I gave the alternative, you could see a visible change in the faces of the pastors I had been teaching. They realized that many of the assumed, godly, foundational mantras that they recite without even thinking could be self-centered.

Limited Lordship

All of this “feel-good theology” leads Cats to a limited Lordship.

Cats will call Christ Lord—as long as it feels good. When God asks them to do something they don’t feel comfortable doing, they say no to it. Oh, they’ll still go to church. And they’ll still help out in any way they can (as long as its comfortable), but they won’t go outside of their comfort zones.

To a Cat, Christ is not Lord outside of his/her comfort zone.

When it comes to serving God, Cats tell God how they want to serve him. They have a sheet of paper where they have mapped out all of the ways they will serve God. (These ways are all within their comfort zone—of course.) And they ask God to sign at the bottom. “God, please okay my plans for serving you.”

Note who is in control—Cats are!

Dogs have a different way of looking at the Lordship of Jesus Christ. He is Lord in and out of their comfort zone. If Jesus asks them to do something that is very uncomfortable for them, they pray about it and seek God’s will. If God says, “Do it,” they do it.

Dog Christians will go anywhere, do anything or say anything for God’s kingdom. For them, it isn’t the graduate level of Christianity. It isn’t something you say after you’ve been to Bible school or seminary. It is basic Christianity—giving Christ their lives.

Like Cats, Dogs also have a sheet of paper regarding God’s will for

their lives, but they haven't written anything on it. At the bottom is simply a line that says, "I will do anything you ask me to do. Please tell me what you want me to do." Following that is their signature already given in advance.

For a Dog, Christ is Lord—no matter what is asked. For Cats, he's Lord as long as he asks them to do something within their comfort zone.

Chapter 7

Cats Expect Life To Be Fair

When we constantly focus on what God can do for us, we come to an inevitable conclusion. Life is supposed to be fair.

To gain greater insight and understanding into this troublesome situation, we're going to look at three case studies of people in the Bible who encountered various ways of revealing God's glory: the first is Jabez, whose story is told in 1 Chronicles 4:10; the second is a nameless young girl found in 2 Kings 5:1–15; and the third is Stephen, who is probably more familiar to you. His story is found in Acts 6–7.

Jabez

Let's look at our first case study. We don't know much about Jabez. The Bible only records a short mention of his birth and a prayer he prayed. The paragraph given to his story tells us that Jabez cried out to God, "Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain" (1 Chronicles 4:10).

As we analyze his prayer, we find it's made up of five simple requests, not unlike the ones that we may pray.

1. Bless me.
2. Enlarge my territory.
3. May Your hand be with me.
4. Keep me from harm.
5. I want zero pain.

How does God respond to this? After all we've talked about so far, this sounds like a prime example of a Cat's "It's-all-about-me" prayer. So

how does God deal with this man? Does He say, *“Hey buddy, buck up. I’m going to send my Son to the cross where he’ll endure great pain. He’s going to have nails driven through his hands and feet. He’s going to be crowned with thorns, whipped and lashed until blood is coming out his back, and he’s going to sweat blood. Remember this: All who desire to be godly and live godly lives will be persecuted. You need to get used to that, so toughen up. Learn to bear your own cross!”*

He could have said that, but he didn’t. As we read on, we find that God granted his entire request. He what? He granted his request? Yes, you read that right.

God, in essence, said, “You’ve got it, the whole nine yards. It’s yours, and I want you to have it!” (Nowhere in this book have we said God doesn’t want to bless you. We’re only cautioning against focusing on the idea that God lives for you and lives to bless you, as though that were a higher priority than radiating his own glory.)

Young Girl

Next, let’s move on to our second character. We don’t know her name, so we’ll just call her “a young girl.” Her story is found in 2 Kings 5. As we begin reading, we need to be aware of the context. This young Jewish girl was taken captive in war and enslaved in a foreign land. Her mistress was the wife of Naaman, the second in command of the enemy army.

That man, who was greatly responsible for all her woes, contracted leprosy. She then spoke to her mistress about him.

In order to better understand this girl’s predicament, keep in mind some of the behind-the-scene activities. After having heard story after story about what happened in French-speaking West Africa during some of their recent civil wars, we can almost guarantee that the following is well within the possibility of what happened to this young girl.

