

GOT QUESTIONS



**A 30-Day Challenge
To Faith & Hope**



Many people today view having faith as *blind faith*. View the Bible as outdated. And do not have Biblical responses to the current narratives of the day. This workbook helps to address this.

FORERWORD

Hi there, my name is Trevor Hartley.

Together with my wife Abigail (and our children, Tyra and Cale, who are on the journey with us), we have the privilege of serving on a team that leads a church campus in Johannesburg, South Africa.

As a church, our desire is to positively impact the community we are part of through various campus expressions, including a Pre-School, Preparatory School, and High School. Aided by other facilities like our skatepark, 5-a-side soccer courts, café and co-workspace, and various sports clubs and interest groups, we serve our community as a *lung in the city* that breathes in the toxic and breathes out the life of God.

Each of these campus expressions creates opportunities to build relationships with the community, and specifically young people. One of the main purposes of the campus is to raise up and release Godly leaders, and we realise the need to equip the next generation with a reason for the faith and hope they carry. *The 30-Day Challenge to Faith & Hope* book that you are about to work through is a collaborative effort of the NCCB creative team to do just that. A fantastic team of designers, illustrators, photographers, and videographers has helped me bring to life the content on the pages that follow.

We trust this resource would be a gift to you that encourages you (and your family, friends, school, or broader community) as you discover the joy of journeying in your faith with Jesus.

Name

Start Date

Date Completed

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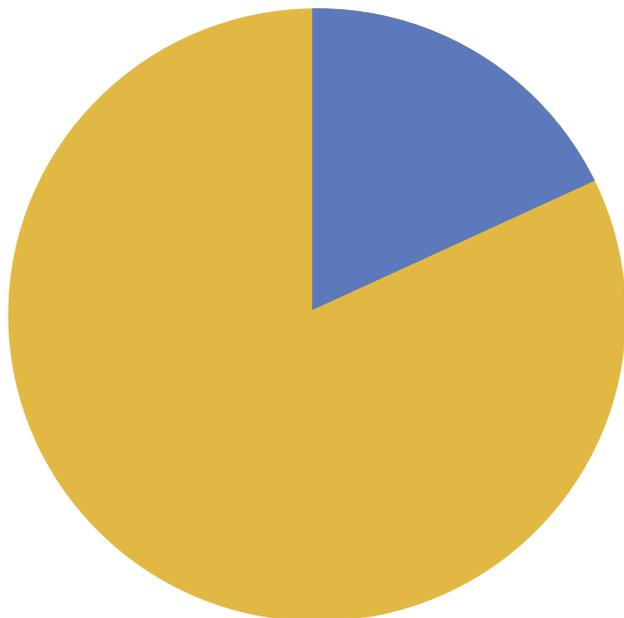
A Quick Introduction

As a parent of two young children, I have been struck by the weightiness that comes with the great privilege entrusted to parents in raising children. Providing the environment to see them flourish and expending the effort to build the right foundations in their lives is all part of the responsibility. And while this responsibility rests primarily with parents, it also extends to those who have responded to the call to play a role in this formative process, whether family members, friends, educators, or the like.

Research shows that somewhere between

60-80%

of high school students fall away from Christianity in the first four years of leaving school.



In a recent conversation with the head of a prominent international theological seminary, he mentioned that one of the highest drop-off rates of Christians from their faith happens when school-leavers head off for university.

As it turns out, much research has been done around this topic, and the statistics are alarming. The different studies paint a similar picture that between 60 to 80% of first-year students who claim to be Christian will walk away from Christianity by the time they reach their fourth year. When surveyed,

“most young ex-Christians report the primary reason they rejected Christianity was simply because they no longer believed it to be true. They had intellectual doubt that could not be resolved by the Christians in their lives. They found better answers elsewhere.”²

A Great Partnership

My desire in writing this workbook is to provide the foundation for a great partnership to develop between adults and young people.

This partnership will see young people embarking on a journey to faith and hope, and adults acting as their allies.

For The Adults

This workbook is a resource for you to be allies to young people in the journey of their faith.

If we are serious about raising up and releasing the next generation of Godly leaders, we have a significant role to play. In her book, *Keeping Your Kids on God's Side: 40 Conversations to Help Them Build a Lasting Faith*, Natasha Crain bluntly asks, "Most of us, if pressed to defend what we believe as Christians, find ourselves woefully ill-equipped. *How are we ever going to prepare our kids if we aren't first prepared?*"³ Adults, we cannot rely only on our personal experience of knowing God and hope that the



young people in our lives will just catch it. We also need to intentionally be clearing the obstacles to their spiritual journey by providing them with a sound reason for their faith.

For The Young People

Your futures are bright! I believe that every young person reading this workbook has the potential to be the positive change agents that our world so desperately needs.

Through this workbook, I hope to properly equip you to stand firm in your faith over time, against the raging currents of opposition, and to present living proof of a loving God to a watching world – is there a great adventure to live out on this planet, I think so!

Whether an adult or a young person, our goal when it comes to faith and hope should be the same. The Apostle Peter describes it well when he says (1 Peter 3:15),⁴

The Apostle Peter

“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.”

Six Questions

This workbook seeks to provide a basic introduction to the subject of apologetics without getting into too much detail.

But it is strictly not only an apologetics book and includes topics that I believe can help you develop a personal relationship with God. The book is structured as a *30-Day Challenge to Faith & Hope* and covers six broad questions:

- Chapter 1: What Is Your Worldview?
- Chapter 2: Is God Real?
- Chapter 3: What Is The Real Story Of The Bible?
- Chapter 4: Is The Bible True And Trustworthy?
- Chapter 5: What's Stopping You From Knowing God?
- Chapter 6: How Do We Respond To Big Questions?

Each chapter includes five topics. The chapters can be read separately but are best read in order as they build on one another. You will receive practical handles to challenge your own understanding and engage in meaningful dialogue with others through the concepts, illustrations, and practical application activities.

The simple goal of this workbook is to provide an engaging resource that encourages young people in a journey of faith in Jesus, by equipping them with a reason for the hope that they carry.

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RESPECT

FAITH

The workbook has been designed to be engaging, so look out for the following areas:

Big Idea

Each day has ONE *Big Idea* that we will be discussing. When working through the book or engaging in conversation with someone else about *Faith & Hope*, these are the golden nuggets you should try to remember.

Practical Application

Each day will include a section where you will be asked to engage around the topic being covered. I want to encourage you to take the necessary time when completing these sections.

A Story To Begin Our Journey

Have you ever been on an *incredible adventure*? I'm not talking about just any old adventure. I'm talking about the type of adventure where you set out feeling like a true explorer, into the vast unknown, not sure exactly what to expect but at the same time full of anticipation and a sense of wonder!

I have spent most of my life living on the southern tip of Africa, and South Africa is a place filled with the possibility of adventure. I have been on several incredible adventures in my life, but perhaps the most *unexpected* of these came while on an audit as an accounting clerk.

I know what most of you are thinking – *incredible adventure* and *accounting* don't belong in the same sentence! Before I explain, let's get familiar with a few terms.



Explorer Of The Unexpected

Audit

An official examination of a business and its financial records to see that they are true and correct (doesn't sound too exciting).

Big Five

The term originally given to the five most dangerous animals that early hunters used to encounter on the African continent: the lion, leopard, rhino, African buffalo, and elephant (getting more exciting).

Game Drive

The adventure of viewing wild animals in their natural habitat, best experienced in an open-air vehicle with very little separating you from the animals (now we're talking!)

As it turned out, one of the clients of the accounting and auditing firm where I was doing my three-year apprenticeship was a Big Five safari park. To be honest, I wasn't expecting much when one of my colleagues, Mark, and I took the long trip out to the park for the week-long audit. But the tiresome humdrum of numbers and spreadsheets began transforming into an adventure midway into stay. An international tour group arrived at the park, and Mark and I were promptly carted off to the tented bush camp – they needed every bed in the lodge for their new guests. It was the middle of winter, and temperatures in the South African bushveld plummet as soon as the sun goes down.

This was now an authentic African experience – no gates, no fences, nothing protecting us from the many wild animals in the park. Only a thin canvas tent separated us from any grazing buffalo, curious elephant, or would-be ravenous lion!

Up until this point, while I had seen Big Five animals before, I had never been on a safari in a game drive vehicle. After working a long, hard week – waking early and going to bed late – we were rewarded with the offer of an early-morning game drive. I can't remember the name of our willing game ranger (let's call him Thabo), but he was brilliant! Thabo was an expert tracker, and his knowledge and passion for every aspect of nature that surrounded us were contagious.

Mark and I had one item on our game drive *wish-list*, we wanted to encounter the largest land animal on the planet, the majestic African Elephant!

There was just one problem, the elephants weren't in the mood to be easily found. For the next few hours, we tracked a herd of elephants, this way and that, up mountains and through riverbeds. Thabo expertly found the clues that only the most experienced tracker would. Half a footprint here, a small broken branch there – I have been on many game drives since, but never have I experienced anything quite like I did with Thabo.

Eventually, with only a few minutes left to spare before Mark and I had to be heading back to the lodge, we rounded a corner, and there before us was a herd of about 30 elephants. For the next ten minutes, we sat, enjoying the experience, basking in the delight of not only having searched but also found the focus of our desire.

As we begin this 30-Day Challenge to Faith & Hope, I want to borrow a few analogies from this story.

01

Firstly →

Our journey was made a lot easier because we had a skilled guide with the right tools (like binoculars). Had it not been for Thabo, we would have been stuck out in the bush searching a lot longer than we were.

Each of us have an incredible guide on this journey, the person of the Holy Spirit is accessible to us (we will learn more about Him in Chapter 5). He can direct us when we are lost, help us when we are struggling, and comfort us when we feel heavy – all we have to do is ask for His help! Then, we can also play a significant role in the journey of others towards faith, and we don't need to be an expert in apologetics to do that.

03

Thirdly →

And finally, you would imagine that a herd of elephants should be fairly easy to find, given their size. But that is not always the case. Elephants can actually be incredibly stealth-like for such big animals, and if the bush is thick, they can be hidden from your view.

Although God is a big God, the culture we find ourselves emerged in can hinder us from finding Him. However, God's promise is that "everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened" (Matthew 7:7).

02

Secondly →

Mark and I could have given up our search on many different occasions. The adventure required perseverance! Interestingly, the delight that we experienced when we eventually found the elephants was much greater than what it would have been had we encountered them around the first corner of our journey.

Sometimes, the road we are walking can become frustrating or discouraging. It may be either challenges we are facing or because of the people we are walking a journey with. Take heart; you never know what awaits you around the next corner of your journey. And remember, your kindness and perseverance can meaningfully impact the lives of those you are on a journey with too. Often, the greater the search, the greater the reward!

JOURNEY

Linking The Audit Process To This 30-Day Challenge

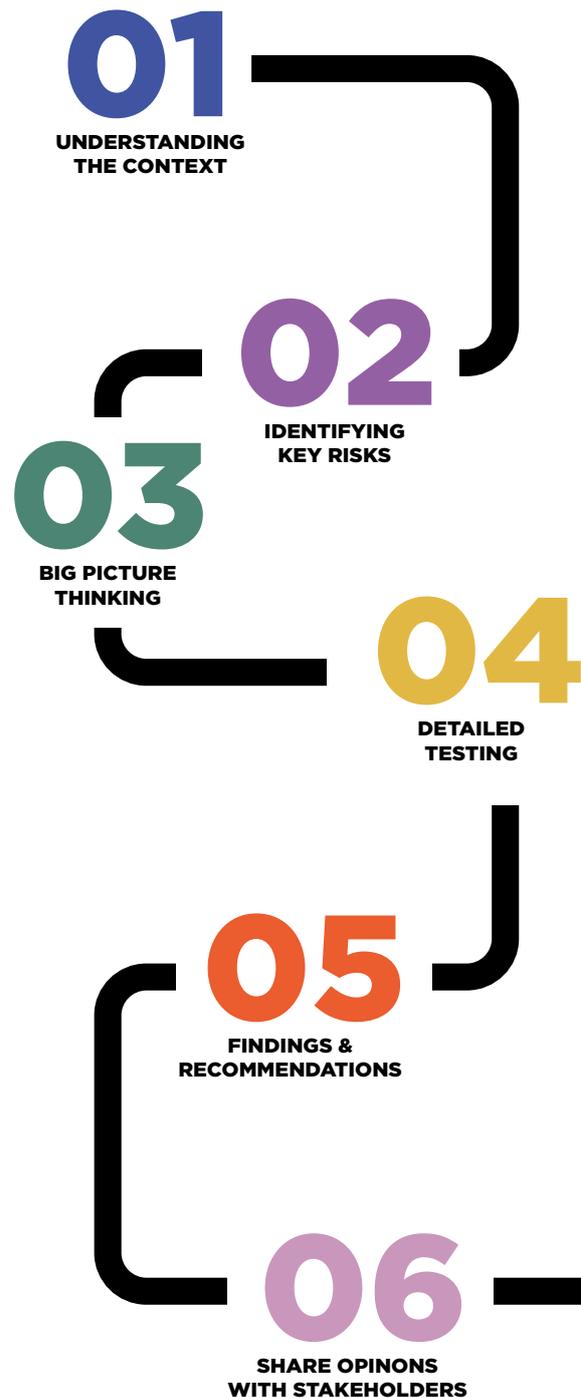
I often joked with people that I was a *recovering auditor*. The truth is that I never enjoyed auditing that much – it’s very detail orientated, and I found it quite boring!

On one occasion, after having proudly declared myself a *recovering auditor*, a highly respected elderly gentleman came up to me to have a word. He graciously reminded me that the auditing profession, when functioning as it should, played a significant role in society. It acted as a deterrent for would-be fraudsters, helped employees find security in their jobs, protected investors’ funds, and underpinned the business confidence of any company. This man had been the managing partner of a well-known international audit firm’s offices in South Africa. He had worked on a governance committee for the President’s Office and had been appointed by the United Nations to sit with the opposition party leaders in South Africa’s first democratic election in 1994 – he was the person who had to declare it as a *free and fair* election!

Over the years, I came to realise that my time spent auditing had prepared me for much of what I experienced later in life - ever looked back at a tough time in your life with fresh eyes a little while later?

It taught me how to first understand a specific context before jumping into the detail, how to identify key risks and consider the means of addressing them, how to test assumptions and make recommendations, and many

more valuable skills. The audit process is actually a very helpful tool when explaining the *30-Day Challenge to Faith & Hope* that we will enjoy together. Here’s an overview of how the guide has been put together, linked to a simplified 6-step *audit process*.





Step 1
Understanding
The Context



Chapter 1
What Is Your
Worldview?

Any audit has to begin with gaining a good understanding of the context. Different environments would require different approaches. In the same way, Chapter 1 considers the cultural context we find ourselves in. Understanding that each of us has a bias (or a worldview) through which we interpret the world around us is essential.



Step 2
Identifying
Key Risks



Chapter 2
Is God Real?

Next we need to identify the major risks. These represent those major concerns, which if left unaddressed, could compromise the entire audit. A bit more work often has to be done in these areas before we can move on. In Chapter 2, we consider some of the big questions that a Christian worldview needs to address looking at the facts, not just an individual's opinion.



