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# **How Do We View Christianity?**

An Epistemological and Worldview Exercise

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Compiled By:

Rev. Dr. Matthew Richard

[www.pastormatrichard.org](http://www.pastormatrichard.org)

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## **Introduction:**

The following material is a compilation of pithy theological quotes that have been gathered over the past several years from conversations, various books, and pastoral encounters. These pithy quotes have been adapted and organized into 50 different doctrinal subjects. Each doctrinal subject though, presents two opposing theological views laid forth as 'Plan A' and 'Plan B.' Furthermore, connected to each subject, there are Biblical References listed to allow the reader the chance to discern which plan is correct in light of scripture.

## **Instructions:**

Take time to compare 'Plan A' with 'Plan B.' As previously stated, 'Plan A' and 'Plan B' present two different views of the Christian faith. Even though only a few words are changed in each plan, you will most likely see that they present two very different perspectives of the Christian faith. Therefore, as you compare 'Plan A' with 'Plan B,' you may scratch your head while pondering which plan is right and which one is wrong. While you are scratching your head, you will likely be driven to want to resolve this tension (which is good). Therefore, in order to resolve which plan is Biblically right and which one is wrong, Bible references have been listed above the pithy quotes to allow you, the reader, to view both of the plans in light of scripture. Keep in mind though, by turning to the scriptures one may also encounter a new problem. In other words, as you examine the scriptures you will not only find yourself concluding which plan is correct, but you may find the scriptures conflicting with your prior accepted knowledge on each subject.

Enjoy this little exercise as it illustrates and brings about what is technically called a 'worldview conflict' and an 'epistemological crisis.' Lord willing, through this little exercise the Word will either confirm your theological views or gently correct your theological views on the following subjects.

In the Lord's strong Word—for you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rev. Matthew Richard". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Rev. Dr. Matthew Richard

# How Do We View Christianity?

Compiled By: Rev. Dr. Matthew Richard

## **The Fundamentals of Christianity (See 1 Corinthians 2:2 & John 3:16-18):**

Plan A: Christianity is foremost about morality; morality guided and modeled by Christ's life, death, and resurrection

Plan B: Christianity is foremost about faith; faith that believes upon and receives the benefits of Christ's life, death, and resurrection.

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## **State of Man's Heart & Sinful Actions (See Jer. 17:9 & Mark 7:23):**

Plan A: My heart is good; therefore, the evil actions that I do make me a sinner.

Plan B: My heart is evil; therefore, the evil actions that I do are because I am a sinner.

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## **State of Man & Jesus' Actions (See Eph. 2:1-10 & Ezekiel 37:1-14):**

Plan A: I am infected with sin; therefore, I ascend to Jesus so that I can get a hold of forgiveness and be healed.

Plan B: I am dead in sin; therefore, Jesus descends to me so that I can receive forgiveness and be made alive.

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**The Opposite of Sin (See Romans 3:20-25 & Ephesians 2:1-9):**

Plan A: The opposite of sin is virtue.

Plan B: The opposite of sin is faith.

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**Free Will and Bound Will Assumptions (See Rom. 6:1-23 & Gal. 2:17):**

Plan A: Assumes the will is free; therefore, the preoccupation is always how to keep freedom in check, how to bind.

Plan B: Assumes the will is bound; therefore, the preoccupation is always how to set out the Word that frees.

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**The Undermining of Free Will (See Romans 5:17 & Ephesians 2:1-10):**

Plan A: The election of grace undermines free will; the election of grace is an opponent to mankind.

Plan B: Sin undermines free will; the election of grace is an ally to mankind.

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**The Will & Conversion (See John 6:44; 1 Cor. 2:14; & Philip. 2:13):**

Plan A: The will *cooperates in* conversion.

Plan B: The will *is the object of* conversion.