In front of her, Naaman or his men probably committed the following acts:

1. Raped her mother

2. Killed her father
3. Killed her older brothers
4. Raped her and took her away to be a slave

Think of all the emotional baggage this young girl carried inside herself. Talk about dysfunctional! Whew, she would be off the chart! Now it might make sense if we were to read that she said to her mistress, *"It serves him right."*

While that would be an understandable response to a series of devastating events, it's not what she said. Instead, she said:

"If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy" (2 Kings 5:3).

Did we read that correctly? This girl probably went through all of the heartbreak and turmoil listed above, and yet she still knew forgiveness? She still had a heart for God's glory? Yes, that is what the text says.

What resulted from her kindness? You know the story. Naaman went to God's prophet and was miraculously healed. Then he stood before the prophet and said:

"Now I know there is no God in all the world except in Israel" (2 Kings 5:16).

This man, a Gentile, the "number two" man in authority in his country's army, stood up and testified about the God of Israel. Naaman, a Gentile leader, acknowledged God just because a young girl knew forgiveness and had a heart for God's glory!

Stephen

Third, let's move on to the life of Stephen, found in Acts 6–7. The Bible says Stephen was full of grace and power. It tells us that he did great wonders and performed miraculous signs among the people. But the Sanhedrin opposed him, and they got others to lie about him. He was arrested and taken into court.

As the public heard his testimony, many covered their ears, yelled at

the top of their voices, rushed at him, dragged him out of the city, and stoned him. Stephen was stoned to death even though he was full of God's grace and power. (Isn't it interesting that you can be full of the power of God and still be stoned to death?)

The Wrong Question

Now let's review. We've looked at three lives. One was completely blessed (Jabez), one lived through a hell-on-earth experience in order to touch a Gentile's life (the young girl), and one was full of God's power and grace and yet was stoned to death (Stephen)—three totally different lives.

Now here's a simple question for you: To which life was God fair?

- The one God completely blessed?
- The one who had to go through suffering to touch a Gentile?
- Or the one who was stoned to death?

While that is a question most people would accept, it's really the wrong question to ask. ***Life wasn't designed to be fair.***

Where did we ever get that idea?

Life was designed to be a series of events to reveal God's glory and point us and others to that glory. That is what life is all about! Paul writes, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

If that is true, that our purpose is to live for his glory, let's ask a different question: *Which of these lives pointed themselves or others to God's glory?*

- The one completely blessed?
- The young girl who touched a Gentile's life?
- Or the man full of God's power and grace who was stoned to death?

Naturally, the answer is that *all three glorified God.*

One did it by asking God to bless him. God did. And Jabez gave God glory for it. This demonstrated the grace and benevolence of God as a Father.

The young Jewish girl knew forgiveness even though she had gone through a hellish life. All of this greatly pointed to God's glory living through her. She was used to influence a Gentile man of great authority and to show God's desire to reach people from all nations.

The third one we still talk about today as an example of a man who saw such value in God that he was willing to die for it.

Paul understood this idea. Look again, even more closely, at Romans 11, verse 36: "For from him and through him and to him are most things." Is that what it says? No! The Bible doesn't say "most things," it says "all things." "For from him and through him and to him are *all* things."

How many is all? Well, it's all.

All—not some, not a lot of, nor even a great majority of. It's all! The trees are to point us to God, the heavens declare his glory, and the uniqueness of his botanical creations demonstrate his creativity. The birth of a child is a marvel, and a lion's roar directs us to God; car accidents are to point us to God; cancer is to point us to God; heart attacks are to point us to God; an early death is to point us to God. All things are to point us and others to him—not most, a lot of, or even the vast majority of, but *all things*.

There is nothing that can come into a Dog's life that cannot point him or her to God. Hence, life is all about pointing to the glory of God in the midst of blessings and in the midst of tough times. It all brings about opportunities to glorify God.

A Dog's key verse is found in Habakkuk 3:17–18:

Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior.

Life was never designed to be fair. It is designed to be a series of opportunities that point to, reflect, and radiate God's glory.

Chapter 8

Cats Have A Winner's Circle Theology

Another danger of Cat Theology is that Cats always want to relate to the winner—to the major character in the Bible story they are reading—never to the minor character.

Let's look at a simple example: Job. You all know the story of Job. God allows Satan to take away everything he has except his life. What lesson do Cats learn from this? There are times when God is going to test you.

"Wait a second," you might think to yourself. "I thought everything was supposed to be safe, soft, easy, comfortable, and secure, and that I should always come out on top."

It turned out that way for Job in the end. God doubled his possessions and gave him the same number of children, thus doubling the number of his children for all eternity. But that is a Cat's winner's circle lesson.

Is there anything for Dogs to learn outside of the winner's circle? Is there anyone else to relate to in the story?