Step 3
Big Picture
Thinking



Chapter 3
What Is The
Real Story Of
The Bible?

Having understood the context and identified the big risks, we are now ready to begin looking at businesses' systems and financial records. But, before jumping into the detail, we need to get a birds-eye view of how things work. Chapter 3 considers the overarching story of the Bible. Like in any business, interpreting what the Bible is saying can be complex and you need to see the overarching storyline before jumping into the detail.



Step 4
Detailed
Testing



Chapter 4
Is The Bible
True And
Trustworthy?

All of the steps completed until now have been preparing us for how much of the detailed financial information we need to test. An important concept at this point is *materiality*. Even in the best business systems we expect to find some errors, because humans are involved and we make mistakes! The key consideration is *are those mistakes material or not?* - meaning is the nature or quantity of the mistakes so significant that they affect the overall reliability of the all of the financial records. Chapter 4 deals with a similar principle of *materiality* when we consider whether the Bible is actually true and trustworthy.



Step 5
Findings &
Recommendations



Chapter 5
What's Stopping
You From
Knowing God?

Having done most of the audit work, we now consider what we have found and make recommendations to the people in the business. Are there things they should do, improvements that can be made, things that could help the business in future. We do the same in Chapter 5. God is the central theme and focus of our journey to faith and hope. Now, having considered everything in the preceding chapters, we made some recommendations.



Step 6
Share Opinions
With Stakeholders

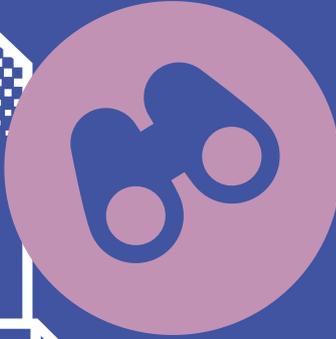


Chapter 6
How Do We
Respond to Big
Questions?

The final step in the audit process is to communicate an *audit opinion* to the various stakeholders of the business. Hopefully, we are able to share that all of our investigations have led us to believe that financial records of the business are true and correct. In Chapter 6 we consider how to communicate the truth of the faith and hope that we have in Jesus - especially in dealing with some of the real questions that we are faced with today.

CHAPTER

01



**WHAT IS YOUR
WORLDVIEW?**



WHERE ARE WE IN THE PROCESS?

We will start the journey by taking some time to understand the cultural context that we find ourselves in. The culture we live in influences the way we see the world. My daughter has a set of pink, heart-shaped sunglasses, and when she wears them, the whole world looks pink to her! That's a good illustration of how the culture we live in *colours* the way we see the world.

William D. Watkins

“WHAT IS IT THAT EVERYONE HAS, NO ONE CAN LIVE WITHOUT, EVERY IMPORTANT DECISION IN LIFE IS MADE WITH, AND YET MOST PEOPLE DO NOT EVEN KNOW THEY HAVE? DO YOU GIVE UP? IT IS A WORLD VIEW.”



IN CHAPTER ONE WE WILL:

- Consider the concept of a worldview and develop an awareness of the worldview we have.
- Assess the impact that cultural norms have had on us.
- Highlight the starting point to living a meaningful life.

In his book, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview As A Concept*, James Sire retells a story of a little boy coming to his father with a question.

"Today the teacher showed us a big round globe. She said it was a model of the world. She said the world was just surrounded by space. How can that be? Dad, what holds up the world? Why doesn't it just fall down?" His father, knowing that this was just a child's question, gave him a child's answer: "It's a camel that holds up the world, Son." The boy went away satisfied, for he trusted his father and for the moment it made sense. He'd seen pictures of camels holding up all sorts of things. So why not the world? But then he got to thinking about it and by the next day decided something was missing in his father's answer. He asked, "Dad, I was just wondering: if a camel holds up the world, what holds up the camel?" His father now thought that he might be in trouble. So, knowing that a quick answer would turn away further questions, he said, "It's a kangaroo that holds up the camel." Again the boy went away, but this time only for a couple of hours. Back again with his father, he asked, "Dad, if a camel holds up the world and a kangaroo holds up the camel, what holds up the kangaroo?" This time the father realized that he was in deep trouble. So he chose the largest animal he could think of and he put a capital on it. That is, he shouted. People believe you if you shout, he thought. "It's an Elephant that holds up the kangaroo!", "Come on, Dad!" his son retorted. "What holds up the Elephant?" His father, in a fit of genius deriving from necessity, replied, "It's . . . it's . . . it's Elephant all the way down." What the boy said next is not recorded.⁵

This is a comical story but drives home the point, *lazy responses* (or lazy thinking for that matter) can confuse people's understanding of truth. The grounding of our own faith and Christian worldview thinking will probably happen differently to those around us - the difference between what adults experienced previously and what young people will experience today, is likely *significant*. Never before has a generation been bombarded with so much information (and false information at that). We need to provide people today with handles and develop their ability to logically think things through. Too often, Christians think of having faith as *blind faith*. This is simply not the case. Jesus never expected even His disciples to have blind faith; He gave them a reason to place their trust in Him - we should be doing the same.



A camel

A Kangaroo

An Elephant

An Elephant

An Elephant

An Elephant

An Elephant

An Elephant

DAY ONE



Photo captured by [Mart Production](#) from [Pexels](#).

Josh McDowell & Sean McDowell

“Intellectual challenges, just a click away, confront young people today more than in any other previous generation.”

Big Idea

DON'T BE PERPLEXED. UNDERSTAND YOUR CONTEXT!

Backwards Bicycle

The *Backwards Brain Bicycle* experiment demonstrates both the opportunity and challenge that lie in the plasticity of young minds. In Destin Sandlin's remarkable video, Destin (an engineer) is handed a bicycle with an important hitch: when you turn the handlebars left, the front wheel turns right—and vice versa. Like every adult who has ridden a bike their entire life, he expects to quickly adapt to this small nuance. But as he attempts to ride the bike, he can't even ride 6 feet! What began as humorous quickly becomes frustrating. For eight months, Destin re-trains his neural pathways and bodily habits to ride the *backwards bike* - as it turns out, old habits



01





do die hard. But the story was very different for Destin's young son. He learned to ride the *backwards bike* in just two weeks. There is an important spiritual insight here: what if we not only focused on informing young minds but invited them on the incredible journey of seeing our world impacted by Christians who actively live out their worldview – can you imagine!

In *The Backwards Brain Bicycle* video, Destin Sandlin concludes the experiment by noting, “Truth is truth. No matter what you think about it. So, be very careful how you interpret things because you’re looking at the world with a bias, whether you think you are or not.”⁶

Least Resistance

Our brains are always looking to use the least amount of energy in processing information and making decisions.

Think back to the past couple of days. Did you take the shortest route to get from your home to school (or to the shops, or your friend's house)? I'm guessing you *think you did* ... but you actually didn't! That's because the shortest route is always *as the crow flies* – meaning a direct path from where you are to where you

want to be. The problem is that route isn't paved! When we drive to a destination, we take the path that is paved – and if you live in a busy city, the way that probably has the least amount of traffic.

In the same way, the patterns, habits, and influences in our lives create well-worn mental paths that will direct the traffic flow of our thoughts. This is called a worldview.

Whether we like it or not, our underlying beliefs directly or



indirectly affect every aspect of our lives: “they guide thought, stimulate imagination, influence intuition, direct moral choices, and determine the value and priority given everything we do or don’t do.”⁷

The problem with the sometimes unconscious nature of a worldview is that rather than thinking things through properly, we end up, *developing a bumper sticker-type* worldview – short statements that may be catchy in the moment but that don’t stack up in the long run! They may suggest the right answer is a *camel*, a *kangaroo*, or even an *elephant*, but their answers ultimately lead to a *restless heart* in our young people.

One of the great church fathers, Augustine, summed things up well when he described the relationship between humanity and God,



Augustine of Hippo (CE 354–430)

Laurent de La Hyre, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1953, Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain. This image was donated to Wikimedia Commons as part of a project by the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

“You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.”⁸

Russel Brand (author, comedian, and celebrity) gives us an insight into this restlessness when he confesses,

“Drugs and alcohol are not my problem. Reality is my problem. Drugs and alcohol are my solution, to fill up a hole inside of me.”⁹

What is the reality that young people are being trained to live in? “Is our life merely a random series of events in which we try to weave moments of happiness into a tapestry of atoms and molecules, briefly arranged together to give us our fleeting existence? Or is it something far more meaningful, perhaps even divinely premeditated?”¹⁰

Practical Application

Getting clear on your worldview.

So what is your *camel*, or *kangaroo*, or *elephant*? James Sire simplifies the concept of a worldview when he says, “a worldview is not just a set of basic concepts but a fundamental orientation of the heart.”¹¹



01





Sire provides 7 Basic Questions that help identify our worldview.¹² Understanding these seven questions will help us determine what currently makes up our reality and act as the starting point to the journey.

01 What is your prime reality—the really real?

- God.
- The gods.
- The material cosmo.
- I'm not really sure.

02 What is the nature of external reality, that is, the world around us?

- The world as created or autonomous.**
- The world as chaotic or orderly.
- The world as matter or spirit.
- I'm not really sure.

03 What is a human being?

- A person made in the image of God.**
- A highly complex machine.
- A sleeping god.
- A “naked ape.”
- I'm not really sure.

04 What happens to persons at death?

- Transformation to a higher state.**
- Personal extinction.
- Reincarnation.
- Departure to a shadowy existence on “the other side.”
- I'm not really sure.

05 Why is it possible to know anything at all?

- We are made in the image of an all-knowing God.**
- Consciousness and rationality developed under the contingencies of survival, in a long process of evolution.
- I'm not really sure.

06 How do we know what is right and wrong?

- We are made in the image of a God whose character is good.**
- Right and wrong are determined by human choice alone or what feels good.
- The notions simply developed under an impetus toward cultural or physical survival.
- I'm not really sure.

07 What is the meaning of human history?

- To prepare a people for a life in community with a loving and holy God.**
- To realise the purposes of God or the gods.
- To make a paradise on Earth.
- I'm not really sure.

How did that go? On a scale of 1 (not confident at all) to 10 (very confident), to what extent do you feel confident to give an evidence-based reason for your worldview?

NOTE: The Highlighted boxes indicate the Christian worldview.

DAY TWO



THE LOVES AND
LONGINGS OF
YOUR HEART

Big Idea

**WHAT THE HEART
DESIRES, THE WILL
CHOOSES, AND THE
MIND JUSTIFIES.
IT'S LIKE YOUR
MAGNETIC NORTH.**

**James K.
Smith**

**"Your love or desire—
aimed at a vision of the
good life that shapes
how you see the world
while also moving and
motivating you—is
operative on a largely
nonconscious level."**



02





What is the difference between True North and Magnetic North?

True north (or geographical north) is constant, never shifting. However, magnetic north is the direction towards the north magnetic pole. It is called a *wandering point* and is constantly changing.

Most compasses point towards Earth's north magnetic pole, usually in a different place to the north geographic pole (it can be as much as 19 degrees different in Johannesburg). The difference between magnetic north and true north is called *magnetic declination*. So why is this important? Glad you asked. There is a rule in navigation called the *1 in 60 rule*. This rule says that for every 1-degree error when navigating, there will be a 1-mile deviation from your desired destination for every 60 miles travelled.

Let's Make This Practical

The distance from Johannesburg to Cape Town is about 1,400 km (or 875 miles). If you didn't adjust your magnetic north to true north (the magnetic deviation is about 19 degrees in Johannesburg), you would end up in the ocean somewhere, 443km (277 miles) away from where you thought you were headed!

To help with an illustration, I want to use the idea of true north and magnetic north as a metaphor in our lives.

One of the running themes in the Bible's New Testament is that of the spirit (true north) and the flesh (magnetic north). The Apostle Paul explains that desires set on the *spirit* is life, but desires set on the *flesh* is death. In the depths of our hearts, humanity has been designed to desire life (our true north); however, our desires often become disordered because of the cultures that we live in – pulling our hearts off true north one degree at a time. So let's quickly explain the terms of *flesh* and *spirit*.

Spirit

A person's spirit is that part of us that has been created to be in contact with the Spirit of God. It represents the deepest desires that God placed within us when He created us, desires to be in an unbroken relationship with Him (we will cover this more in Chapter 2).

Flesh

Our flesh is not talking about our physical bodies (our bodies were created good). Instead, it represents the disordered desires we find ourselves battling because of the world we live in. These desires direct our longings away from God, aiming our love at the pleasures around us.

The Apostle Paul explains that desires set on the Spirit lead to life, but desires set on the flesh lead to death (Romans 8:6). In the depths of our hearts, humanity has been designed to desire life (our true north); however, our desires often become mixed up (disordered) because of the cultures that we live in – pulling our hearts off true north one degree at a time.

James K. Smith notes that “our loves are pulled magnetically to some north toward which our hearts have been calibrated.”¹³ Our hearts become orientated towards some picture of *the good life* that we are presented with by the culture we live in.



CALIBRATING OUR HEARTS

What are we allowing to calibrate our hearts?

Advertisers subtly (and not so subtly) influence a person's desires by presenting a vision of what happiness and fulfilment looks like. They are experts in understanding what fuels the human heart.

Unfortunately, most of the images they put before us promise a good and beautiful life, but in the end, they never deliver on that promise. Don't get me wrong, for a brief moment, those new pair of sneakers lift our mood and make us feel great. But, as quickly as that happiness came, it leaves again. These disordered desires become our default settings, causing us to become selective about what we see and how we measure value. Advertisers sell us replicas of *happiness*, knock-offs of the real thing. True happiness is only found in discovering (and living out) the reason of why we have been created (we will get to this in Day 5).

Make A Magnet

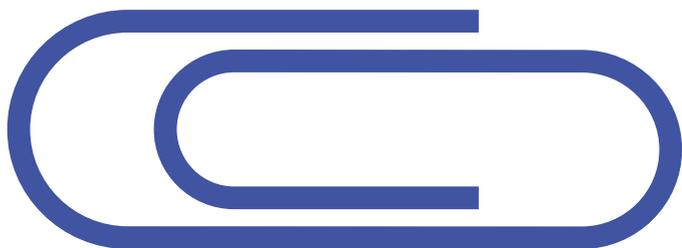
Have you ever tried to make your own magnet?

If you take a magnet and rub it over a paperclip as fast as you can about 50 times, something interesting happens, the paperclip turns into a magnet. Here's the catch though, it's vital that when you are rubbing the magnet, you don't rub it back and forth. You have to rub it consistently in only *one direction*.

What Lesson Can We Learn From This?

Constant *practice* of something *magnetizes* our hearts to the thing we are exposed to (whether we realise it or not).

Our daily routines are love-shaping practices that form and deform the desires of our hearts. What are your daily practices teaching you to find a sense of meaning and fulfilment in? What fills the hours of your days? Shopping in malls, spending time in front of a screen, gaming, social media, the hustle-and-bustle of a performance-driven life? In which direction are we intentionally (or unintentionally) aiming the affections of our hearts? Are we slowing down to take in the beauty of nature? Are we engaging in meaningful conversation with our family? Are we investing in times of devotion to a loving God?