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**Cause of Salvation (See Rom. 8:29-30; 2 Thess. 2:13-15; 2 Tim. 1:9; & Eph. 1:3-6):**

Plan A: God saves me in view of *my faith*; therefore, I am saved *on account of my* faith.

Plan B: God saves me in view of *His mercy & the work of Christ*; therefore, I am saved *insofar as I receive by* faith.

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**The Main Force of the Law (See Romans 3:20 & Galatians 3:5, 10-11):**

Plan A: The main force of the Law is to *empower* me *in living a victorious* life.

Plan B: The main force of the Law is to *reveal to* me *original sin and its fruits in my* life.

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**The Gospel Proclamation (See Acts 8:35; Rom. 10:13-17; & 1 Pt. 1:12):**

Plan A: Gospel proclamation is an announcement of *good advice* to be *applied*.

Plan B: Gospel proclamation is an announcement of *good news* to be *believed*.

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**Faith & the Word of God (See Rom. 10:17; 1 Pt. 1:23-25; & Heb. 4:12):**

Plan A: As I hear the Word of Christ, the Word *enables me to have* faith. (i.e., *Informative words that I act upon.*)

Plan B: As I hear the Word of Christ, the Word *creates* faith *in me*. (i.e., *Performative words that act upon me.*)

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**Faith & Grace (See Romans 10:17; Ephesians 2:8-9; & John 1:12-13):**

Plan A: Faith is *man's decision* that *accepts* God's grace.

Plan B: Faith is *God's Gift* that *receives* God's grace.

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**The Bible (See 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:21; Acts 3:18; & Luke 24:44-45):**

Plan A: The Bible *contains* the Word of God.

Plan B: The Bible *is* the Word of God

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**Grace & Mercy (Ephesians 2:1-9 & Romans 3:11-26, 5:6-8):**

Plan A: God helps those who *can* help themselves.

Plan B: God helps those who *cannot* help themselves.

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**Justification & Righteousness (See Romans 4:1-12):**

Plan A: Justification is *my internal transformation*, where I am *made* completely righteous. I am saved because God *pours* the merit and worthiness of Christ *into my heart*.

Plan B: Justification is *God's external declaration*, where I am *accounted* completely righteous *for Christ's sake*. I am saved because God *counts* the merit and worthiness of Christ *to my credit*.

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**Location of Assurance (See John 3:14-15, 19:30 & Hebrews 12:2):**

Plan A: Justification is something that happens inside a person, thus we look inward to one's heart for assurance. The righteousness that avails before God is inside of me.

Plan B: Justification is something that happened outside a person, thus we look outward to Jesus/Cross for assurance. The righteousness that avails before God is outside of me.

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**The Sacraments (See Matthew 26:27-28 & 1 Peter 3:20b-21):**

Plan A: Baptism and Communion are acts of my obedience and commitment brought to God, on my behalf.

Plan B: Baptism and Communion are acts of God's forgiveness and grace brought to me, on Christ's behalf.

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**The Sacraments (See Matt. 26:27-28; Acts 2:38-39; & 1 Peter 3:20b-21):**

Plan A: Baptism and Communion are powerless outward signs that signify inner salvation.

Plan B: Baptism and Communion are powerful outward signs that confer extra nos salvation.

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**The Sacraments (See 1 Corinthians 10:14-11:22):**

Plan A: The Lord's Supper is celebrated and professed *in order to strive towards doctrinal unity.*

Plan B: The Lord's Supper is celebrated and professed *because of the doctrinal unity we already share.*

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**Closed Communion (See 1 Corinthians 11:17-22):**

Plan A: Closed communion insures that only the *good* come forward to the altar to receive the Holy Meal.

Plan B: Closed communion insures that only the *bad* come forward to the altar to receive the Holy Meal.

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**Acceptance & Obedience (See 1 John 4:19 & Matt.22:37-40):**

Plan A: I obey (*i.e., love*); *therefore* I am accepted (*i.e., loved*) by God.

