Overview
If you are paying attention at all to what is going on in our nation and world you possibly have a disturbing awareness that everything seems to be up for grabs. Nothing seems to be certain as an anchor for our soul in the storms of life. Growing turmoil and massive changes have been taking place in every realm of our culture—government, entertainment, religion, morality, economics, education, marriage, family, respect for authority, and more. Rioting is on the increase along with threats of terrorism. Certain words are being redefined to mean something different than they have meant throughout history such as tolerance, marriage, equality, sex, truth, good, evil, and hate. Much of this has been simmering beneath the surface but has erupted into the open in just a few recent decades.

There is nothing ever new under the sun. Casting aside moral restraint, twisting of the divine scriptures, defiance of God and his word and his people, pursuing false gods and philosophies, lies and deception have all been around since the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Since that major crisis in history everything and everyone tends toward deterioration and corruption. That is true materially, morally and spiritually. Genesis 1-6 shows that to be the case in the first millennium and a half of human history. Things got so bad that God finally sent judgment with a great global flood. When that catastrophe hit the world there were only 8 righteous God fearing people left on earth.

1. From what you see, hear or have experienced, identify things you consider crucial issues facing us in our society and culture, and the church.

2. All people look at the world and life issues from one of two presuppositions (things assumed or taken for granted). These are called worldviews and there are variations within each. From the scriptures given below, identify the two primary ways people look at the world.
   a. Psalm 14:1-3 (Rom.1:20-23f)
   b. Genesis 1:1; Daniel 2:28; Isaiah 45:22; Heb.11:6

What would you consider some implications of following each worldview?

3. Ed Vitagliano of American Family Association (AFA Journal, 6/2017, p.21) states that, “A Christian worldview is the lens through which a believer comprehends and interacts with the world around him or her.” Another way he says it is, “The Christian worldview is thinking and living based on what God has revealed in His Word.” That worldview is affirmed in the MB Confession of faith: “We accept the Bible as the infallible Word of God and the authoritative guide for faith and practice.”

   How do you go about determining right and wrong beliefs and behaviors so that you can be like the men of Issachar and rightly understand the times and know what to do (1 Chr.12:32)?

4. Read James 3:13-18. What are the two kinds and sources of beliefs and behaviors that underlie all human beliefs and behavior, and how are they different?
   a. Source 1:
   b. Source 2:
c. Several extended passages speak similarly: 1 Cor.12:18-25; Rom. 1:18-25f; John 8:42-47.
   What are some things emphasized about the source and nature of wisdom and folly?

5. A growing mindset of our times is relativism. The moral relativist says, “That may be true for you but it is not true for me.” Do you agree or disagree with that? Why or why not?
   a. Judges 17:6 says, “all the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes.” NLT
      Our society seems more & more like that. How do you think a society gets that way?
   b. In contrast to relativists are absolutists who believe that certain morals, values and facts are fixed, invariable and unalterable; they are true for all people, in all places and in all times.
      Do moral absolutes exist? If so, where do they come from and who determines them?
   c. After sharing your thoughts about the above questions, read the following scriptures:
      Joshua 1:7-8; Matt.5:18; John 14:6 & 18:37-38; 2 Tim.3:14-17; 1 Pet.1:22-25. What do you learn about the scriptures? In what ways should you or do you use God’s word in your life?

6. The Bible, which Christians have considered throughout history as God’s inspired word, played a large part in the forming of our country and its values. It has been indispensable in enabling the true Christian church to stay on track morally, spiritually and pursuing its mission. In Paul’s second letter to Timothy he gave urgent instructions (2 Tim.4:2-4). Describe in your own words what was of such great urgency and why?
   Based on this, what advice would you give to yourself as a person or parent, or to anyone who preaches or teaches spiritual things?

7. Inclusion and total tolerance is the growing push today. All beliefs, behaviors, and values are to be accepted as equally valid. No one dare say something is sinful or wrong. Bible believing Christians are more and more faulted for being so exclusive.
   Those who cry the loudest for tolerance and inclusion are often the most intolerant and exclusive people. Everyone and everything is to be tolerated and included in public life EXCEPT EVANGELICAL BIBLICAL CHRISTIANS, THE WORD OF GOD AND ITS TEACHINGS, THE NAME OF JESUS AND PRAYER IN HIS NAME and more.
   What does the word of God have to say about all this? Is God ever exclusive or only inclusive? Read the following scriptures one by one and write inclusive or exclusive behind each one.
   Rom.10:11
   1 Cor.6:9-10
   1 Cor.5:1-2
   Mt.7:21-23
   James 2:
   Gal.3:26-29

8. To wrap things up, read 2 Thessalonians 2:7-13. What are some things you observe in this text that helps you understand our times and what conditions will be like as this world winds down?

**For personal reflection:** Examine your heart and discern how important God’s word is to you.
Job 23:12; Psalm 1:3-4; Jeremiah 15:16; Matthew 4:4; John 5:24; John 15:10