

JOHN 6 AND GOD'S GENERAL CALL

1. The John 6 Problem.

2. Order of Salvation Review.

- a. Man's fallenness.
 - (1) Every aspect of our being has been corrupted by the fall.
 - (2) This includes our bodies, our souls, and our spirits.
 - (3) Unbelievers can produce human good, but not divine good.
 - (4) We are not as depraved as we possibly could be.
 - (5) Don't understate total depravity, but also don't overstate it.
- b. God's desire to save all.
 - (1) As you read the Bible, substitute the verb or noun "will" with "desire."
 - (2) God desired to create free will creatures—angels and men.
 - (3) By his own desire, God doesn't get everything he desires.
 - (4) By not getting everything he desires, God gets what he desires.
- c. Unlimited atonement.
 - (1) On the cross, Jesus paid the judicial penalty for every human sin, without exception.
 - (2) One gets the benefit from Jesus' atonement only when he/she believes in Jesus.
 - (3) The sin of unbelief is different in kind from all other sins.
 - (4) Jesus' unlimited atonement does not extend to the sin of unbelief.
 - (5) People are condemned to hell for eternity not because of their personal sins, but because of their unbelief.
 - (6) Some Scriptures do relate Jesus' atonement particularly to the elect.
 - (a) However, Jesus dying for the sins of believers does not preclude him from dying for the sins of unbelievers.
 - (b) We cannot make a firm conclusion about unbelievers from descriptions about believers.
 - 1) **Ga 2:20** 20 I [Paul] have been crucified with Messiah. It is no longer I who live, but Messiah who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me [and many others as well].

3. God's general call is an important step in the order of salvation.

- a. It is necessary because of our fallenness.
- b. It is motivated by God's desire to save all.
- c. It is made possible through Jesus' unlimited atonement.
- d. Key texts:
 - (1) **2 Co 5:19-20** 19 ...In Messiah God was reconciling the world (κόσμος) to himself, not counting their trespasses against them [unlimited atonement], and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation [God's general call]. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Messiah, God making his [general] appeal through us: We implore you on behalf of Messiah, be reconciled to God.
 - (2) **1 Ti 2:4-6** 4 [God] desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth [God's desire to save all]. 5 For there is one God, and there is one

mediator between God and men, the man Messiah Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all [unlimited atonement], which is the testimony [general call] given at the proper time.

4. God issues a general call to all humanity to seek him with humility.

- a. **Pr 1:20-23** 20 Wisdom cries aloud in the street, in the markets she raises her voice. 21 At the head of the noisy streets she cries out, at the entrance of the city gates she speaks. 22 How long, simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge? 23 If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my Spirit to you. I will make my words known to you.
- b. **Pr 8:1-4** 1 Does not wisdom call? Does not understanding raise her voice? 2 On the heights beside the way, at the crossroads she takes her stand. 3 Beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries aloud: 4 To you, men, I call, and my cry is to the children of man.
- c. **Is 45:22** 22 Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.
- d. **Mt 22:8-14** 8 Then he said to his servants, The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. 9 Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find. 10 And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests. ... 14 For many are called (κλητός) [general call], but few are chosen (ἐκλεκτός) [election].
 - (1) God's general call is like an invitation to a royal wedding feast (Mt 22:2-10)
 - (2) Both Jews (Mt 22:3-4) and Gentiles (Mt 22:9-10) are invited.
 - (3) Both the relatively "bad" and the relatively "good" are invited (Mt 22:13).
- e. **Lk 14:16-24** 16 ... A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. 17 And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, Come, for everything is now ready. 18 But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused. 19 And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused. 20 And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. 21 So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor, crippled, blind, and lame. 22 And the servant said, Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room. 23 And the master said to the servant, Go out to the highways, hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. 24 For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.
 - (1) God's general call is like an initiative to a great banquet (Lk 14:16-17).
 - (2) The poor, crippled, blind, and lame of the streets are invited (Lk 14:21).
 - (3) People in the highways and hedges (Gentiles) are invited (Lk 14:23).
 - (4) There is plenty of room at the feast (Lk 14:22).
 - (5) God wants his house filled (Lk 14:23).
- f. **Jn 7:37** 37 On the last day of the feast [of Booths], the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.

- g. **Ac 17:30** 30 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he [generally] commands all people everywhere to change their mindsets (μετανοέω, pres.)....