Plan B: I obey (*i.e., love*); *because* I am accepted (*i.e., loved*) by God *through Christ.*

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**Faith & Obedience (See Romans 1:5; 1 Thess. 1:3; & Galatians 5:6):**

Plan A: Obedience *produces* Faith.

Plan B: Obedience *is a fruit of* Faith

Plan B: Obedience *that consists of* Faith.

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**Complete Sanctification (See Hebrews 10:10-25 & Ephesians 2:10):**

Plan A: Complete sanctification is the *goal* of all good works.

Plan B: Complete sanctification is the *source* of all good works.

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**Progress in Sanctification (See Colossians 3:5-17 & Galatians 5:22-25):**

Plan A: Progress in sanctification is the movement of the *Christian* upon *holiness*.

Plan B: Progress in sanctification is the movement of the *Holy One* upon the *Christian*.

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**Good Works (See Ephesians 2:8-10 & James 2:14-26):**

Plan A: Good works are prescriptive for justification.

Plan B: Good works are descriptive of sanctification.

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**Love and the Law (See John 14:15 & Luke 14:1-11):**

Plan A: If God's law gets in the way of man-centered love, then throw it out.

Plan B: If manmade law gets in the way of God's love, then throw it out.

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**Love is the Fulfillment of the Law (See Romans 13:10 & John 14:15):**

Plan A: When Law and Love contradict, remember Love trumps the Law

Plan B: Law and Love will never contradict, because Love is fulfilled in the Law.

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**Discipline for the Old Adam (See Colossians 3:5 & 1 Corinthians 9:27):**

Plan A: Mankind is inherently good; therefore, discipline and boundaries are bad.

Plan B: Mankind is inherently evil; therefore, discipline and boundaries are good.

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**The Work of the Holy Spirit (See Galatians 5:22-23 & Colossians 2:19):**

Plan A: The Holy Spirit demands obedience by driving the Christian into conformity of rules.

Plan B: The Holy Spirit produces fruit by leading the Christian into a receptive orientation.

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**Ongoing Effects of Original Sin & Grace (See Rom. 7:24-25 & 1 Tim. 1:15):**

Plan A: I was a sinner who was saved by Grace. (i.e., viewing original sin and forgiving grace in the past tense.)

Plan B: I am a sinner who is daily saved by Grace. (i.e., viewing original sin and forgiving grace in the present tense.)

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**Understanding Sanctification (See Galatians 3:10, 5:24 & Col. 3:5-ff):**

Plan A: My sinful nature needs to be *reformed* daily.

Plan B: My sinful nature needs to be *crucified* daily.

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**Moral Transformation (See 1 Cor. 1:30; John 15:3; & Gal. 5:16-26):**

Plan A: The human will, exertion, and effort are the primary modes of moral transformation.

Plan B: Christ, His Word & Sacraments, and His Holy Spirit are the primary agents of moral transformation.

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**Struggle With The Sinful Nature (See Rom. 8:13; Phil. 3:12, 14; & 1 Jn. 1:8-10):**

Plan A: There is spiritual *depth and maturity* in this life when the struggle against the sinful nature entirely ceases.

Plan B: There is spiritual *death and deception* in this life when the struggle against the sinful nature entirely ceases.

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**Spiritual Blessings (See Ephesians 1:3-14 & Colossians 2:9-10):**

Plan A: Jesus is the means to every spiritual blessing; He is a means to another end. (i.e., Jesus helps me attain joy.)

Plan B: Jesus is the source of every spiritual blessing; He is the end. (i.e., Jesus is my joy.)

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**Worship (See Luke 2:20 & Isaiah 6:1-8):**

Plan A: Man is the speaker; God is the audience in worship; God responds to man's sacrifice of worship with pleasure.

Plan B: God is the speaker; Man is the audience in worship; Man responds to God's sacrifice of Christ with pleasure.