PRACTICE



02





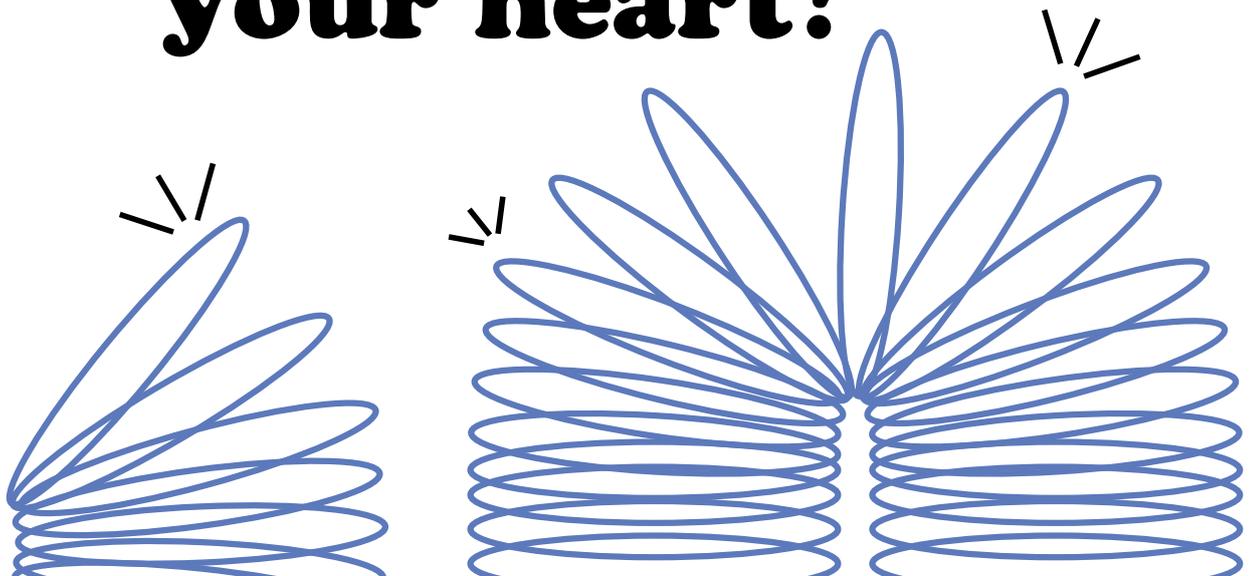
Shaping

LOVES

HEART



**What is shaping
the loves and
longings of
your heart?**





Practical Application

What is shaping the loves and longings of your heart?

Did you know that everything in our culture, even shopping malls, are formative spaces, covertly shaping the loves and longings of your heart? Think back over the past month and answer the following questions.

01

How many hours do you normally spend in front of a screen per week for the activities below?

School or work:

Social media:

Gaming:

Other:

Series or movies:

02

Other than screen time, what were the top three things you spent your time doing? (sports / shopping / family time)

03

In the last week, how much time did you spend aiming your heart towards God? (e.g. listening to worship music, reading the Bible, attending church small groups etc.)

04

Looking at your answers to the above three questions:

What key insight can you draw?

What ONE thing would you like to change?



02



DAY THREE

UNDERSTANDING OUR CULTURE



C.S. Lewis

“No one knows the strength of the wind until you have tried to walk against it.”

Big Idea

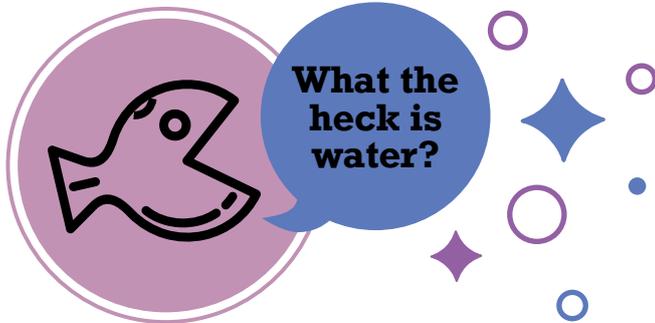
**WHAT YOU
CELEBRATE, YOU
GENERATE.**

A Fish In Water

David Foster Wallace once used the illustration: “There are these two young fish swimming along. They happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says, ‘Morning, boys. How’s the water?’ And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes, ‘What the [heck] is water?’”¹⁴



We've probably all heard (or used) the expression *going with the flow*. But Wallace's illustration adds another dimension to this idea. Are you even aware of the culture that you have learned to *live and breathe in*? If not, how can you become more aware of it? Our *disordered desires* are normalized and celebrated without us even knowing it!



Seven Deadly Sins

Ever heard of the Seven Deadly Sins? One way to look at our culture's disordered desires is to think about two different trees that can represent our lives.



One is a tree rooted in *Love* – God's love. The other is a tree rooted in *Pride*. You see, pride is the complete anti-God state of mind. It is like a spiritual cancer that destroys a person's capacity to truly experience love.

In Rebecca DeYoung's recent book, *Glittering Vices: A New Look at the Seven Deadly Sins and Their Remedies*, she describes the idea of fruit produced by the tree of Love (called virtues) and fruit produced by the tree of Pride (called vices). She explains the concepts as follows: "The vices mark things we need to leave behind. That is our starting point. The virtues, by contrast, mark the end or goal; they give us a picture of the Christlike life in all of its fullness."¹⁵

Rebecca reveals how contemporary culture trivializes these vices (deadly sins), often making heroes of those driven by them. Think of *Pirates of the Caribbean*, which makes greed seem fun, or any good *revenge* movie, which makes wrath seem justified. Using what Kanya West calls a "beautiful dark twisted fantasy,"¹⁶ she explains,

"The sexuality portrayed in music videos, romance novels, advertisements, video games, and films cultivates our imaginations, shapes our attitudes, and influences our inclinations. These carefully curated pictures aren't real, but they are alluring enough to make us want to forsake reality to chase what they promise."¹⁷

All the time, these heroes and fantasies are desensitizing us to the warped culture around us, the *polluted* water that we live and breathe in.



03





***Glittering Vices* is eye-opening! It allows us the opportunity to sit back and evaluate the culture that surrounds us.**

We can discern that *celebrated vices* have a misleading and flawed reflection of beauty. They offer subtle and deceptive imitations of what true fulfilment looks like – “*lust* offers pleasure; *avarice* promises self-sufficiency; *envy* and *vainglory* offer to secure our worth and approval; *sloth* beckons with comfort; *wrath* clings to control; *pride* prizes status, superiority, and power.”¹⁸

We will spend more time tomorrow assessing the impact of these vices and their remedies. However, the starting point in dealing with them is to acknowledge their presence. C.S. Lewis (the great author of *The Chronicles of Narnia*) notes,

“Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is ... You find out the strength of a wind by trying to walk against it, not by lying down.”¹⁹

I want to encourage every young person reading this book to walk against the wind, swim against the flow, and fight against the polluted culture that

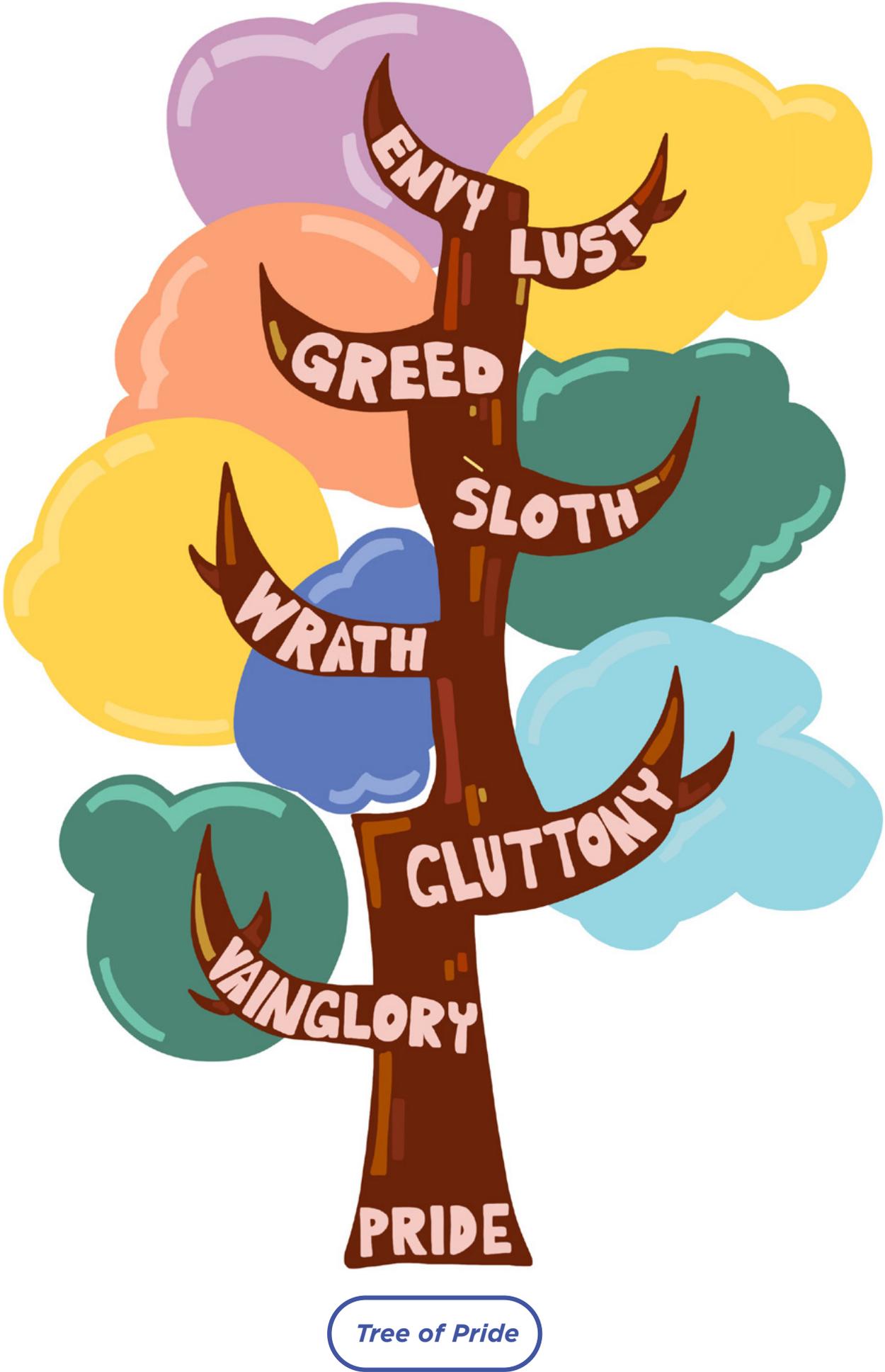
surrounds us. And adults, are we setting a good enough example for our young people in the way we are doing this?

Practical Application

Identifying what culture celebrates

Using the image of the *Tree of Pride* and its branches, populate the tree with specific aspects of our culture that you believe best *hangs* on each branch. Use the names of movies, series, songs, video games, famous people, etc.

NOTE: The aim of this exercise is not to judge the content or people identified but rather to become aware of what each is *celebrating*. Remember, what we *celebrate, we generate!*



03



DAY FOUR



Rebecca DeYoung

“[Vices] eat away at our ability to see things clearly, to appreciate things as we ought, to love and live in healthy relationships with others, and to refrain from self-destructive patterns of behavior.”

Big Idea

**GOOD AND EVIL
BOTH INCREASE
WITH COMPOUND
INTEREST.**



Fun Police?

I once heard it explained, the only thing that can be sustained at the centre of our lives without eventually destroying us ... is God.

As we explore the seven vices in more detail today, you will notice that each vice has placed *self* at the centre instead of the love of God and others. This was the devil's first sin, wanting to be at the centre - wanting to be God, and this is the sin that he has been teaching humanity ever since.

Too easily, our vision of God is distorted by what society is promoting. Society wants to encourage the idea that godliness is no fun at all! Like the story of a schoolboy who was asked what he thought God was like. He responded,

“I'm not really sure, but as far as I can make out, he's like the Fun Police - always snooping around to see if anyone is enjoying themselves and then trying to stop it!”²⁰



Compound Growth

Do you know what *compound growth* is? The great Albert Einstein once said, “Compound interest is the eighth wonder of the world. He who understands it, earns it ... he who doesn't ... pays it.”²¹

Today's big idea is that *good and evil both increase with compound interest*. A great way to demonstrate the power that compound interest can have over time is to use an apple tree illustration. Imagine we had an apple tree that doubled the fruit on its branches each day. Meaning, if it had one apple on the first day, it would have two apples on the second day, four apples on the third day, eight apples on the fourth day, and so on.

You will see that what begins as only small growth, gets way bigger as time goes by - but how *BIG* is big?

Using this example, how many apples do you think the tree will have on it by Day 10? By Day 20? By Day 30? Write your answers down before you turn to the next page.

How many apples do you think you'd have?

AFTER 10 DAYS
AFTER 20 DAYS
AFTER 30 DAYS





Answers to apple question:

AFTER 10 DAYS YOU WOULD HAVE:

512 apples

AFTER 20 DAYS YOU WOULD HAVE:

524 288 apples

AFTER 30 DAYS YOU WOULD HAVE:

537 870 912 apples

This is what Einstein was talking about! When it comes to finances, unfortunately, not many people use compound interest to their benefit – through good investments. Most people suffer the negative consequences of compound interest because of their debt – from buying things they actually can't afford.

It's the same with good and evil in our hearts. Virtues and vices begin by only having a small impact in our lives, but the more we *invest* in them through our thoughts, desires, and behaviours, the more fruit our lives start to produce!

Bad Fruit

Yesterday, we introduced the idea that each of us has a choice. We need to choose between living a life rooted in *Love* or a life rooted in *Pride*.

We used the example of our lives being like a *Tree of Virtue* or a *Tree of Vices*. Rebecca

DeYoung uses the term *capital vices* when referring to the seven deadly sins. Her term is derived from the original Latin word, meaning *head or source*.²² You see, the seven vices are the source of life for many other poisonous fruits in our lives. If pride is the root and trunk of the tree, each of the seven main branches is one of the seven vices. But each of them grows many other branches, which in turn begin producing toxic fruit in our lives (the compound effect).

The great news is we don't have to try to deal with this *Tree of Vices* on our own. It's like going to a doctor. You go to the doctor because you're looking for help, not because you're hoping to receive a bad diagnosis. You seek out the help of a doctor because they are an expert who knows how to treat you, heal you, and restore you to wholeness.

God is our great physician and can draw us from a place of brokenness and bondage into the wholeness and freedom found in His love. He can help uproot the *Tree of Pride* in our lives and plant His *Tree of Love*.

Practical Application

Doing a self-assessment on the capital vices.

In today's practical application, we will evaluate the extent to which we believe each of the seven capital vices are being demonstrated in our lives. Remember, vices are corruptive and destructive habits that undermine our good character and damage our ability to enjoy loving, trusting, and secure relationships with God and others.

This exercise helps us assess to what extent our lives reflect either healthy fruit growing from a *Tree of Love* or poisonous fruit growing from a *Tree of Pride*. The statements on the left indicate the behaviours and thinking associated with the vices and those on the right indicate Godly behaviour and thinking.



Remember, the point of this self-assessment and reflection is not intended as a guilt trip. Instead, it is an invitation to be set free through acknowledgment and repentance.