Yes. You see, Dogs ask, "Why don't we ever relate to Job's kids?"

"What?" you're probably saying to yourself as you read this. "Relate to Job's kids? They all died. Are you crazy?"

That's the whole point. Why do we always relate to the one who comes out alive in the end? Why do we always relate to the one who is the main character in the story? Dogs think, "Hey, we don't have to. We can relate to anyone in the text who can teach us a life lesson."

In order to understand this, a few tough questions needs to be asked. Did God love Job's kids as much as Job? The obvious answer is yes. Did God have a plan for their lives? Not as obvious, but the same answer still stands, yes. What was it?

To answer that, let's assume Job's kids made it to heaven (they had a godly father) and had a talk with God. I believe the conversation might have gone something like this:

Kids: Lord, do you mind if we have a few moments with you?

Lord: Oh, of course. Absolutely!

Kids: Umm, Lord, we're kind of curious—why did we all die at the same time?

Lord: Oh, I love you all so much, and I allowed you all to come home early.

Kids: Lord, just why exactly did you do that?

Lord: I wanted to reveal my glory by teaching your father a lesson.

Kids, incredulously: What! You took us home early just to teach our father a lesson?

Lord: Yes, that's right.

Kids: One responds, "But, God, my brothers and I had a business, and it was just starting up. It was going really well." And the oldest adds, "Yes, Lord, and I was going to inherit my father's business." One daughter remarks, "Yes, Lord, and I was engaged, and we were going to get married and have kids." Her little sister adds, "And, God, I was hoping to get married too." And another one says, "I was hoping to go into the ministry. I had all these plans." And then in unison they all say, "In the midst of all this, you wanted to teach our father a lesson? What about us?"

Lord: I'm sorry you're so confused. You see, it was never about you. It never was. It's about my plan and revealing my glory in a myriad of ways. And I allowed you to die early so that I could reveal my glory through your father.

Kids: But, Lord, it just doesn't seem fair!

Lord: Well, just to let you know, the way I run my creation is not based on fairness; it is based on revealing my glory. And in what I did through your father, my glory shone brightly. But here, I have something for each of you."

Then God rewards them in ways they never would have imagined!
They are speechless but finally mutter some words...

Kids: What? We get all this?

Lord: Yes, I love you so much, and you played your roles so well in being a part of revealing my glory.

Kids: But, God, we don't deserve all this!

Lord: I know. But it has never been based on what you deserve. Giving you this continues to radiate and reflect my glory, and that is what it has been about from the beginning. Some I bless with things, some I allow to be persecuted, and some I bring home early—it's all a beautiful stained-glass window revealing my glory.

That is a lesson from outside the winner's circle.

David's Fighting Men

Are there other "Winner's Circle Lessons" from which we can learn new things? Let's talk about David's sin of counting his fighting men in 1 Chronicles 21.

Satan got David to count how many men he had. The Lord wasn't pleased with this at all. David wanted to point to himself, his country, and his people, and he didn't want to give the Lord the glory for all the victories. (Even great men like David can be Cats sometimes and anger a jealous God.)

So what happened? The Lord killed seventy thousand men. This time it was directly initiated by the Lord, not the Lord using Satan, but the Lord. In 1 Chronicles 21:14 we read:

"So the Lord sent a plague on Israel, and seventy thousand men of Israel fell dead."

What do Cats learn? Don't take pride in your numbers. Hence, churches are not to take pride in how many attend their services, how many they baptize, or how many come to Sunday school.

That, believe it or not, is a winner's circle lesson because David is still alive in the end.

What lesson is there to learn outside of the winner's circle?

A Dog also relates to the seventy thousand men who died and to their widows and children. What lesson can a Dog learn from this passage?

My life may be called upon to be a sacrifice.

Whether the Lord calls you to a people group who has never heard the gospel or you die because of someone else's sin, the idea of being a sacrifice on behalf of someone else's actions is very theologically sound to a Dog.

Can you imagine the conversations David's men might have had with God?

Men: Lord, why did you bring us all home at once? We weren't even fighting a war.

Lord: David sinned.

Men: What? David sinned, and we were all punished for his sin?

Lord: I don't see bringing you into my presence as punishment. I hope you don't see it like that—but yes, that is what happened.

Men: Oh, Lord, we're sorry. You're wonderful . . . but why didn't you take him home?

Lord: Because I had a greater plan for his life.

Men: What about our lives?

Lord: I had a plan for your lives as well.