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**Prayer Conversation (See Revelation 3:20 & Psalm 51:15):**

Plan A: Prayer begins by me knocking on God's heart with my words; God responds to me in a prayer conversation.

Plan B: Prayer begins by God knocking on my heart with His Word; I respond to God in a prayer conversation.

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**Tithing Motivation (See Exodus 25:2 & 2 Corinthians 9:7):**

Plan A: God has blessed me in innumerable ways *in life, because* I give to God.

Plan B: God has blessed me in innumerable ways *in Christ, therefore* I give to God.

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**The Emptiness of Riches (Ecclesiastes 5:13):**

Plan A: People control goods.

Plan B: Goods control people.

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**Beginning of Life (See Psalm 139:13 & Luke 1:41):**

Plan A: A new individual human being begins at *viability*.

Plan B: A new individual human being begins at *conception*.

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**Definition of Marriage (See Genesis 1-2 & Matthew 19:3-6):**

Plan A: Marriage is a romantic union of persons enhanced by sexual activity for the sake of pleasure.

Plan B: Marriage is a comprehensive union of a man and woman sealed by sexual intercourse for the sake of the procreation and raising of children.

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**What Makes A Marriage (See Genesis 1-2 & Matthew 19:3-6):**

Plan A: A bride and groom make a marriage by creating the estate of marriage through vows.

Plan B: A bride and groom do not make a marriage, but step into the estate of marriage and take their place through vows.

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**Human Sexuality & Gender (See Genesis 1:26-28, 5:2 & Matthew 19:4-6):**

Plan A: A person's gender identity is not based upon physiology and reproductive organs, but shaped and formed by a person's inner most feelings about their sex and gender.

Plan B: A person's gender identity is not based upon a person's inner most feelings about their sex and gender, but shaped and formed by physiology and reproductive organs.

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**Church Discipline (See Matthew 18:15-17 & Galatians 6:1):**

Plan A: Church discipline can be summarized as *vengeance for* a wrong.

Plan B: Church discipline can be summarized as *redemption from* a wrong.

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**Church Assimilation (See 1 Cor. 1:10-13 & 1 Cor. 10:16-17):**

Plan A: *God's grand story* becomes a part of our *individual unique story*.

Plan B: *Our individual unique story* becomes a part of *God's grand story*.

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**Christian Koinonia (See 1 Corinthians 1:9 & Acts 2:42):**

Plan A: Christian koinonia is fellowship among and between *homogeneous* people around shared *internal personal experiences*.

Plan B: Christian koinonia is fellowship among and between *heterogeneous* people around a shared *external Word and external Sacraments*.

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**The Mark of a Good Pastor (See 2 Timothy 4:1-5):**

Plan A: The mark of a good pastor is that he is *friendly*.

Plan B: The mark of a good pastor is that he is *faithful*.

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**The Great Commandment & Commission (See Matt. 22:36-40, 28:16-20):**

Plan A: The Great *Commission* is about *serving* our neighbor through *loving works*.

Plan B: The Great *Commandment* is about *loving* our neighbor through *loving works*.

Plan B: The Great *Commission* is about *disciplining* our neighbor through *the Gospel*.

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**The Mission of the Church (See Ephesians 3:7-12):**

Plan A: The Church is here to solve the world's social problems.

Plan B: The Church is here to preach the solution to the world's eternal problems.

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**Bad Relationships & Bad Preaching (See Rom. 10:17 & 2 Tim. 4:1-5):**

Plan A: If you believe that people are converted by relationships, you'll probably get most upset when Christians act like jerks.

Plan B: If you believe that people are converted by the Word alone, you'll probably get most upset when Christians preach falsely.

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**Exegesis Example (See Matthew 13:44):**

Plan A: The kingdom is the treasure & I am the man; I was willing to give up everything to obtain the kingdom.

Plan B: I am the treasure, the field is the world & Christ is the man; Christ was willing to give up everything to obtain me.

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**Notes:**