Please complete the following three steps:

- STEP 1: Mark where you think you are at for each of the seven continuums below.
- STEP 2: Consider some of the ideas to overcome each of the seven vices.
- STEP 3: Reflect on your assessment and answer a few questions.

04



STEP 1: Mark where you think you are at for each of the seven continuums below.²³

1. Vainglory / Vanity (prizes status) ~ begins as an emptiness that we want to fill with the approval and recognition of others.

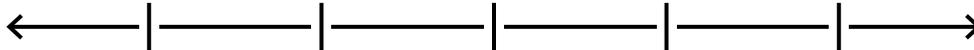


Image means a lot to you. You deeply desire recognition and approval from others.

You're still concerned with what people think of you and are influenced by those around you.

You realise that your identity is found in being a child of God and are not worried about what people around you think.

2. Envy (promotes worth & approval) ~ causes us to always be ranking ourselves against others.



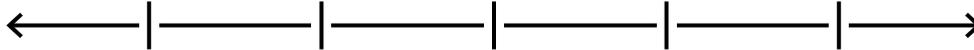
You find yourself feeling bitter when others have it better. You're constantly measuring your self-worth by comparing yourself to others.

You are happy when things are going well with other people but still find that you're focusing more on what you don't have than what you do have.

You love celebrating when good things happen to other people and don't compare yourself to others. Instead, you are grateful for all God has given you.

3. Sloth / Acedia (beckons with comfort) ~ slothful people resist a transformational relationship with God through either their laziness or busyness.

A note on the original Latin word "acedia": Acedia (sloth) is not only laziness. Contrary to modern-day belief, busyness and workaholicism is not virtuous but rather sloth's classic symptoms. Historically, sloth was not the lack of effort in general but a lack of effort in our spiritual lives.

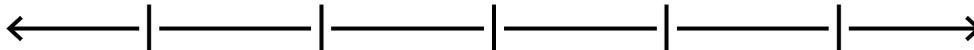


You find that there is a lack of effort in your life to love God and love others. Whether through laziness or busyness, you are resistant to growing spiritually.

You want to invest more time growing in a relationship with God and loving others but find yourself easily distracted or feeling like it's too much effort.

You are committed to developing a daily relationship with God and are being transformed by His love. Because of this, you love caring for others.

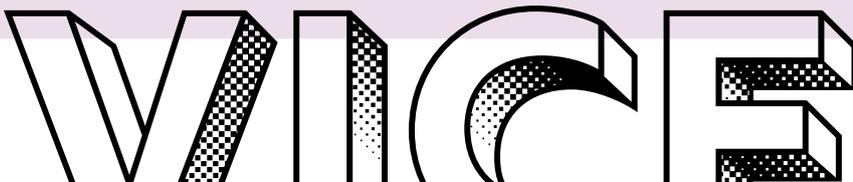
4. Avarice / Greed (seeks self-sufficiency) ~ Avarice (again a Latin word) is greed that comes from the love of things rather than God and others.



You have a deep attachment to money and possessions. You love buying things and feel anxious about not 'having enough' one day

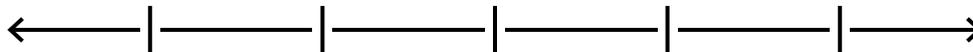
You are content with what you have and don't feel any great desire or anxiety about having money or possessions in your life.

You believe that the real reason for owning possessions is to use them for the sake of serving others. You are generous and love giving to others.





5. Wrath (clings to control) ~ is the love of justice perverted into the desire for revenge.

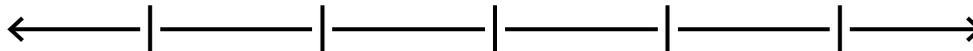


You regularly feel angry when things (or people) interfere with what you expect or feel you deserve. You often vent and find it hard to let go of things.

You feel that injustice needs to be punished and still feel offended when injustices are done to you but are starting to find it easier to let go of hurts caused to you.

You realise God's forgiveness in your life allows you no room to hold grudges. You see justice as a means for restoration more than punishment.

6. Gluttony (encourages excess) ~ is a habit of the heart, not just a habit of the stomach. It is a routine quest for self-gratification by *glutting* on pleasure.

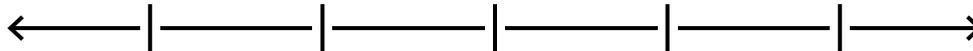


You take great pleasure in eating and often turn to eating for comfort. You can either find it hard to say *no* to good food or can be incredibly fussy about what you eat.

You enjoy good food and don't look for comfort in what you are eating or drinking. You also know when you have had enough and don't eat excessively.

You realise that true comfort is not found in creation (the pleasures of life) but in our Creator. You enjoy creation but look to God for comfort.

7. Lust (pursues pleasure) ~ is treated in its narrower meaning as a desire for disordered sexual pleasure. Lust reduces sexual pleasure to one's own individual gratification.



You often battle against sexual desires (or thoughts) that you find hard to control. You tend to see sexual pleasure more through the lens of personal gratification rather than Godly intimacy between husband and wife.

You have learned to fight selfish sexual desires and not to act on them (or linger on thinking about them). But you still struggle to see sex as a gift from God and to know its place as part of a bigger picture of intimacy.

You have a healthy view of sex, and your identity is found in being created in the image of God as a spiritual being more than only a sexual being. This allows you to see sex as a gift from God to be enjoyed in the covenant of marriage.

STEP 2: Consider some of the ideas to overcome each of the seven vices.

**Vainglory
or
Vanity**

- Try silencing your self-talk for a day or a week.
- Avoid sharing your opinions or feelings, and don't respond to criticism. Instead, focus on listening attentively and lovingly to others instead.
- Don't go on social media.

Envy

- Overcome envy by actively participating in things that don't have winners and losers.
- Participate in acts of love for others, countering the malicious inclinations of the envious.
- Realise good things can be shared without others losing.



Sloth or Acedia

- Like in marriage, stay committed to your relationship with God and work on it daily. Approach God with gratitude for His role in your life by regularly thanking Him.
- Remain true to your spiritual calling and identity (and whatever it requires of you).
- Own up to the inner sources of your resistance to the demands of loving God (often in the form of temptations/ distractions/ busyness).

Avarice or Greed

- Spend a month tracking all your expenses so that you understand the extent of the problem.
- Take a rest from consumerism by spending a month without the mall, catalogs, online shopping, etc.
- Participate in tithing (giving 10% of your earnings) and other giving. Tithing is a Biblical principle that enhances our relationship with God by reminding us of who is responsible for our wealth.

Wrath

- Make a journal of times you get angry. Keep the journal for a week, then put it away for a week. Re-read it and see if you blew things out of proportion.
- Look for the hurt and vulnerability behind your own and other people's anger (remember, hurt people hurt people).
- Practice hope (through prayer or worship) to help refrain from anger.

Gluttony

- Consider if you are eating in a way that is appropriate to your overall physical health.
- Become aware of how much time you are spending on eating (or desiring eating) and redirect some of that time to spending developing a relationship with God.
- Use fasting to find contentment in God. Fasting (different from dieting) is a means of emptying yourself of your *fleshy* desire and filling yourself with *spiritual* desires.

Lust

- A key remedy for lust is community, openness, and accountability. Develop intimate wholesome friendships to show yourself what true intimacy is like.
- Connect with Godly married couples to see sexuality correctly modeled in life.
- Answer the questions: How should our sexual desires serve our full humanness? And, how do unruly sexual desires deform our character, our perception, and our emotions?

Diagram illustrating keyboard shortcuts for the Seven Sins:

- INSERT: LUST
- CAPS LOCK: GLUTTONY
- NUM LOCK: GREED
- ESCAPE: SLOTH
- CTRL + ALT + DELETE: WRATH
- CTRL + C: ENVY
- CTRL + S: VAINGLORY

Culture has trivialized committing the Seven Sins.

One site celebrates the keyboard shortcuts that can help you commit all seven in a single day's work.²⁴ But I would like to use their illustration for good! We all use keyboards daily - why not use these keys as a reminder to become aware of not slipping into the trap of these vices in our daily lives.

- INSERT for lust
- CAPS LOCK for gluttony
- NUM LOCK for greed
- ESCAPE for sloth
- CTRL-ALT-DEL for wrath
- CTRL-C for envy
- CTRL-S for vainglory (vanity)



04





STEP 3: Reflect on your assessment and answer a few questions.

Q1: Which vice(s) do you think your peer group is most affected by?

Q2: Which vice(s) do you have a new understanding of based on the exercise?

Q3: Which vice do you feel most comfortable talking about?

Q4: Which vice do you feel least comfortable talking about?

Q5: Which vice do you find yourself struggling with the most?

Q6: Using the suggested remedies for each vice, what ONE thing do you want to do to overcome the vice in Question 5?

Q7: Who could you talk to about the struggles you are having with any of these vices? (If no one immediately comes to mind, is there a teacher, coach, youth leader, etc. that you could reach out to?)

DAY FIVE



Photo captured by [Cottonbro](#) from [Pexels](#).

Rick Warren

“The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness. It’s far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest dreams and ambitions. If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God.”

Big Idea

**YOU ARE
KNOWN BY GOD
AND CREATED
FOR PURPOSE.**



05





Fulfilled Life?

Rick Warren's book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, is in the Top 10 list of best-selling nonfiction books of all time.²⁵ Why?

Because people are searching for meaning in life. The Bible tells us that the ultimate human wholeness is found in people growing into the likeness of Jesus (more about Him in Chapters 2 and 3). It gives us the picture of a vine – as we are rooted in his love, we naturally bear good fruit. Sound familiar ... roots, trees, and fruit?

Over the past two days, we looked at how our culture celebrates sin and trivializes vices. We then spent time yesterday reflecting on how our behaviour (and thinking) can evidence the presence of vices in our lives.

We realised that they are like the main branches on a tree that need to be cut off for us to find true happiness and fulfilment in life.

But the big question is whether or not we can actually overcome these vices – or disordered desires. Are they not just part of our make-up – after all, they seem to come so naturally and feel so hard to fight?

We have spent a lot of time focusing on the *Tree of Pride*, its branches, and its fruit. But remember, Rebecca DeYoung noted that leaving the vices behind was only the starting point. The real goal is focusing on a fulfilled life in God.

Let's spend some time focusing on the *Tree of Love* now! Like it is the most natural thing for an apple tree to produce apples or an orange tree to produce oranges, it is the most natural thing for those who are rooted in God's love to produce fruit reflecting His character. Fruit of love and joy and peace, of patience and kindness and goodness, of faithfulness and gentleness and self-control – all the things that healthy living needs (Galatians 5:22-23).

You see, it is the *DNA of the tree* that determines the fruit. The DNA of pride produces a poisonous fruit, but the DNA of *God's love* produces healthy fruit.





What Does DNA Say?

What can you learn from your DNA? DNA is the abbreviated name given to deoxyribonucleic (pronounced: DEoxee-Ribo-nuCLAY-ic) acid.

The year 1953 was a big year! Firstly, Sir Edmund Hillary and his guide, Tenzing Norgay, completed the first successful ascent of Mt. Everest, the highest mountain in the world.



DNA Strand - Snippet taken from a [Pexels](#) video created by [Pressmaster](#).

But, the second undertaking was even more significant than that. James Watson and Francis Crick discovered a genetic code deep inside the nucleus of our cells. We call this genetic material DNA (we will explore the significance of this a bit more tomorrow).





Scientists have figured out that God's DNA code for you is about 3 million characters long, and this DNA code is planted inside every single cell in your body. So, all the cells can function and grow according to the same master plan.

But that's not even the most amazing part. Your body is made up of around 37.2 trillion cells, and they each follow God's grand design to make you precisely into who He planned you to be - from before you were even born! Your DNA code is so intricately designed that if the DNA from just one cell were stretched out, it would be 6 feet long. If you stretched out the entire DNA in all 37.2 million of your cells, it would reach all the way to the moon and back. Not just once but 150,000 times!²⁶

Your DNA code is
3 Million
characters long

DNA from 1 cell
stretched out is
6 Feet
long

The entire DNA stretched out would
reach the moon and back
150 000 Times



Into The Light

So, what now? C.S. Lewis pointed out:

“As long as you are proud you cannot know God. A proud man is always looking down on things and people: and, of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you.”²⁷

The starting point to rooting yourself in God's love is humbling your heart to know that you need help. It's going to the doctor and asking to be treated. The greatest gift that you can ever receive is the gift of salvation in Jesus.

The greatest gift that you can ever give another person is pointing them to Jesus and helping remove the obstacles that stand in their way.

As we surrender our lives to Jesus, we begin a process of being formed in His image. It is “a journey into becoming persons of compassion, persons who forgive, persons who care deeply for others and the world, persons who offer themselves to God to become agents of divine grace in the lives of others and their world - in brief, persons who love and serve as Jesus did.”²⁸ Who wouldn't want that?



I'm inviting you to leave behind the vices. I'm inviting you to discover true purpose. I'm inviting you to find Jesus. But I'm *not* asking you to take a blind leap of faith into the *unknown*. Instead, as ex-atheist Josh McDowell describes it, the invitation is not leaping blindly into the dark but stepping into the light.²⁹

You're invited on the journey of discovery, but let's first look at some facts in the chapters that follow before asking you to make your final decision.

Practical Application

Reflecting on where we are at so far.

Before we finish this chapter and head to Chapter 2, take some time to answer the following Yes / No questions:

Q1: Do you believe that your life has a purpose? Y N

Q2: Do you feel that you are valuable and loved? Y N

Q3: Do you feel that there is anything stopping you from being open to finding out if Jesus is really the answer? Y N

If you answered Yes to Question 3, take some time to complete the next two quick activities.

Write down what you think is stopping you from being open to exploring Jesus as the answer.

Ask God to help you let go of what's holding you back from exploring Jesus as the answer - remember, you're able to continue on the journey even if you still have your doubts.



CHAPTER

02



IS GOD REAL?





IDENTIFYING RISKS

We are going to continue our journey by identifying the greatest *risks* that people outside of the Christian faith would feel undermine a Christian worldview. These questions, if left unanswered, can undermine Christianity in the minds of those who have not yet come to faith. However, if we can answer these questions with legitimate reason based on *reliable evidence*, we can remove major obstacles in their journey to faith and hope.

“SCIENCE CAN BE OF SIGNIFICANT SERVICE TO CHRISTIANITY, EXPLAINING THE MANY WONDERS OF GOD’S CREATION, DEMONSTRATING THE ORDERLINESS OF THE UNIVERSE, AND CONFIRMING THE TRUTH OF SCRIPTURE.”

Josh McDowell & Sean McDowell



IN CHAPTER TWO WE WILL:

- Discover that science and Christianity are not at war.

Instead, science can be of significant service to Christian beliefs.

- Provide sound reasoning why the Christian worldview is legitimate.

- Conclude that there can only be one true religion,

found in Jesus Christ.

In the last chapter, we considered the importance of understanding the worldview that we consciously or unconsciously hold and the impact that culture has on our worldview.

Now we will move on to the reasons, or defences, that we hold in believing the Christian worldview to be true.