Men: Well, what was it?

Lord: To die when David sinned, and to serve as an impetus for his repentance.

Men: But, Lord, that just doesn't seem fair.

Lord: Well, I have never run my kingdom based on fairness....

Dogs also learn from this passage that God sometimes allows spouses to die young. (This doesn't make these events any easier emotionally, but understanding God's ways brings peace and healing more quickly.) Children can realize that their moms or dads may be called on by God to serve the Lord in this way as well. Again, coping with the death of a loved one is never easy, but trusting in God's high purposes makes it easier to worship and eventually thank God after it has happened.

A conversation between God and a widow of one of David's men might have gone something like this:

Wife: Lord, why did you take my husband home halfway through my life?

Lord: David sinned.

Wife: Why didn't you take David home?

Lord: Because I had a greater plan for his life.

Wife: But what about my life?

Lord: I had a plan for your life, too.

Wife: What was it?

Lord: To raise your children as a widow, trusting in me to be a Father to the fatherless, leaning on me for all of your needs, coming to me in your greatest times of hurt, and allowing me to heal you. And in how you lived, my glory would be radiated brightly through you.

With Cat Theology, it is very difficult to contemplate the idea that God could call us (or our loved ones) home early as a part of revealing his glory. But with Dog Theology, it's not.

Chapter 9

Cats Have Limited Growth

One of my wife's greatest strengths is hospitality. Debby loves to host people in our home and always makes them feel special. She does this not only for people who visit our home but also for people in our neighborhood. When new neighbors move in, they soon find a plate of homemade cookies or a freshly baked pie on their doorstep.

For Debby, it's a fun way of showing God's glory to others, not to mention that it is "proper etiquette."

Rules of etiquette where we live help us treat others with respect and give us appropriate guidelines when we want to let others feel welcomed or thanked. While Debby is demonstrating etiquette when she bakes a family pie, she does it because she wants to do that for them, not because she feels like she has to. She wants to bless them and to bring God glory through it.

But sometimes, without knowing it, "proper etiquette" keeps many Cats from experiencing the fullest Christian life that they can have.

Why?

Let's use another example. When people have you over for dinner, the most polite thing you can do is to thank them and invite them over for dinner at a later time. This form of dinner etiquette—thanking them and returning the favor—summarizes how Cats live out their Christianity.

Without thinking in these terms, a Cat is basically saying, "Since Christ died on the cross for me (he did something nice for me), I should thank him and at least live for him (I should return the favor)."

A Cat asks, “Isn’t that what living for Christ with a thankful heart is all about?”

Now Cats know they can never fully pay God back, so they try to pay back whatever they can. This comes as they try to live the Christian life on their own, as best they can. Because of this, Cats don’t grow to their full potential. They can’t. Why?

Their growth is stunted. Returning the favor takes away the power of living the Christian life.

“Help-Me” Prayers

When I was in college, I used to type out my prayers. Many prayers went like this:

- Lord, help me to be holy.
- Lord, help me to love you more.
- Lord, help me to be bold in sharing my faith.
- Lord, help me to become more like you. (And on and on they went.)

One day as I was praying, I felt the Lord say to me, “Bob, what are you asking me to do?”

I replied, “Lord, what do you mean? I’m asking for your help. I can’t do this on my own.”

“Yes,” his Spirit gently nudged me, “but what does that mean?”

“I don’t get it, God,” I said. “I need your help. I can’t do it without you.”

“But what does that mean?” He said again.

And then it hit me like a ton of bricks! I had been asking God to help me. I was trying to return the favor of eternal life by living for God in my own power and strength. I never would have put a percentage on it, but let’s say that I was trying to live 70 percent in the power of the flesh (as the Bible calls it) and was asking God to complete the other 30 percent.

And somehow (though I never would have said it) I thought that when I got to the “heavenly Olympics” and the medals were given out, I would get the gold (after all I had done 70 percent of the work) and Christ would be standing next to me with the silver (he had helped me do the additional 30 percent of the work). And I was going to say to him, “Thanks, Jesus, I couldn’t have done it without you.”

Little did I know that I was living like a Cat and that it was limiting my spiritual growth.

In John 15:5 Jesus says:

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

I never really understood what that “nothing” meant, especially since we can put men on the moon, we can create computers that sort through tons of information in a nanosecond, we can save premature babies—there are tons of things humans can do without acknowledging God.