5. God's general call is:

a. Universal.

- (1) **Ps 19:1-4** 1 The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. 2 Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. 3 There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. 4 Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.
- (2) **Pr 8:1-4** 1 Does not wisdom call? Does not understanding raise her voice? 2 On the heights beside the way, at the crossroads she takes her stand. 3 Beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries aloud: 4 To you, men, I call, and my cry is to the children of man.
- (3) **Pr 9:1-6** 1 Wisdom has built her house. She has hewn her seven pillars. 2 She has slaughtered her beasts. She has mixed her wine. She has also set her table. 3 She has sent out her young women to call from the highest places in the town, 4 Whoever is simple, let him turn in here! To him who lacks sense she says, 5 Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed. 6 Leave your simple ways, live, and walk in the way of insight.
- (4) **Is 45:22** 22 Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.
- (5) God's general call is the theological answer to the oft-asked question, "What about those who've never heard?"

b. Sustained.

- (1) **Ps 19:1-4** 1 The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. 2 Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. 3 There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. 4 Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.
- (2) **Jer 35:15** 15 I have sent to you all my servants the prophets, sending them persistently, saying, Turn now every one of you from his evil way, amend your deeds, and do not go after other gods to serve them, and then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to you and your fathers. But you did not incline your ear or listen to me.

c. Finite.

- (1) God's general call doesn't extend indefinitely.
- (2) At physical death, God's general call to a person ends.
 - (a) **Heb 9:27** 27 ...It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment....
- (3) At Jesus' second coming God's general call to humanity ends.
- (4) God always warns before he judges.

6. God issues his general call through the five Cs.

a. Consciousness.

- (1) Self-consciousness or self-awareness is “having knowledge of one’s own existence, especially the knowledge of oneself as a conscious being,” “being aware of oneself as an individual,” “awareness of one’s own personality or individuality.”
- (2) “Cogito, ergo sum.”¹
- (3) Illustration: our son David is just now becoming objectively aware of his own existence. It’s enjoyable watching him look at himself in the mirror. He’s asking the age-old question, “Who am I?” More stunning
- (4) **Ec 3:11** 11 [God] has put eternity into man’s heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.
- (5) We are God’s image-bearers. We have a soul, and we interact every day with other human beings who have a soul.
 - (a) “It is man himself, created in the image of God, who most abundantly bears witness to the existence of God. When we meet another human being, we should immediately realize such an incredibly intricate, skilful, communicative living creature could only have been created by an infinite, all-wise Creator.”
 - (b) See C. Larkin’s diagram of body, soul, and spirit.
- (6) Theism versus pantheism and atheism.
 - (a) Self-consciousness rebuts pantheism, for in distinguishing oneself from all else, one immediately recognises all is not one, as pantheism asserts.
 - (b) Self-consciousness rebuts atheism, because consciousness cannot derive from non-consciousness. Soul cannot come from non-soul. How can pure matter become conscious of itself? Personality never comes from non-personality.
 - 1) Naturalistic science cannot explain self-consciousness.

b. Creation.

- (1) **Ps 19:1-4** 1 The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. 2 Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. 3 There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. 4 Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.
- (2) **Ro 1:20** 20 ...[God’s] invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.
- (3) The Cosmological Argument: Causal Evidence.²
 - (a) Anything that begins to exist has a cause.
 - (b) The universe began to exist.
 - (c) Therefore, the universe must have a cause.
 - (d) This cause must be eternal and uncaused.
 - (e) God is the most reasonable explanation for such an uncaused first cause.
- (4) The Teleological Argument: “Design Evidence.”³

¹ Rene Descartes.

² J. Warner Wallace, *Cold-Case Christianity*, 63.

³ J. Warner Wallace, *Cold-Case Christianity*, 65.