This practice is also called apologetics. Kenneth D. Boa defines apologetics as “Marshalling philosophical arguments as well as scientific and historical evidences for the Christian faith.”³⁰

Natasha Crain believes:

“Our ultimate goal should not be for our kids to merely believe true things ... We need to make sure our kids have good reasons for their beliefs.”³¹

Recently, a fifteen-year-old young lady decided to defend the truth of Christianity in a paper for school. When asked why she picked the topic, Ella gave the following three reasons: ³²

1. Apologetics is very important and a lot of people, especially my age, don't know about the multitude of evidence found both inside and outside the Biblical record.
2. There are many people in my school/class that are not Christians, so I wanted to show them the evidence, so that they will know that Christianity is not a stupid, blind faith.
3. I wanted to encourage the other young Christians around me and strengthen their faith.

The statistics are sobering when considering the resistance that our young people are likely to have when they head off to universities. Studies conducted in America in 2005 and 2006 related to the attitude of College Professors towards Christianity (and things have probably only worsened since then) found the following:³³



- Nearly **three-quarters (72%)** of faculty members describe themselves as politically liberal, according to 1999 data from the North American Academic Study Survey (NAASS), up from **39%** in a 1984 survey by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.
- About **25%** of college professors are professing atheists or agnostics (**5-7%** of the general American population is atheistic or agnostic).
- Only **6%** of college professors said the Bible is “the actual Word of God.”
- **51%** described the Bible as “an ancient book of fables, legends, history and moral precepts.”
- **75%** believe religion does not belong in public schools.

A statement by Richard Dawkins, an outspoken atheist, sums up what many of these professors believe:

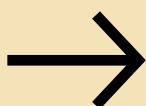
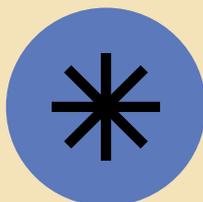
“Faith is the great cop-out, the great excuse to evade the need to think and evaluate evidence. Faith is belief in spite of, even perhaps because of, the lack of evidence.”³⁴

The good news is that with some of the help of the defences we will review in the remainder of this chapter, we can equip our young people with the evidence needed to justify their faith in the face of accusations such as Dawkins’.

DAY SIX

WAS CREATION DOWN TO GOD OR 'GOOD LUCK'?

Goldilocks



Kalam

Your DNA



Isaac Newton

“This most beautiful system of sun, planets, and comets could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful being.”

Lee Strobel

One of the many remarkable stories of an atheist-turned-Christian is that of Lee Strobel. Lee was an investigative journalist trained in law and confessed that skepticism seemed to be part of his DNA - I'm sure that you have friends like Lee, where skepticism seems to be part of their DNA! Growing up, Lee had the same misinformed ideas about Christianity as many atheists today do, passing the Christian faith off as something concocted out of nothing. However, many of these casual atheists don't realise that if you approach the Christian faith as a *thinking person*, it is far harder to disprove.

After a nearly two-year investigation, which included devouring books by atheists and Christians, interviewing scientists and theologians, and studying archaeology, ancient history, and world

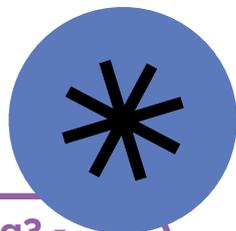
Big Idea

UNDERSTANDING GOLDILOCKS, KALAM, AND THE MESSAGE OF YOUR DNA.



06





religions, Lee was stunned to find that Christianity's factual foundation was rock solid! His investigation ended with him concluding,

“I was completely surprised by the depth and breadth of the case for Christianity. And as someone trained in journalism and law, I felt I had no choice but to respond to the facts.”³⁵

Lee became a Christian and has now dedicated his life to helping others make that decision as well.

We don't have the time to delve into as much detail as Lee Strobel did. However, here is the three-point *starter pack* to defending the case that creation was down to God, not good luck.

Goldilocks: The Fine-Tuning Argument

In all the vastness of the universe, the earth is placed in just the right spot! Scientists actually call it the *Habitable Zone*, or the *Goldilocks Zone* - for those of you who remember the story of Goldilocks eating the porridge, that was *just right*. Fifteen different *Goldilocks Factors* make conditions perfect for life on Earth - things like how much water we have, the Moon's pull on the earth, our spot in the Milky Way galaxy, or that Jupiter acts as a Solar System vacuum cleaner for asteroids, comets, and meteors.

The fact that Earth meets these conditions is so amazing that some astronomers have estimated that the chances of there being another planet like ours in the universe is around 1 in 700 quintillion - or 1 in 700,000,000,000,000,000!³⁶

Kalam Or Big Bang? - The Cosmological Argument

Before the universe was found to be expanding, atheists claimed that the universe was eternal, which meant it should be largely static. But in the 1920s, astronomer Edwin Hubble discovered that the universe is expanding, dismissing this idea. Hubble observed that other galaxies are moving away from us.³⁷ Imagine you had a balloon (if you could actually do it, it would be even better). If you marked an “X” on the bottom of the balloon and then began to blow into the balloon to inflate it, you would find the “X” moving further and further away from your mouth as you blow more air into the balloon. If the universe is expanding, it implies a beginning (when the balloon is uninflated). This means that the universe couldn't have just popped into existence on its own; it must have been caused by something else.



Photo captured by [Monstera](#) from [Pexels](#).

JUST ✨

Right



This brought support for a new argument to support the Christian worldview called the *Kalam Cosmological Argument*.

We can summarise the Kalam Cosmological Argument as follows:³⁸

1. Everything that begins to exist has a cause.
2. The universe began to exist.
3. Therefore, the universe has a cause.

Therefore, something else, something immaterial, timeless, powerful, and intelligent must have created the universe – this something is revealed to us as the God of the Bible.

The Message In DNA: The Intelligent Design Argument

We discussed in Day 5 of the workbook that the year 1953 was a big year because that was the year that our DNA code was discovered. This discovery was so significant that it was celebrated as the *tiny code that is toppling evolution*.³⁹

You see, we expect to find patterns in nature, but the structure of DNA is more like a language than a pattern. Like with a computer program that's designed to produce specific information, we know that where we see information there is intelligence behind it. Lee Strobel went as far as to say, "an intelligent entity has quite literally spelled out the evidence of his existence through the four chemical letters in the genetic code. It's almost as if the Creator autographed every cell."⁴⁰

When you consider all of the evidence, the question, "Is God real?" can't actually be 100% proven or disproven – it requires faith. Whether accepting or rejecting God, faith is required to fill the gap of the unknown – God intended it that way. What you have to decide is whether the evidence weighs more heavily in favour of God or *Good Luck*. Josh and Sean McDowell conclude God all of the way:⁴¹

- *The fine-tuning of the universe points to a Fine-Tuner.*
- *The beginning of the universe points to a Beginner.*
- *The vast amount of information contained in living organisms points to an Information Giver.*



06





Practical Application

In Your Own Words.

Place your own view of creation aside for a moment. And, in your own words, write one sentence explaining the Christian case for God from each of the arguments discussed:

Q1: In your own words, how would you explain the Christian view of the Goldilocks (fine-tuning) argument?

Q2: In your own words, how would you explain the Christian view of the Kalam (cosmological) argument?

Q3: In your own words, how would you explain the Christian view of the message in DNA (intelligent design) argument?

DAY SEVEN



07



**WHAT'S 'RIGHT'
AND
WHAT'S 'WRONG'?**



C.S. Lewis

“Quarrelling means trying to show that the other [person] is in the wrong. And there would be no sense in trying to do that unless you and he had some sort of agreement as to what Right and Wrong are.”

Big Idea

**YOU CAN'T CALL
A LINE CROOKED
UNLESS YOU
HAVE SOME
IDEA OF WHAT A
STRAIGHT LINE
LOOKS LIKE.**

An Architect

My family heritage, and Hartley origin, can be traced back to England. In fact, there are some pretty fancy castles that Hartley's used to live in.

Imagine with me for a moment that there was a family castle in your heritage. In visiting the castle, do you think that you would find out more about who your relatives were by simply taking a tour of the castle that they had built, or by actually sitting down and having a conversation with them?



★ RIGHT ★

Yesterday we considered the evidence of whether creation was down to God or good luck.

As compelling as the evidence is that creation was down to God, you can actually learn more about God from something called the *Moral Law* than from the universe in general, in the same way that you can learn more about an architect by listening to their conversation than by looking at the castle they have built.

Moral Law

So what is the *Moral Law*? The argument for moral law has two important ideas. Firstly, moral standards are more than just every person's opinion of what's right or wrong. And, secondly, the best explanation that can be given for this moral law, is that there must be a moral law giver (God of the Bible).

You see, many people argue that you can't have a conversation with God - by the way, I believe you can, together with many millions of people across the world who enjoy this aspect of relationship with God on a daily basis. However, the conscience that is inherently within each of us is a fantastic indicator of the conversation that God is wanting to have with us everyday!

Has anyone ever promised you anything and not delivered on that promise? How did that make you feel? I'm sure you felt disappointed or wronged. But if there is no moral law you have no basis of feeling wronged.

Without moral law, what the Nazis did in World War II was not *wrong*, or what South African's did to their fellow countrymen during Apartheid was not *wrong* (even writing those things sends a shiver down my spine).

• WRONG •

How Many Sweets?

Many atheists argue that each person (or country) has different ideas of what wrong and right is, so there can't be such a thing as objective moral law. But that's the same as saying just because you don't act like you should, there's not actually any right way of acting.

Here's an example to try and explain the concept. Have you ever taken part in a competition at school (often called raffles), where you had to try and guess how many sweets there were in a big jar? I remember taking part in some, wishing with all my might that I would get the right answer and take home the prize! Imagine, that after collecting everyone's responses, the judge came out and



said, “Everyone guessed a different number of sweets in the jar, so we’ve decided there isn’t a right answer and nobody wins the prize.” I think there would be a lot of unhappy people if that happened! No, just because many people guessed incorrectly, doesn’t mean there is not a *right answer* to how many sweets are in the jar.

Little Voice

Our conscience, that little voice inside of every person telling them what is right and wrong, what is fair or unfair, IS the conversation with God in our hearts.

Sure, we can choose to ignore that little voice and soon it will become quieter and quieter. But that doesn’t mean it was never there. Have you ever been caught out doing something that was clearly wrong, like punching your brother in the face? When your parents scold you, you don’t argue that there’s nothing wrong with punching your brother in the face, you know it is wrong. Instead, you try to make an excuse to get out of trouble, like: “He punched me first,” or “it was an accident,” or “you’ve got it all wrong, he actually headbutted my fist” – you get the idea.

By not properly addressing things like the moral law and human conscience in their worldview, C.S. Lewis notes, “Atheism turns out to be too simple.”⁴² We all have an engrained ethical yardstick to know right from wrong.

So, next time you have an argument with a friend, or get into a quarrel with your sibling, remember, those feelings are evidence that God is real.

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07





Practical Application

Discussing moral law.

If you had to describe in five points, how the fact of *moral law* and *human conscience* points to the evidence of God, what would you say?

01 _____

02 _____

03 _____

04 _____

05 _____

DAY EIGHT



**WAS JESUS
GOD OR
ONLY A
'GOOD GUY'?**



C.S. Lewis

“A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He’d either be insane or else he’d be the devil of hell. You must make your choice: either this man was and is the Son of God, or else insane or something worse. But let’s not come up with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

Big Idea

**IF JESUS DIDN'T LIVE,
DIE, AND RISE AGAIN,
CHRISTIANITY IS OF
LITTLE IMPORTANCE.
IF HE DID, IT IS OF
ETERNAL IMPORTANCE.**





J. Warner Wallace was a famous detective in the USA. He specialized in cold cases – old cases no one could solve. Many of these cases have actually been seen on TV.

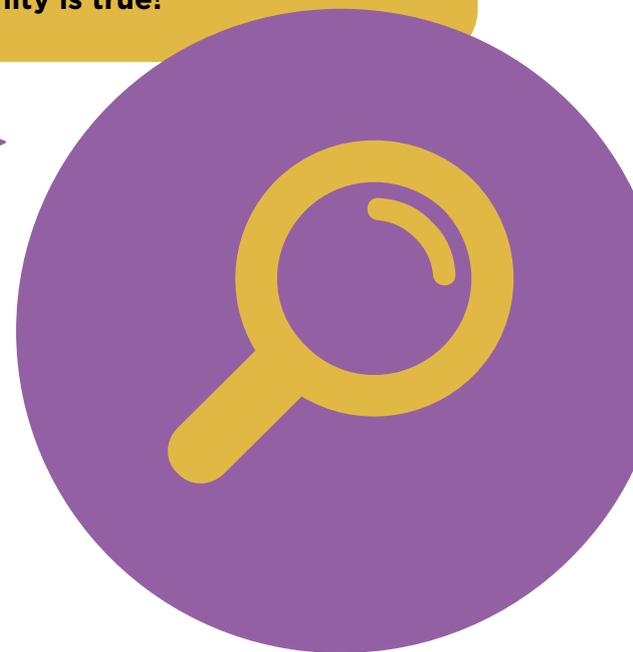
Wallace used to be an atheist until he became interested in the story of Jesus. At the time, he didn't believe it was true. But he decided to look at the claims of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection as a cold-case mystery and apply his detective skills.

At the end of his investigation, he decided the evidence was overwhelming, and his conclusion was this: "The Bible accounts are true, and Jesus is the Son of God."⁴³

Using Wallace's detective skills, we will address the *cold-case mystery of Jesus*. Because the Jesus case can get really detailed, I'm going to give you two pointers so that we can narrow down our investigation to the most important thing to prove or disprove.

Firstly, virtually all historians acknowledge that Jesus was a historical figure. The combined evidence from Christian and non-Christian sources settles the matter that Jesus, the man, did exist.

Secondly, Professor of Apologetics, Craig Hazen, provided us with an important clue to help focus our investigation. He said, "I have not been able to find a passage in the scriptures and teachings of the other great religious traditions that so tightly links the truth of an entire system of belief to a single, testable historical event... This idea that the truth of Christianity is linked to the resurrection of Jesus in a testable way does set Christianity apart from the other great world religious traditions in a dramatic fashion."⁴⁴ In short, if Jesus died and rose again, Christianity is true!





The Case

Alright, let's get to it. When trying to solve a mystery, you should always write down all of the evidence. Then make a list of all the possible ways to explain the evidence.

One of these explanations will be more reasonable than the rest. When it comes to Jesus' death and resurrection, this is what we know:⁴⁵

Evidence:

- Jesus died on a cross and was buried.
- Jesus' tomb was found empty.
- Besides Jesus' closest disciples, five hundred other people said they saw Jesus after his death - alive (resurrected).
- Jesus' disciples were so committed to their testimony that they were willing to die for it. They never changed their story.

Some of the possible explanations people have suggested:

- Jesus didn't really die - He fainted, woke up, and walked away.
- The disciples were so upset about Jesus dying that they imagined they saw Him alive (either hallucinations or wishful thinking).
- The disciples stole the body of Jesus and lied about the resurrection.
- The story of the resurrection was added many years later as the story of Jesus became a legendary fairy tale.
- Jesus actually rose from the dead.

Which of the explanations are most reasonable?