But it dawned on me that it meant “nothing of eternal significance.” Trying to live 70 percent of the Christian life on my own was limiting God to bringing about only 30 percent of growth in my life. He wanted me to grow more, but, like a Cat, I didn’t trust him for my growth. I thought I had to struggle for it by myself.

Therefore, 70 percent of the potential spiritual growth in my life wasn’t happening.

When I realized this, a passage from the Bible jumped out at me and has since changed my life. It says:

“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.” (Ezekiel 36:26,27 KJV).

“Cause-Me” Prayers

God wants to cause us to walk with him! When I realized what that verse meant, a huge burden was lifted from my shoulders. No longer was the burden of living the Christian life on my shoulders. It was on God. He was the one responsible for causing me to live a life pleasing to him. And as he provided, he would get the glory, becoming more famous in our eyes!

After that, I changed my prayers. They are now like this:

- Lord, *cause me* to be holy.
- Lord, *cause me* to love you more.
- Lord, *cause me* to be bold in sharing my faith.
- Lord, *cause me* to become more like you.

...And on and on they go.

“So should we do nothing and give it all to God?” Cats ask.

Dogs know that the balance between our effort and God’s effort is found in Colossians 1:29. It says:

“To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.”

The phrase “I labor” refers to us going through the motions. I’ve finally learned that, yes, I need to have a quiet time; yes, I need to be in God’s Word; but unless God meets me there, nothing is going to happen. And if I’m not going through those motions by faith, then God doesn’t have the opportunities to cause the growth to take place.

Dogs know that growth in the Christian life comes as we take steps toward giving God opportunities to make changes in our lives. If we don’t give him those opportunities, nothing will come about.

The phrase “his energy” refers to God empowering us during those times. This happens when we pray things like, “*Lord, I’m going to go out and share my faith today, but unless you speak through me and touch people’s hearts, nothing is going to happen,*” or “*Lord, I’m going to have a quiet time, but unless you meet me there, it will be like dry shredded wheat.*”

Dogs know that we obey and God brings about 100 percent of the growth and gets all the glory. This pleases a jealous God!

But if we don't obey, even when it feels like just going through the motions, then God doesn't have as many opportunities to cause our growth.

Chapter 10

Robing God of His Glory

I have never thought that I could *rob God of his glory*. But in praying “help me” prayers, that’s exactly what I was doing.



Praying “cause me” prayers applies in every area of life, even the most basic.

For years I tried to “fall in love with God,” not really knowing what to do. But God even wanted to work in that area of my life.

Deuteronomy 30:6 says:

The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.

God wants to circumcise our hearts to love him. He will cause us to love him. So even in the most basic areas of the Christian life, Dogs know that one of the first steps is to call on God to cause us to love him!

I am now 60 years old. I have been praying, “God, cause me to love you” for 40 years. And quite honestly, I’ll never stop praying that prayer—because I can always love him more. I attribute to that prayer

the great love that I do have for God. I didn't put that love in me. God did. He is the one who gets all the glory.

Cause Me To Love My Wife

This even applies to marriage. My wife, Debby, is an extremely beautiful woman—that's one of the reasons I married her. I did this in part (I came to realize later) because I had a poor self-image. I wanted other guys to look at her next to me and to say, "Wow, you've really got a babe!"

But that puppy love wore off as our marriage continued. As with any couple, our marriage began to move from the honeymoon stage to the reality stage, and I began to struggle with loving her as I should.

And then I relearned the lesson all over again. I had been trying to love my wife in my own power and strength. I repented and began to pray, "Lord, cause me to love my wife the way I should."

I have been praying that prayer for decades. And I find it very interesting that, when I pray it, our marriage gets better. The bad part is, the better our marriage gets, I pray it less and less. As a result of not being dependent upon God, our marriage once again begins to run into problems. It is then I say, "Oh yeah, I need to keep praying, 'Lord, cause me to love Debby.'" And then as I pray that, our marriage improves again!

Today we have a healthy marriage, and all of the credit and glory goes to God because each of us is dependent upon God in this area of our lives.

All Areas

This principle applies not only to the big areas of life (loving God, loving your spouse, etc.) but also to the little areas, which is another place where Cats stunt their growth. This happens in activities that Cats commonly do, when they've "been there, done that, and got the T-shirt." So they begin to rely on their own power in these little areas.

Cats begin to think things like: *"I've driven to work a thousand times; I don't need God's help."* *"I've flown all over the world; I know nothing will happen to the plane."* *"I've taught this Sunday school lesson lots of times;*

it'll come out all right." "I've seen this problem before; I know how to handle it." "I know how to do my job; I don't need to pray about it."