- (a) Structures and systems that: (1) cannot be explained by some natural law requiring their appearance; (2) exist in spite of the high improbability they could result from chance; and (3) conform to an independently existing and recognisable pattern are most reasonably explained as coming from the design efforts of an intelligent agent.
- (b) Biological systems possess characteristics these characteristics (*e.g.*, information contained in the DNA code).
- (c) Biological systems are, therefore, most reasonably explained as coming from the design efforts of an intelligent agent.
- (d) God is the most reasonable explanation for such an incredibly wise, all-powerful, intelligent agent.
- (e) Quotes.
 - 1) “The beauty of a snowflake, the majestic power of a thunderstorm, the skill of a honeybee, the refreshing taste of cold water, the incredible abilities of the human hand—all these and thousands of other aspects of creation simply could not have come into existence apart from the activity of an all-powerful and all-wise Creator.”⁴
 - 2) “The odds against the universe existing are so heart-stoppingly astronomical that the notion that it all ‘just happened’ defies common sense. It would be like tossing a coin and having it come up heads 10 quintillion times in a row.”⁵
- (5) The Anthropic Principle: “Fine-Tuning Evidence.”⁶
 - (a) The physical constraints and laws of the universe appear to be uniquely and specifically related to one another (fine-tuned), making life possible on earth.
 - (b) The fine-tuned relationships of these laws and constants appear to be designed (as their existence by natural unguided means seems improbable and unlikely).
 - (c) A design requires an intelligent designer. An incredibly vast and complex design requires an incredibly intelligent and powerful designer.
 - (d) God is the most reasonable explanation for such a vast, universal designer (and fine-tuner).
- c. Conscience.
 - (1) The work of God’s law is written on our hearts.
 - (a) **Ro 2:14-15** 14 When Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. 15 They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also testifies, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them.
 - (b) We pass judgment on others all the time. This shows we have a conscience. We are aware there is an objective standard of what is good, true, and beautiful.

⁴ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 142-43.

⁵ Eric Metaxas.

⁶ J. Warner Wallace, *Cold-Case Christianity*, 64.

- 1) **Ro 2:1** 1 You have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things.
 - (c) We cannot escape our conscience. It is with us wherever we go. It constantly testifies to us about our own thoughts, words, and actions and the the thoughts, words, and actions of others.
 - 1) **Ro 2:15** 15 They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also testifies, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them....
 - 2) **2 Co 1:12** 12 Our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you.
 - 3) **Ro 9:1** 1 I am speaking the truth in Messiah. I am not lying. My conscience testifies for me in the Holy Spirit.
 - (d) When we do what we hate, it proves we have a conscience.
 - 1) **Ro 7:15-23** 15 I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. 16 Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. ...For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. 19 For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. ...21 So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. 22 For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being [my conscience], 23 but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.
 - (e) The Moral Argument: Moral Evidence.⁷
 - 1) There is an objective, transcendent moral law.
 - 2) Every moral law has a lawgiver.
 - 3) Therefore, there is an objective, transcendent moral lawgiver.
 - 4) God is the most reasonable explanation for such a transcendent moral lawgiver.
 - (f) See C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*.
- d. Conversation.
- (1) Great Conversation.
 - (a) The Great Conversation is the centuries-long discussion of the great ideas and the human condition.
 - 1) Traditionally, it focuses on the classics/great books of the Western canon.
 - 2) It treats the most difficult subjects and focuses on the best thinking that has been done.
 - 3) See M. J. Adler, *The Great Ideas: A Syntopicon*, for a comprehensive list of topics Western civilisation has discussed over the centuries.
 - (b) Participation in the Great Conversation often leads people to faith in Jesus.
 - 1) Illustration: Francis and Edith Schaeffer's L'Abri.

⁷ J. Warner Wallace, *Cold-Case Christianity*, 66.

- 2) Illustration: the Board of Regents at U. of Kansas shut down a very popular liberal arts series of courses out of which many students were becoming Christians.
 - 3) Illustration: I read the entire book of Proverbs the day before my “second conversion” experience. Around the same time, I read Leo Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina*, Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, and Albert Camus’s *The Stranger*.
 - 4) Great Books club anyone?
 - 5) The Bible can handle any challengers. It is the undefeated heavyweight champion of the world. It has taken on Plato, Aristotle, Spinoza, Hume, Rousseau, Kant, Darwin, Nietzsche, and Einstein, and won every time.
- (c) Participation in the Great Conversation makes us better evangelists.
- 1) With a good understand of the questions raise and solutions offered in the course of the Great Conversation, one gains confidence that that the biblical worldview is true.
 - 2) We are able to recognise people’s worldviews.
- (d) Most Kiwis, especially young Kiwis, are not engaged in the Great Conversation.
- 1) “The most striking fact about contemporary university students is that there is no longer any canon of books which forms their taste and imagination.... This state of affairs itself reflects the deeper fact of the decay of the common understanding of—and agreement on—first principles that is characteristic of our times.”⁸
 - 2) We are at “the stage where everybody is so concerned with his own special interests that nobody looks after the common good.”⁹
- (2) Conversational Evangelism.
- (a) **Mt 22:8-10** 8 [The king] said to his servants [NT disciples], The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. 9 Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find [Jews and Gentiles]. 10 And those servants [NT disciples] went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both “bad” and “good.” So the wedding hall was filled with guests.
 - (b) **Lk 14:21-24** 21 So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor, crippled, blind, and lame. 22 And the servant said, Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room. 23 And the master said to the servant, Go out to the highways, hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. 24 For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.
 - (c) **Ac 1:8** 8 ... You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