1. The terrible way that Jesus was tortured would have meant he lost a lot of blood. Roman soldiers were also experts at killing people. Surely if they were told to kill Jesus, they would have.
2. Evidence shows that five hundred people all saw Jesus at the same time. While one person can have a hallucination and imagine something, a group of five hundred people would not all imagine the same thing at the same time.
3. If you get past the problem of the disciple's actually stealing Jesus' body - remember Jesus' enemies thought they may try something like that and asked the Romans to guard the tomb - you could reason that they lied about him being raised. But, there is another problem, the disciples who denied they knew Jesus when he was initially arrested for fear of being harmed, changed. Most of his closest disciples were tortured and killed, but none of them would change their testimony of Jesus being raised from the dead!
4. Lying seems very unlikely!
5. The accounts of Jesus' resurrection are too early to be the product of a legend developing. Even the enemies of Jesus conceded that his tomb was empty on Easter morning.

The most reasonable explanation of all of the evidence, as strange as it may seem, is that Jesus was, in fact, raised from the dead!

08

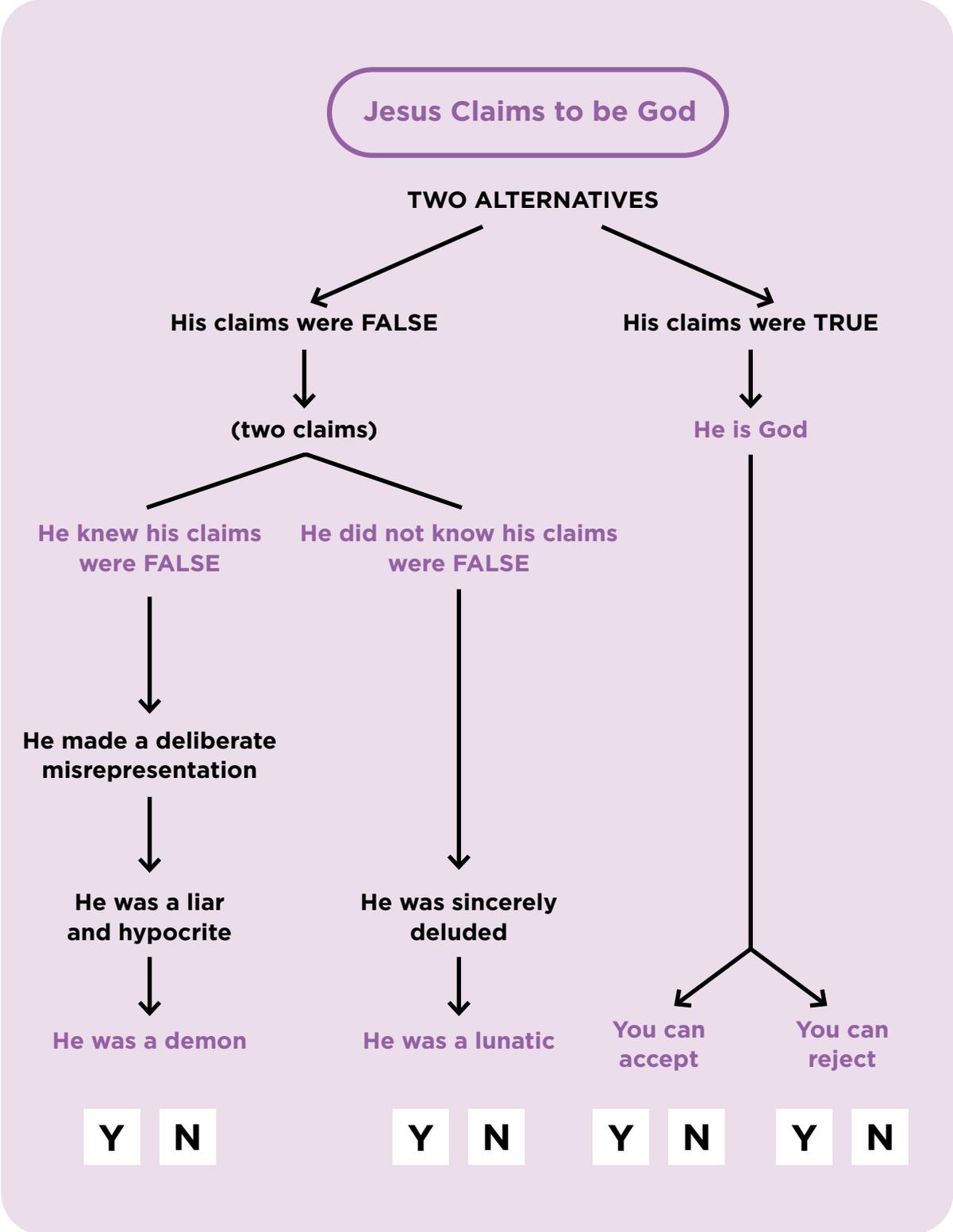




Practical Application:

A reasonable decision tree regarding Jesus - based on the evidence.

Using the decision tree created based on the opening C.S. Lewis quote, indicate what decision you arrive at. Was he a demon? Was he a lunatic? Or is He God?



DAY NINE



A.W. Tozer

“A man by his sin may waste himself, which is to waste that which on earth is most like God. This is man’s greatest tragedy and God’s heaviest grief.”

Big Idea

THINGS CAN BE DONE ACCORDING TO GOD’S WILL, BUT STILL NOT ACCORDING TO HIS WAY.

Concept Of Sin

In Chapter 1, we spent time describing how the culture we live in tries to blind us to what sin *really* is and its impact on our lives.

Remember, we described pride (the root of all evil) as the ultimate anti-God state of mind. We also described pride as a spiritual cancer that infects our lives and stops us from being able to truly experience God’s love.



09





If we consider the Christian worldview of sin, we can summarise it by saying that sin entered the world through the door Adam and Eve opened (the first sin), establishing the sin-death connection. The *sin-death disease* then infected the entire human race, alienating humanity from God and causing all men to be inclined to sin. Only God's grace – which is a gift freely received, not earned – can heal the sin-death disease and re-establish man's relationship with God.

To explain the ideas of *sin* and being *saved* a little more, I'd like to ask you two questions.

Question 1



Is God more focused on your obedience or your joy?

Your answer actually reveals a lot about your perspective of God. Is God all about a set of rules and a long list of do's and don'ts? Or does God have unimaginable life and joy that He wants you to experience?

While obedience to the Lord is fundamental, it is not the primary objective. The Bible teaches us that obedience is the necessary vehicle the Lord uses to lead us into a place of abundant joy in Him (*Psalms 16:11*). God's goodness was experienced at the beginning of time when all that He created is described as being good (*Genesis 1:31*). Unfortunately, our sin blocks our view of God's goodness and causes us pain and suffering, but God is unchanging. God is fully and perfectly good, and because of that, His thoughts towards us are always good (*Psalms 139:17*) – now that's a fantastic thought! Even in our place of being separated from God's love, the Bible tells us that God's goodness and kindness lead us back to repentance (*Romans 2:4*).⁴⁶ The starting point of understanding sin and being saved is gaining a clearer view of God's goodness towards us.

People sometimes ask, "If God is so good, why has He let the world go so wrong?"

The answer is actually very simple – He gave each person *free choice*. Let me explain it like this.

Anyone who has ever been in a leadership position will know that things can be done according to your *will*, but not your preferred way. What on earth am I trying to say?

Ok, let's make this practical. Whenever you give people a choice to do something, you will generally get some people who do and some people who don't. It's like when parents say it's up to their child to do their homework or not. Because they gave a *choice*, if their child chose not to do their homework and fails their test, they are still *acting in the parents' will*. Sounds strange, but their will was to give the child a free choice and not force them to study – they wanted their child to *choose* the right way. They would absolutely have preferred that the choice would be to study and pass the test, but if they forced their preference on the child, they would have gone against their own will of giving the child a choice. Get it? God is the same. He doesn't want to force people to do what is good for them; His will is that everyone chooses God's goodness for themselves. God's *preferred way* is for each of us to choose obedience to Him, which always leads to goodness and abundant joy.

Unfortunately, not everyone chooses goodness. But that is only possible because God *willed* to give us all free choice. So, things can be done according to God's will, but still not according to His way.



Question 2

What is your understanding of God’s holiness?

Theologian, Michael Bird, described God’s holiness as: “The single attribute that distinguishes him from everything and everyone in heaven and on earth.”⁴⁷ If asked the same question, most people would probably say the holiness (or purity) that God requires seems unattainable for them.

It is the sense of *impossible holiness* that the devil so often uses to bring guilt and condemnation on us – leaving us with the thought, “Well, I’m going to miss the mark anyway, so why even try?”

But, holiness is a two-sided coin. On the one side is judgment. Because God is holy, everything that is evil has to be judged. On the flip side is salvation. God’s holiness is what is given to those who put their trust in Jesus. Jesus’ perfect life was given to pay every debt that our wrongs have, or will ever, rack up.

There’s only one condition, we have to let Jesus pay our debt by recognising our sin and receiving his gift of salvation.



09





Practical Application

Seeing sin and being saved in light of God's goodness.

Take some time to answer the following questions:

Q1: What in your life is blocking your view of God's goodness (and good thoughts) towards you?

Q2: What new thinking can you take hold of when it comes to sin and being saved?

Read the story below about "Settling the Debt" and answer the two questions that follow.

Imagine two best friends, Shirley and Bianca, who had grown up their entire lives together. After school they went their separate ways, Shirley got involved in crime, and Bianca became a successful judge. One day Shirley broke the law and was caught – she knew she was wrong. She ended up appearing before a judge and it happened to be her old friend, Bianca. Bianca had a dilemma: what was she to do? She loved Shirley, who had pleaded guilty to the crime. But Bianca couldn't just let her off, because she was a judge. She had to be just.

That's God's dilemma, if you like. God is a God of justice. If there was no justice in the world, the world would be a terrible place. But He also loves you. So, this is what Bianca did: she fined Shirley the appropriate penalty – let's say R200,000. Then Bianca took off her robes, she went round to see her friend, and she wrote out a cheque for R200,000 and gave it to Shirley.

What in this story represents justice?

What in this story represents love?

DAY 10



**DON'T ALL RELIGIONS
POINT TO THE
SAME TRUTH?**

Natasha Crain

“Religions differ in their claims of where we came from, why we are here, the problem of evil, the nature of ultimate reality, and where we’re eventually headed. There is simply no logical way that all of these contradictory claims can point to the same truth.”

Big Idea

I’M NOT SAYING THAT JESUS IS THE ONLY WAY; HE IS SAYING IT.



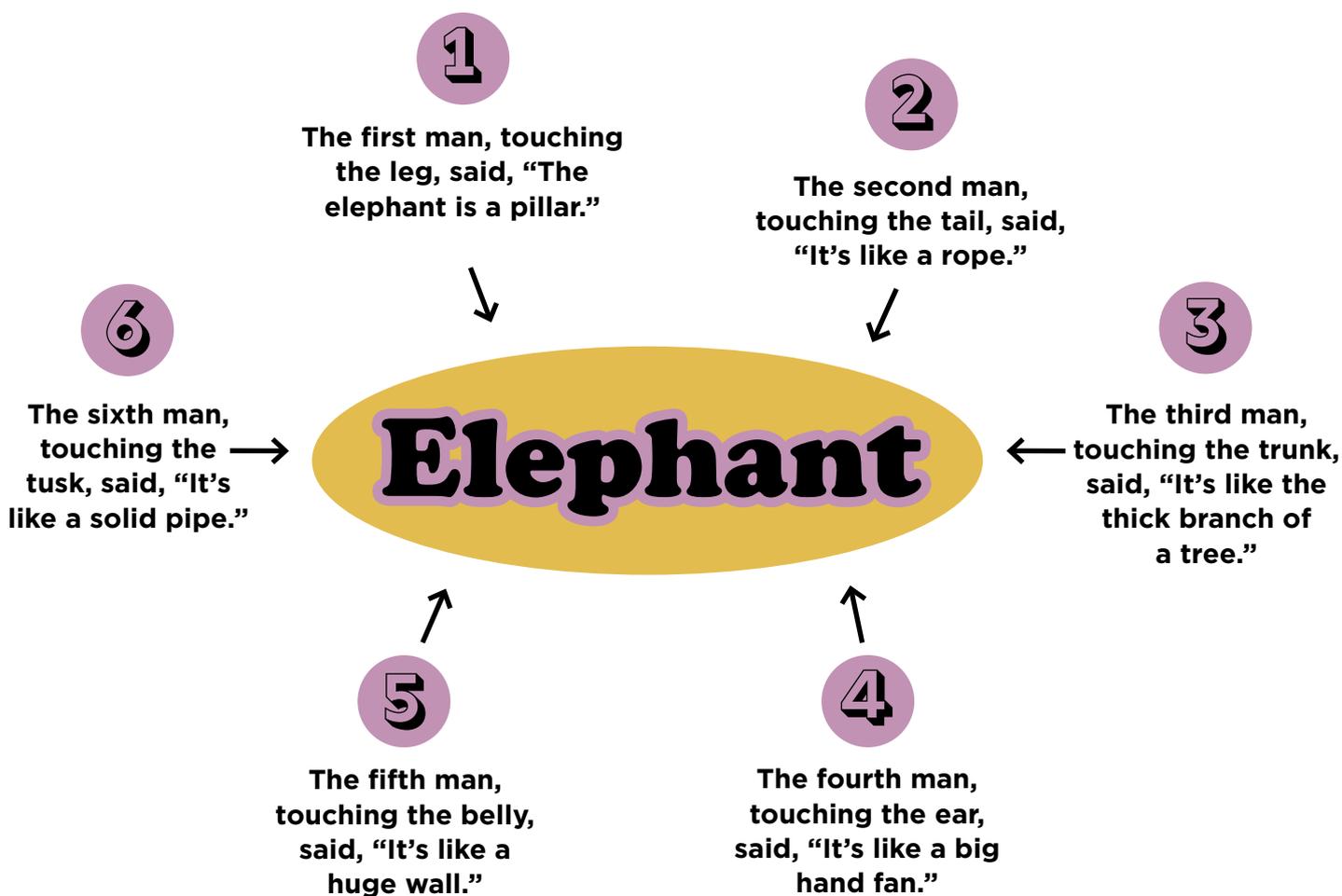
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There is a story of the elephant and the six blind men. Yes, another elephant story!

This one comes from a Hindi proverb, and it goes something like this:⁴⁸ Once upon a time, there lived six blind men in a village. One day the villagers told them, “There’s an elephant in the village today!” The blind men had no idea what an elephant was, but they decided to go find it. When they found it, each man touched a different part of the elephant.



The men were starting to argue about what the elephant really was when a wise man passed by. The wise man settled the matter by explaining, “You are each saying something different because you are each touching a different part of the elephant. You are all right.”

While this example may resonate with people who are trying not to offend others, we will see that it doesn’t actually make much sense when you think through the claims logically.



Five Major Religions

The table below demonstrates the five major world religions' beliefs about *God, salvation, and other religions*.⁴⁹ You will notice that the only religion to accept different gods and religions is Hinduism. But, there's a catch, only if these other religions are seen as part of Hinduism are they true. If taken only on their own merits, they are false.*

Religion	Beliefs About God	Beliefs About Salvation	Beliefs About Salvations
Buddhism	No God	Enlightenment	False
Hinduism	Many Gods	Reincarnation	All True*
Islam	Unitarian (Allah)	The Five Pillars	False
Judaism	Unitarian (Yahweh)	The Law	False
Christianity	Trinitarian (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)	Grace	False

As we can see, all of the major religions (given the explanation of Hinduism), in fact, do not believe that all religious paths lead to the same God.