The things we've done thousands of times can cause us to rely on our strength and not trust in the Lord for His power and strength. And when we do that, we're working in the power of the flesh. That doesn't please a jealous God.

What does please him, and what Dogs pray is, "Lord, I've given this talk a thousand times. You've demonstrated that you love to use it, but I'm still 100 percent dependent on you to speak through me and to change lives." "God, I'm looking to you to empower me today as I do the laundry, drive a taxi, go shopping, make dinner, and do the dishes." "God, I need you at the office today. I know I could do it all in my own power and strength, but I don't want to because I don't want to live my life in the power of the flesh and rob you of your glory."

Dogs know that when God has you over for dinner, there's only one response: *"God, thank you. You are so very kind. Could you have me over for breakfast too?"* And then when he has you over for breakfast, you say, *"Lord, thanks again. Could you have me over for lunch?"* And then after his faithful provision, you ask, *"Lord, could you have me over for dinner again?"*

In America, most people would wear out one's welcome acting this way! But with God, it never wears out. Why? The more we come to God, the more glory he gets by providing for us day after day.

No wonder Psalm 116:12,13 says:

"What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord...."

God has blessed you. Don't think you have to work in your own power and strength to thank him. The opposite is the truth. Call upon him even more. He wants you to bring every aspect of your life to him and to trust in his future empowerment.

Now I realize that when I get to the heavenly Olympics, I won't be getting any of the medals. Jesus will get the gold for 100 percent of the

work, and I won't even be on the podium. All of the glory goes to God!

Don't try to live this Christian life—even a part of it—in your own power or strength.

You'll fail miserably.

Live in absolute dependence upon God!



Chapter 11

Cat Theology In The Church

Can Cat Theology be found in the church?

I was sitting in a church one Sunday morning when the pastor got up and said, “We want you to know that we are believing God for literal miracles in this church.” As I sat there and took in the context, I realized how Catish that was. Did you catch it?



“Miracles in *this* church.” He didn’t want miracles in the church down the road. Why? Because if miracles happened there, people would start going to that church and leave his church. And if they left his church, tithing would be down. With less money, he might have to cut back on staff or even his own salary.

No, he wanted miracles in *his* church.

To that pastor, it wasn’t about God’s kingdom. It was all about his kingdom, his church, his numbers. He was a Cat pastor.

So, the answer to the first paragraph is absolutely yes. I have seen it for years and I’m sure you have seen it too. It’s not only in the pastors, it can be found:

- In the greeting at church
- In our prayers
- In our worship

- In our announcements
- In our sermons
- Even in our benedictions.

Let's address each one of these.

In Our Greetings

Have you ever tried to find a new church? It isn't always that easy. But churches that are actively looking for new members realize that one key thing you need to do to find new members is to greet them warmly right as they come in.

What kind of greetings are heard? It can go from "God bless you for coming here," to "We're so glad you're here; thanks for coming!" to "We hope you're really blessed."

Without realizing it, they have nonverbally communicated two different messages.

The first is, "This service is all about you. It's about you finding God's blessings. You should be coming here because God wants to bless you." This keeps the focus solely on them.

The second message is, "It's about our church! We're so glad you came to *our* church. *We* want to be growing in size, and you can help *us* make that happen. Thanks for coming!" This is different from the first, and again, it takes the focus off of God.

Both messages are people-centered and don't focus on the glory of God.

What would a Dog greeting be like?

A Dog greeting would be something like, "We hope you really meet with God here, but if you don't, come back and talk to us because we can recommend a few other churches in the area where we believe you can really connect with God."

This greeting puts the focus on meeting God. It moves from them to God—even to the point of encouraging them to go another church to see that happen!

In Our Prayers

Having travelled the world, I have heard so many prayers, both prayed from the pulpit and individually from the hearts of sincere believers. One prayer that keeps coming over and over again sounds like this:

“Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross for our sin.”

As we have said before, Cat Theology is not incorrect, but it is incomplete.

When I hear that prayer being prayed, I want to cry out, “Finish the prayer! Finish the prayer. He died on the cross for our sins *so that* we can glorify God, *so that* we can magnify God, *so that* we can praise God.”

But sadly, that prayer is prayed over and over again at churches around the globe. Once they pray about their sins being forgiven, they forget about why God wanted to forgive their sins. Their focus is only—and always—on them. And without realizing it, they have non-verbally communicated to the listening ears, “It’s about us being saved.”

This prayer is not incorrect, but it is incomplete and very self-centered.