⁸ Allan Bloom, *Shakespeare’s Politics*.

⁹ Robert Hutchins, *The Great Conversation* (1951).

- (d) **2 Co 2:14-16** 14 ... Thanks be to God, who in Messiah always leads us [apostles] in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere [God's general call]. 15 For we are the aroma of Messiah to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, 16 to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things?
 - (e) **2 Co 5:19-20** 19 ... In Messiah God was reconciling the world (κόσμος) to himself, not counting their trespasses against them [unlimited atonement], and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation [God's general call]. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Messiah, God making his [general] appeal through us: We implore you on behalf of Messiah, be reconciled to God.
- e. Conviction of the Spirit.
- (1) **Jn 16:8-11** 8 ... When [the Spirit] comes, he will convict the world (κόσμος) concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment: 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; 10 concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; 11 concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.
 - (2) The unforgivable sin is rejection of the Spirit's conviction into unbelief.
 - (a) **Mt 12:31-32** 31 ... I [Jesus] tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. 32 And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven. But whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

7. God isn't the only one whose calling.

- a. **Pr 9:13-18** 13 The woman Folly is loud. She is seductive and knows nothing. 14 She sits at the door of her house, She takes a seat on the highest places of the town, 15 calling to those who pass by, who are going straight on their way, 16 Whoever is simple, let him turn in here! And to him who lacks sense she says, 17 Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. 18 But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.

8. We must respond positively or negatively to God's call.

- a. **Jer 35:15** 15 I have sent to you all my servants the prophets, sending them persistently, saying, Turn now every one of you from his evil way, amend your deeds, and do not go after other gods to serve them, and then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to you and your fathers. But you did not incline your ear or listen to me.
- b. **Mt 22:2-7** 2 The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son 3 and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. 4 Again he sent other servants saying, Tell those who are invited, See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast. 5 But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, 6 while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. 7 The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

- c. **Lk 14:16-24** 16 ...A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. 17 And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, Come, for everything is now ready. 18 But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused. 19 And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused. 20 And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. 21 So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor, crippled, blind, and lame. 22 And the servant said, Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room. 23 And the master said to the servant, Go out to the highways, hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. 24 For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.
- d. Illustration: It's like your home telephone ringing. Will you answer it or not? It will only ring so many times.
- e. Responding to or rejecting God's general call is a lifetime of choices we make.
(1) **Re 22:17** 17 The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let the one who hears say, Come. And let the one who is thirsty come. Let the one who desires (θέλω) take the water of life without price.
- f. At each encounter with God's general call, a person's heart softens toward or hardens against God.
(1) **2 Co 2:14-16** 14 ...Thanks be to God, who in Messiah always leads us [apostles] in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere [God's general call]. 15 For we are the aroma of Messiah to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, 16 to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things?
- 9. If one responds negatively to God's general call, he/she will not receive a special call.**
- a. **Pr 1:24-27** 24 Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded, 25 because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, 26 I also will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when terror strikes you, 27 when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you.
- b. **Lk 14:16-24** 16 ...A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. 17 And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, Come, for everything is now ready. 18 But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused. 19 And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused. 20 And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. 21 So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor, crippled, blind, and lame. 22 And the servant said, Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room. 23 And the master said to the servant, Go out to the highways, hedges,

and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. 24 For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.

10. If one responds positively to God's general call, he/she will receive a special call.

- a. **Ac 2:38-39** 38 ...Peter said to [the men of Israel, as a general call], Change your mindset (μετανοέω, aor.) and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Messiah for the forgiveness of your sins [based on unlimited atonement], and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God [specially] calls to himself.
- b. This occurs through foreknowledge, predetermination, and election.

11. Next week, I'll teach on negative volition.