The message of the good news of Jesus has *always* been for *everyone*. It is the most inclusive religion of all and excludes no one who places their trust in Jesus. However, Jesus offers the only way to be reconciled to God. But, as we just saw in what was discussed yesterday, if Jesus is God, He has the right to determine what people have to do to be saved.

Christianity is Different

You may be wondering how Christianity is different? Much attention is directed towards the Christian faith when people claim a belief system is not accepting of all people. But Christianity is not exclusive at all!

Jesus Himself said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Jesus declares, there is no going without Him (way), there is no knowing without Him (truth), and there is no living without Him (life) - He IS God.

The next time someone approaches you and says, "How can you say that Jesus is the only way?" You can respond, "I'm not saying it. Jesus said it. Let's take it up with Him" (this is a great way to test their worldview and use some of the insights you're learning about to share why Jesus is God).

You may not like the idea of Jesus being the only way, but if He truly is the Son of God and said He was the only way to salvation—can you afford to ignore His claim?





Practical Application

Jesus as the way and the truth and the life.

Take some time to answer the following questions:

Q1: What are you most afraid of that keeps you from telling people that Christianity is the only path of truth? (select the statement that best explains your reason)

- I don't want to offend someone.
- I don't want to be unpopular.
- In a world that believes in tolerance I don't want to be ostracized.
- I don't really believe it myself.
- I feel that I don't have all of the facts to justify why it is true.

Q2: What one new belief / thought / discovery could help you overcome this fear?



10



CHRISTIANITY

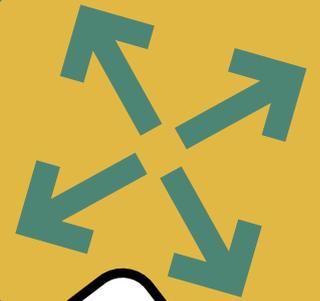


EXCLUSIVE

However, Jesus offers the only way to be reconciled to God.

CHAPTER

03



**WHAT IS
THE REAL
STORY OF
THE BIBLE?**





STEP 3: BIG PICTURE THINKING

Having considered the context and identified the major obstacles that may stand in the way of people believing in the Christian worldview, we are now going to bring Christianity into the spotlight. We cannot talk about Christianity without understanding the essence of God's story – as told through the Bible. Guillaume Bignon is a former French atheist who is now a Christian philosopher and apologist. He encourages us to not assume that people know the Gospel message. Many people have a superficial understanding of religions but are largely clueless about what the Bible actually teaches in answer to the question “What must a sinner do to be saved?”

Chapter 3 will address this issue.

Terran Williams



“WHETHER YOU RESONATE WITH ITS WORLDVIEW OR NOT, HISTORIANS AND PHILOSOPHERS AGREE ON THIS FACT: THE BIBLE HAS CHANGED THE WORLD MORE THAN ANY OTHER BOOK.”

IN CHAPTER THREE WE WILL:

- Gain an understanding of the real story of the Bible.
- Be able to share with others how the free gift of salvation is both essential and distinguishing when it comes to the Christian faith.
- End by considering what your final destination will be and why your decision is vital.

In this next chapter, we will discover that the Bible is not a long list of rules; it is not a summary of life principles, it is not tips for good living. It is not even a compilation of great truths about God, Jesus, us, and the world.

While all of these benefits can be obtained from reading the Bible, the Bible is primarily a story of God's love that serves to capture our imagination and teach us the unthinkable goodness and bigness of God. Remember the *Backwards Bicycle* with Destin Sandlin (Day 1)?

One of the things that he recalled from his experience, is that sometimes when you have a *rigid way of thinking* about something, you cannot change it even if you want to.⁵⁰

Perhaps you have a *rigid way of thinking* when it comes to the Bible. I want to invite you to lay that aside before we move on. At the very least, the Bible is an incredibly inspiring story. At the very most, a story that will change the rest of your life *forever!*

Author of *The Little Prince*, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, said, "If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea."⁵¹ The Bible isn't telling us *to do*; it's teaching us *to long* - a longing that can only be satisfied when we find our place in God's story for our lives.

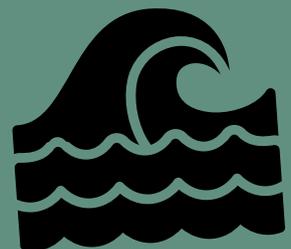


Good Living



TRUTH

THE
Bible

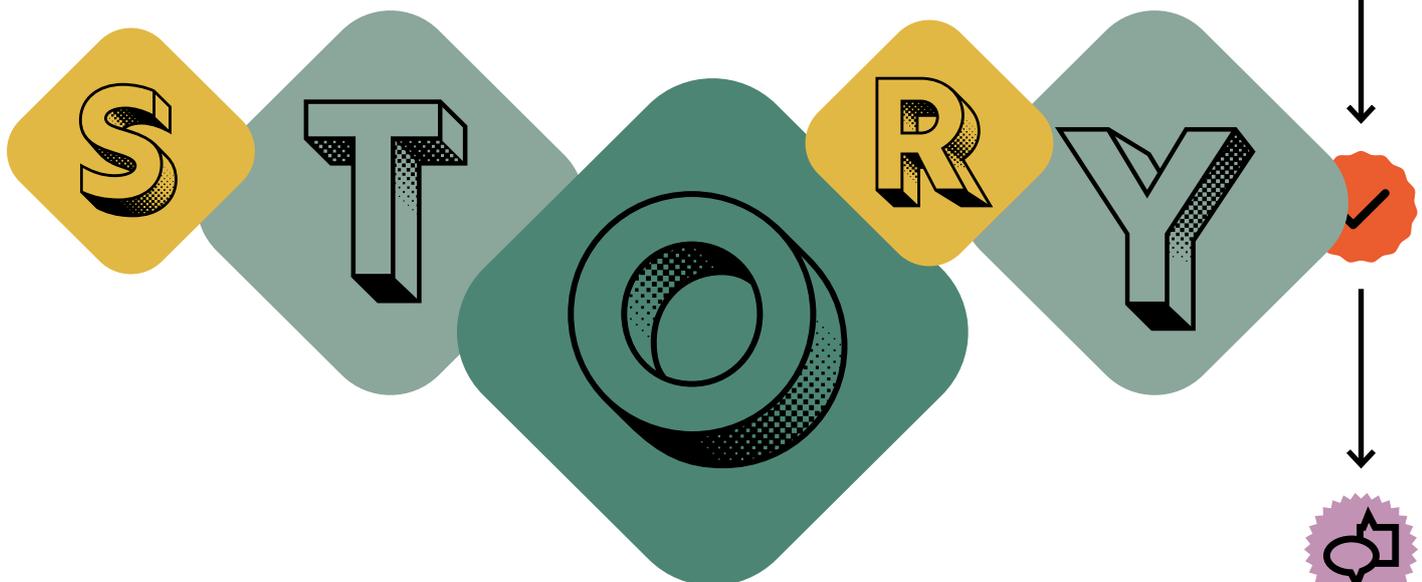


People often argue against a Christian worldview without appreciating how its story has powerfully impacted the world we live in more than any book in history. *Time Magazine* once declared the most significant, future-shaping moment in the second millennium was the printing of the Bible at Gutenberg's Press.⁵² Pastor and evangelist, D. James Kennedy leads us along the same lines of thinking in his book, *What If Jesus Had Never Been Born?*

Here are ten highlights he describes of the positive contributions that Christianity has made through the centuries.⁵³

1. *Hospitals, which essentially began during the Middle Ages.*
2. *Universities, which also began during the Middle Ages.*
3. *Literacy and education for the masses.*
4. *The separation of political powers.*
5. *Civil liberties.*
6. *The abolition of slavery.*
7. *Modern science.*
8. *The elevation of women.*
9. *Benevolence and charity; the Good Samaritan ethic.*
10. *High regard for human life.*

Wow! That is a lot of good that has come from people whose lives have been significantly impacted by the Bible! So what is the essence of this great story? I'm glad you asked. We will be exploring five attributes of the Bible's story, and I've used an acronym to make it easy for you to remember – S.T.O.R.Y.



DAY 11

S - For
Storyline

→ Creation 

Royal Task ← 

Rebellion & Fallout

 God's Covenant

JESUS  → 

 Return Of The King

Andrew E. Hill &
John H. Walton

“God’s plan from the beginning was to create a people among whom he could dwell and with whom he could be in relationship.”

Big Idea

**GOD’S FIRST
PRIZE IS ALSO THE
ULTIMATE PRIZE.**



PIXAR RECIPE

Have you ever watched a Pixar movie? Whether it's Toy Story with Woody, Cars with Lightning McQueen, The Incredibles, or Finding Nemo (just to mention a few), Pixar has an incredible ability to churn out great movies that resonate with children and adults alike.

As it turns out, they have a specific story recipe. Now I realise that every story has different complexities and nuances, but the following six-point recipe gets them started:⁵⁴

Once upon a time there was _____
(introduces the story).

Every day, _____ (describes the comfy, cozy, unchallenging world/lifestyle).

One day, _____ (describes the reason for the adventure/journey).

Because of that, _____ (describes the story crossing into the unknown and the challenges that have to be faced and overcome).

Because of that, _____ (describes the changes that need to be made to redeem whatever mistakes have been made).

Until finally, _____ (describes when everything comes together - normally for the good).

Finding Nemo

Finding Nemo is one of the Pixar movies that my kids love (I'd be lying if I said I didn't enjoy it as well). If I had to use the Pixar Story Recipe to give an overview of the Finding Nemo storyline, it would look something like this:

Once upon a time

there was a single father, Marlin, who was doing everything he could to raise his son, Nemo, trying to protect him from the dangers of the unknown ocean.

Every day,

Marlin and Nemo would go about life on the reef. But Marlin would never allow Nemo to swim too close to the reef's edge - where danger lurked. Nemo was frustrated with his dad and felt he was over-protective. One day, Nemo disobeyed his dad, swimming out past the edge of the reef and up to the ocean's surface, where he got fish-napped by divers on a boat.

Because of that,

Marlin had to go on the most daring journey of his life, facing hungry sharks, befriending forgetful fish, and escaping one life-threatening danger after another.

Because of that,

Marlin had to overcome his own fear and find new levels of courage, all the while traveling halfway around the world to rescue his son. Meanwhile, Nemo realised just how much he missed his dad and how he had done wrong.

Until Finally,

Marlin and Nemo are reunited - against all the odds - and safely make their way back across the ocean to the reef they call home. But things are different now - a good different.



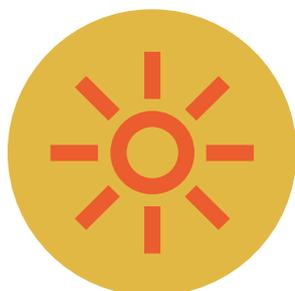
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The Bible's Storyline

At first glance, the Bible is a complex piece of literature. With around forty different authors and written over a span of about 1,600 years, it may appear fragmented at first. But, it actually presents an incredibly unified epic narrative that leads us to Jesus. There is a single main storyline weaving the different books and stories together. Once you can see this storyline and how all the books fit together, you can pick the Bible up at any point, and you'll know right where you are and what the message of the story is.⁵⁵



Creation

(Genesis 1)

It starts with the almighty God of the universe creating a wonderful, ordered world full of beauty and potential, out of nothing. The masterpiece of all of God's creation is humanity. Created in His image, God breathes His own life into humans, distinguishing them from all other creation.



The Royal Task

(Genesis 2)

God appoints humans to oversee this world and develop its beauty and potential, establishing order and goodness wherever they go. But, this is not a task they have to do by themselves, God is ever-present in their lives, and they enjoy union with Him. They walk and talk together every day. However, because God wants them to choose His goodness and love for themselves, He places the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil where they live. God's instruction is simple, you have the freedom to do anything you like, just don't eat the fruit of that tree.

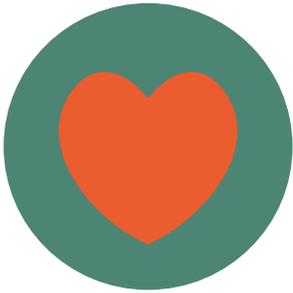


Rebellion and the Fallout

(Genesis 3-11)

Humanity is faced with a choice. They can either trust God's wisdom or seize autonomy and define good and evil for themselves. Deceived by an evil character (the devil), they doubt God's goodness and rebel against Him. In their act of rebellion, humanity hands the authority of the world given to them by God to the evil character, the devil. Through this single act of disobedience, a part of their God-image dies in humanity and is replaced by an inherent evil in their hearts - PRIDE!

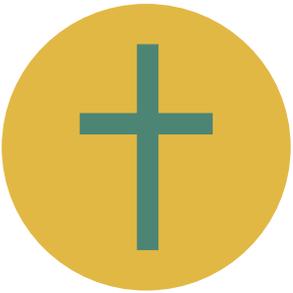
This leads to two kingdoms being established: God's kingdom of love and order remains, but there is now the rise of a fallen kingdom of pride and disorder - called *Babylon* (Babylon is a constant metaphor in the Bible, but also an actual empire that takes the Israelites captive). Remember the illustration of the *Tree of Love* and the *Tree of Pride* from Chapter 1 - they are symbols of these two kingdoms.



God's covenant with Israel

(Genesis 12 & the rest of the Old Testament)

Because of their rebellion, humanity is separated from God. And the tension between a good-yet-just God and a much-loved-yet-rebellious people drives the great conflict that the entire Bible depicts. This conflict results in the central theme of the Bible, which is God's desire to redeem his beloved humanity. This picture of redemption is set in motion through one (underserving) family chosen from among the nations, the people of Abraham, who later become Israel. Through His relationship with Israel, God wants to demonstrate His goodness and redemptive love to all mankind and provide humanity with another chance to make the right choice. Unfortunately, even with God's personal guidance, the nation of Israel chooses rebellion over relationship with God time and time again - repeating the original sin of humanity.



Jesus, and the Kingdom of God

(Matthew, Mark, Luke, John)

The story of Israel in the Old Testament ends with the promise of a great leader who would not only lead Israel in faithfulness back to God but through whom God would rescue the whole world. Enter Jesus of Nazareth, who is sometimes called Immanuel - meaning God with us. The four Gospels of the New Testament present Jesus as the solution to all of the conflict of the Old Testament. Where humanity and Israel had both failed to defeat the evil and sin of this world, Jesus would defeat it and once again establish the Kingdom of God on earth. But the twist was that Jesus planned to defeat humanity's evil and sin by letting it seemingly defeat Him. But, after taking the rightful punishment for the sins of the world - death, Jesus rose again to seal the victory over all evil and death forever! He now offers up His own righteous life as a gift to all of those who follow Him.