In Our Worship

Whenever I speak to African audiences about Cat and Dog Theology, I usually break them down into small groups and get them discussing how Cat and Dog Theology is affecting their lives. One of the first small group questions is, “What characterizes Cat worship and what characterizes Dog worship?”

Instantly the groups are buzzing. Why? Because they quickly realize that many of their worship songs are Catish. They solely focus on what God has done for them or how God is going to bless them.

In my last trip to Africa I was made aware of the song, “God, I’m not going to leave here until you bless me.” Once we had a Christian Kenyan singing group join us for a bus ride, and we asked them to sing the song. They had just heard the message so they were aware

of the difference between Cat songs and Dog songs. After they started singing, they quickly stopped and started giggling. I asked them, “Why are you laughing?” They replied, “We just realized how Catish this song is!”

In America, our worship songs are permeated with words that focus on us. Many Christians are basically singing about themselves in a Christian context. Their songs are permeated with these pronouns: me, my, or I.

Dog worship songs focus on who God is and his glory. They sing of his character and his mighty deeds. Rarely do you find the words *me*, *my* or *I* in Dog songs. And when you do find them, they are basically saying “I want to worship you more.”

Our Announcements

Cat Theology can even be found in the announcements!

A Cat announcement might say, “The seniors will be going to the botanical gardens next Saturday. Be on time and get ready for the trip of your life!” Note the focus is on “your life.”

But a Dog announcement would change it and say something like, “Next Saturday the seniors are going to go see the glory of God. Be prepared to be awed by the power and creativity of your God during this trip!”

This switches the focus from “the trip of your life” to seeing “the glory of God.”

Here’s a more common Cat announcement.

“If you’re a guest here, we’d like to get your name and number so we can come and visit you and tell you about how this church can be your new spiritual home.” Hopefully, you see that it is pure Cat focusing on growing the church.

The same announcement could focus on God’s glory. “If you’re a guest here, we hope you are meeting with God. If you aren’t, please let us know. We’d love to connect with you, and we can recommend a few

other churches in the area where you may want to go and see the glory of God in their churches as well.”

The focus is no longer on their church. It is on God and growing in a friendship with him.

Our Sermons

If you’ve already caught the gist of this book, you’ll completely understand the difference between a Cat sermon and a Dog sermon. I believe little needs to be said on this.

A Cat sermon is a lesson on how God wants to bless you. Someone described their church’s sermons as a “Three point pep-talk.” It is focused only on what you can get out of God and the Christian experience. It focuses on your life becoming better, richer, and more full by receiving the blessings from God. The listener is primary, and God’s glory is secondary.

Most pastors usually teach Cat sermons because that is what keeps people coming back. And you’ve got to have people come back if you’re going to keep the ministry going—because people are the ones who tithe. And without their tithe, the whole church would fall. So a Cat pastor preaches Cat sermons for self-survival.

Dog pastors aren’t worried about who comes back or who doesn’t. Their survival is dependent upon God’s faithfulness, not people’s tithing. They simply want to preach God’s Word and allow people to respond any way they desire. They know that they have an audience of One—God himself. They preach to please him, not the congregation.

The ultimate Cat Theology is found in Health and Wealth Theology. *God wants you healthy and wealthy. Trust Him for your health. Trust Him for a new car. Trust Him for a new home...* The focus is once again on people, not on God. This is the epitome of Cat Theology.

The Benediction

In America, when a Sunday service is just about over, pastors often give a benediction. It is a blessing to encourage the congregation for the week.

Most benedictions that I've heard are not incorrect, they're just incomplete. A typical one that I hear comes from the first verse of Psalm 67.

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us... Amen.

You would think that this would be a great way to end the service—asking God to be gracious to them, to bless them, and to make his face shine upon them. Again, it is straight from the scripture, therefore it is not incorrect, but it is incomplete.

There is a purpose as to why God wants to bless us. It is found in the next verse.

...that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations. (Psalm 67:2)

This takes people's focus away from themselves and puts it on taking God's glory to the ends of the earth. Adding this second part makes the benediction far more complete. It gives a greater purpose and meaning to life; we are blessed to be a blessing!

Cat Theology Is Like Aspirin

Now, think about what is happening at the average church around the world.

People are greeted with a Catish greeting. They hear Catish prayers. They sing Catish songs. They hear Catish announcements. They listen to a Cat sermon. And they are given a Cat benediction.

What are they walking away thinking? They are thinking that *life is all about them and that God has dedicated himself to their blessing.*

No wonder the majority of Christians are selfish in the church. They've been taught to be selfish *by* the church. Without wanting to, the church set them up for failure. They learned to focus on themselves in the church, and that attitude will fail you in life.

Because of this, I say that Cat Theology is like aspirin.

What do I mean by that?

What happens when you have a headache? You take two aspirin and it goes away. What happens if you take the entire bottle of aspirin? You die.

Our churches are dying because we've overdosed on Cat Theology. Remember, it is not incorrect, but it is incomplete. And it's the incomplete part that is killing us.

We have trained people in the church to live for themselves in a Christian context. No wonder we have so many self-centered believers gathering every Sunday.

All of this is the result of being one degree off.

The Challenge

This book is in your hands to help you get back on the primary purpose of life: living to glorify God.

It's not about you. It never was. It's always been about Him.

Quit living one degree off. Quit living to make yourself or your church famous.

Start living today to make God famous! Be willing to sacrifice anything and everything toward that goal. This is why you were put on this earth. This is a life that pleases God.

Epilogue

There are two different Christianities out there. One is selfish. One is focused on glorifying God.

I'll bet you already know that and see it. Maybe you haven't been able to articulate it, but you've sensed it in your heart. Well, you are right. And now you *can* articulate it.

The Church has found herself in this problem because we thought Christ died solely/primarily for us. We have been one degree off in this assessment. And we've been one degree off for two thousand years. This one degree off is killing us. It is affecting our worship, our churches, our marriages, our parenting—every area of life!

Don't be a Cat. Help change the tide of Catness in the church. Live to glorify God in all you say and do.

One Degree Off Series

One Degree Off is a series of short books designed to take you to the next level in your Christian life. Below begins a list of the *One Degree Off* series of books. We encourage you to read them in the following order:

1. *One Degree Off Theology*
 - a. This book needs no explanation because you should have just read it!
2. *Living For Eternity*
 - a. This is a fresh look at discovering what God wants to do for all eternity. It challenges you to live, not for these 80 years on earth, but with an eternal perspective. It also helps you see that Christians who are wasting their lives may face a rebuke in heaven by their heavenly Father.

3. *The Story of the Bible*

- a. This book will help you see God's Word with a whole new perspective. It helps you read your Bible as one book, with one introduction, one story and one conclusion. You'll clearly see how God's greatest glory will shine when there are people from every tongue, tribe and nation worshiping him. Your Christianity will never be the same.

4. *Finishing Strong*

- a. Why are there so many different theologies in the Christian world? Should we be Reformed? Should we be Arminian? Is it faith plus works? This insightful book takes a look at one simple passage and helps you see it in a new light, which then answers so many questions. It also takes you to a whole new level of living a holy life.

5. *One Degree Off Marriages*

- a. A high percentage of Christian marriages are either failing or in terrible shape. This is because most of them are Cat marriages with Cat goals. This book helps you to understand the purpose of marriage: to glorify God to your spouse. Help take marriages to the next level!

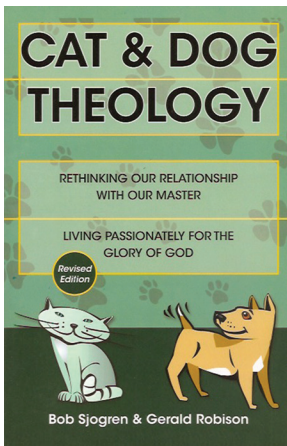
6. *Parenting for God's Glory*

- a. Parenting is hard enough as it is. Throw in our sinful nature, and most parents are really parenting for their own glory, not for God's glory. This book will greatly help young parents in practical ways to raise children who honor God and others.

To get information on any of these books, contact UnveilinGLORY. Their information is on the next page.



UnveilinGLORY
4663 Crown Hill Rd.
Mechanicsville, VA 23111
804.781.0386
www.UnveilinGLORY.com



Cat and Dog Theology was published in 2003. I have taught it for years around the world. In those years of teaching it, I got better and better at communicating the heart of the material. But the book never changed!

This is what One Degree Off Theology is all about. It communicates the heart of Cat and Dog Theology in a fresh new way. But so much more was left out of this book that is found in *Cat and Dog Theology*. Please consider purchasing this book as well!

There is also *Cat and Dog Prayer* and *A Cat and Dog Look at the Cross*.

Homeschooling Material

UnveilinGLORY also has Bible curriculum homeschooling materials for kindergarten, elementary, middle school and high school students.

Check it all out at: www.CatandDogTheology.org.