The spreading of the Kingdom and the Return of the King

(Spread of the Kingdom: Acts - Jude; Return of the King: Revelations)

After His resurrection, Jesus again commissioned humanity, through those who believed in Him, to bring a kingdom order of love and goodness to this world. He ascended back to Heaven but didn't leave His disciples alone. The Holy Spirit was given as a gift to all who believe, as the ever-present indwelling of God in their lives. The part of humanity that had died in their rebellion, restored. The disease of pride in their hearts, healed. His followers are called to reconcile all nations to Jesus with the simple message that all who turn from their own pride and call on the name of Jesus will be saved. God's **called-out ones**, known as **the church**, have been promised that Jesus will return to bring to perfection the kingdom of God that He began through His life, death, and resurrection. When Jesus returns, He will put an end to all evil and suffering. But, anyone who has not yet responded to the call of salvation in Jesus will be lost forever. In case you missed it, Jesus is the hero of the entire story. The Old Testament is the red carpet announcing His arrival, and in the New Testament, we get to meet Him in person.



Practical Application

A Pixar Story Recipe for the Bible.

Many people have been put off Christianity because they don't understand the story of the Bible. They have experienced a poor representation of Christianity through religion. Using the above descriptions and the Pixar Story Recipe, tell the story of the Bible that will help people discover the true message of Christianity. You will notice that each of the six stages of the Bible story is roughly aligned to the six steps of the Pixar Recipe.

Once upon a time there was _____

(introduces the story).

Every day, _____

(describes the comfy, cosy, unchallenging world/lifestyle).

One day, _____

(describes the reason for the adventure/journey).

Because of that, _____

(describes the story crossing into the unknown and the challenges that have to be faced and overcome).

Because of that, _____

(describes the changes that need to be made to redeem whatever mistakes have been made).

Until finally, _____

(describes when everything comes together - normally for the good).

DAY 12

T



**T - FOR THEME
OF REDEMPTION
(GOLDEN THREAD)**

Henri Nouwen

“Before you were born, God knew you. But He not only knew you, He loved you. He loved you from eternity past ... and for all eternity He continues to love you. He loves you with His whole heart, and He loves you more than you will ever be able to be loved by anyone.”

Big Idea

**THE POWER OF THE
GOSPEL IS GOD’S
TOTAL ANSWER
TO HUMANITY’S
TOTAL NEED.**



12





The Cross



Have you ever done something that has made you feel ashamed or guilty? Don't worry, we're all in the same boat - no one on earth has not done something they don't feel ashamed or guilty about at some point.

Shame is feeling bad about who we are. Guilt is feeling bad about the stuff we do. And both shame and guilt are weapons that the devil uses to keep us from responding to God.

I remember as a seven-year-old boy doing something pretty awful! I have a brother who is four years younger than me, Jono, and I wasn't always the best brother to him - Jesus had to do a big work in my heart! One of these not-the-best brother moments involved a jar of sweets. We didn't eat many sweets growing up, and my mom kept a jar of sweets in her bedroom cupboard to treat us when we were really good (which didn't happen too often for me). I had a sweet-tooth, and the temptation of that sweet jar was too much to bear. I would sneak into my parent's bedroom, steal the much-desired treasure, run back to my room, and stash it under my t-shirts - that way, I could reward myself whenever I wanted. The problem was, over time, my mom saw a steady decrease in the level of the sweet jar. One day my dad called a family meeting with the three children (I also have an older sister,

Cheryl). The question was simple, "Who took the sweets?" I totally blamed my little brother, who was too young to really defend himself ... not only had I stolen, I also got my brother into trouble. His punishment was severe because he had not only stolen but was now also lying about not stealing (the poor little guy)! Don't worry, not too long after that, my mom was tidying my cupboard and found my stash of sweets. I received my punishment, but the whole episode really hurt my little brother.

Each of us has stories like this. Moments where we have messed up. Things we've done that have hurt others. But there is an important story that each of us needs to know - it's the story of the cross. You see, the cross was the height of pain and the depth of shame. It is where Jesus gave Himself as a perfect sacrifice to redeem each of us.

Through Jesus, our shame is removed, and our guilt is redeemed. If we accept what Jesus has accomplished for us, our lives can be restored from any form of brokenness into God's intended beauty.

However, the same evil character (the devil) who deceived Adam and Eve to doubt God's goodness and choose their own way is still at work today. That is why God weaves into each part of the Bible, the unfolding theme of redemption.

Every occasion you read the Bible, you must remind yourself that your greatest worth is that you are of worth to God. When Jesus went to the cross, He bore all of your guilt and all of your shame.

GUILT

SHAME

If Jesus paid the debt of our disobedience, what did it accomplish? In looking at the Bible's storyline yesterday, we noticed the central theme of the Bible - the theme of redemption.

Simply put, redemption means to be saved from sin, error, or evil. It means regaining possession of something lost or the clearing of a debt. Humanity's debt of disobedience (sin) required a payment of perfection. In the Alpha course, Nicky Gumble describes the impact of sin in our lives as *Four P's*.⁵⁶

- **The Pollution of sin**

The things we do wrong spoil our lives. Just like the pollution of the environment is a big problem at the moment, Jesus says it's possible to pollute your soul. The stuff that we do wrong can spoil our relationships.

- **The Power of sin**

The bad stuff in our life, the bad habits, they're very addictive. The Bible shows us that whoever sins is a slave to sin. Think of that picture - regardless of what a slave wants to do, they have to obey their master.

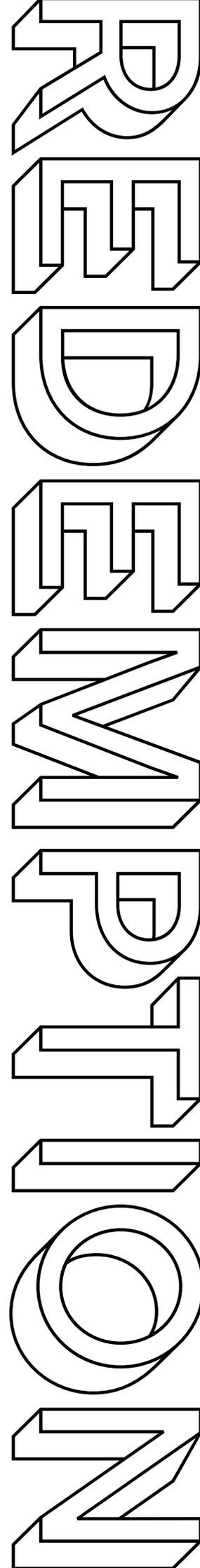
- **The Penalty of sin**

There's something within us that cries out for justice (remember we spoke about this in Chapter 2). When we see the kind of horrific things that are going on around the world, we say: "That should not to happen. They must be stopped. They have to be brought to justice." In the same way, our sin requires judgment.

- **The Partition of sin**

You know how it is when we have offended someone, or someone has offended us, we don't want to look them in the eye. We try and avoid them because something's come between us. Similarly, sin is what the New Testament says is the stuff that has caused a partition between us and God.

Through what Jesus did on the cross, the pollution of sin was cleaned from us, the power of sin was broken over us, the penalty of sin was paid in full on our behalf, and the partition of sin was removed so that we could enjoy an unbroken relationship with God - now that's good news!



12





The Golden Thread

Fortunately, there is a good end to the story of Jono and me. At the age of fourteen, I went away on a youth camp, and Jesus touched my life in such a real way. From that day, my relationship with my brother improved, and we have become great friends since. Interestingly, about fifteen years after the camp, I was visiting my brother in Cape Town, and we were reflecting on our childhood (we always have a great laugh when we do), but this time he said something he had never mentioned before. He said that he remembered me coming back from that same youth camp a different person. I still messed up, but my heart was softer, and every time I messed up, I would always come and apologise. Jesus took away my shame and guilt, and because of that, I was different – a good different.

Next time you read one of the many stories in the Bible, read it through the lens of this great theme of *redemption*. Choose to believe God's goodness towards you, choose to submit yourself to Him, and choose to resist the lies of the devil, and see your life changed!



Practical Application

Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.

Read the passage of Scripture from Eugene Peterson’s Message translation of the Bible,⁵⁷ and follow the directions below.

James 4:7-8, “So let God work his will in you. Yell a loud no to the Devil and watch him scamper. Say a quiet yes to God and he’ll be there in no time. Quit dabbling in sin. Purify your inner life.”

Write down the things that you know are not right in your life - things you seem to continue to struggle with (often, these are also the areas where the devil tries to bring shame and guilt).

Now, ask Jesus to take away the shame and guilt by saying that you trust in Him.

Write down how you feel after doing this.

Is there someone you can talk to about what you have written down? Write their name down - and commit to reaching out to them.



12



DAY 13



**O - FOR OUR
RESPONSE**

C. S. Lewis

**“There is a good many things
which would not be worth
bothering about if I were going to
live only seventy years, but which
I had better bother about very
seriously if I am going to
live forever.”**

Big Idea

**WHEN IT'S MY
SIN VERSUS GOD'S
GRACE, GOD'S
GRACE WINS
HANDS DOWN.**

A Motorbike And A Miracle

If I'm really honest with myself, I don't think that I had a complete understanding of God's grace until I had an accident on a motorbike where I should have lost my life.

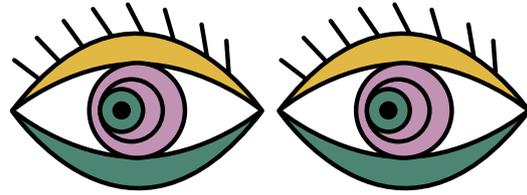
Up until that stage of my life, I'd grown up in an amazing Christian family, had great Christian parents, and had a group of close friends that were passionate about Jesus. I never did anything really bad, and while I knew that Jesus had saved me, I didn't really have an understanding of the fullness of His grace.

That all changed on Wednesday the 25th of June in 2014. A group of nine friends and I left home for a three-day motorbike trip. On the first day of the trip, we were riding down one of the most scenic passes in the country. I was doing what I had always done up until that point in time, pushing the boundaries! I was speeding down the mountain and had just overtaken a vehicle heading into a corner, as it turned out, way too quickly than I should have! The corner was one of the sharpest of the entire pass. In what seemed like a *flash-of-a-moment* and yet an eternity bundled into one,

I remember thinking: "How could this be happening to me?" One of my wheels had touched the gravel next to the road, and I was hurtling towards a steep drop off at the edge of the mountain pass.

I miraculously hit a single signpost that deflected me away from the drop-off and not back into the road where an oncoming vehicle would have hit me. Had I missed that sign to the left or right, I would have been in serious trouble.

My bike was mangled, and I had to be rushed off to hospital. But to cut a very long story short, I had the strangest experience in hospital. In the operating theatre, I had an encounter with God where I had the *experience of dying* -



I must point out that at no point was I medically in any danger of dying. However, the experience was as real to me as anything I have ever felt.

During this experience, God revealed to me that I would live because of His grace in my life. And... I would meet my son - at this point, my wife and I only had a little girl. I awoke from the experience gasping for air and calling out for a nurse in a voice so faint she could barely hear me. I was alive! But, on chatting to the nurse and the doctor, I realised that my life had never been in any danger during the operation, yet what I had experienced felt so real. I felt God prompting me to write everything I had experienced down before sharing it with anyone.

A few days later, back at home after suffering a big knock on my head and only one fractured bone (a miracle right there), I was reading the account to my wife. As I was reading, I suddenly understood the significance of the whole ordeal. God had revealed to me the end that I *should* have experienced had it not been for His incredible grace. His overwhelming, unconditional, undeserving grace! You see, the unfailing, always-and-forever love of God will pursue you, again and again, seeking to rescue you (even from yourself at times), to set you back on the path *to which* He has called you - *for which* He has formed you.

As an important side note, when I read that by God's grace I was going to live and meet my son, my wife thought I was hinting for a second child. One week later, we had an unexpected trip to the doctor because my wife was not feeling well - we found out that it was morning sickness, she was pregnant! In fact, she was already four weeks pregnant at the time of my accident, something that neither of us could have known. Eight months later, our child was born, you guessed it, a SON!

I know that God's undeserved grace has given me a second chance. And my greatest desire is that you would also experience the unfailing, always-chasing, never-giving-up grace of God that I am talking about.



13





Free Lunch

Have you ever heard the saying, “There’s no such thing as a free lunch?” Or maybe, “Nothing in life is for free?”

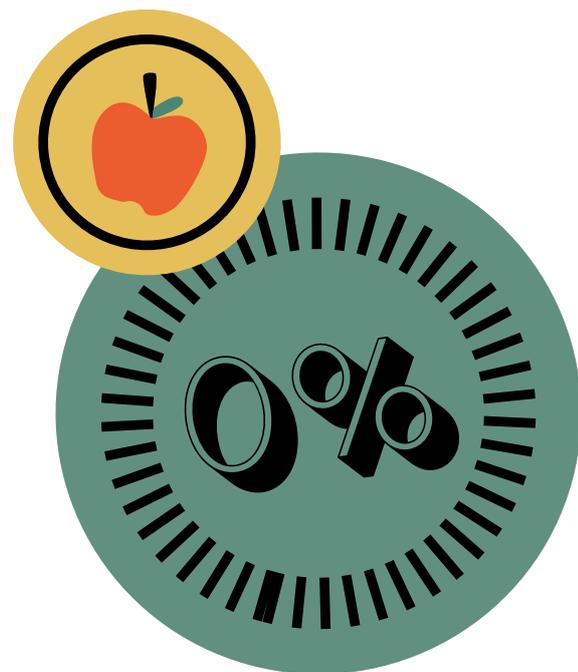
As humans, we are generally very suspicious when someone offers a *no-strings-attached free gift* – like that time I *won* a holiday but had to buy a whole bunch of stuff before I could receive my prize!

People often think, “God is offering this free gift. There must be a catch.” There isn’t a catch. *It is free. But it’s not cheap.* You have to surrender yourselves to Him and lay down your do-it-myself attitude.

I once heard someone describe our response to God’s grace as the 0% we need to do so that God can do His 100%. But our 0% is still essential! Our 0% means us *not resisting* the grace of God in our lives.

That’s all that is required, us not resisting the power of God’s grace in our lives. He does all the work; our response is not to resist it.

The Apostle Paul knew all about the free gift of grace – perhaps more than most people. Paul had gone from someone who took pleasure in killing individuals and families who said that they believed in Jesus, to being one of the people who arguably did the most to see the good news of Jesus spread throughout the first-century known world. How? Because he understood God’s grace!



0%
R
A
C
E



Practical Application

The *right* response to the message of God’s grace.

Read Paul’s summary of the story of the Bible from Eugene Peterson’s Message translation, and then follow the directions below.

Romans 5:12-21 (MSG) - The Death-Dealing Sin, the Life-Giving Gift

“You know the story of how Adam landed us in the dilemma we’re in—first sin, then death, and no one exempt from either sin or death.¹³ That sin disturbed relations with God in everything and everyone, but the extent of the disturbance was not clear until God spelled it out in detail to Moses. So death, this huge abyss separating us from God, dominated the landscape from Adam to Moses. Even those who didn’t sin precisely as Adam did by disobeying a specific command of God still had to experience this termination of life, this separation from God. But Adam, who got us into this, also points ahead to the One who will get us out of it.

Yet the rescuing gift is not exactly parallel to the death-dealing sin. If one man’s sin put crowds of people at the dead-end abyss of separation from God, just think what God’s gift poured through one man, Jesus Christ, will do! There’s no comparison between that death-dealing sin and this generous, life-giving gift. The verdict on that one sin was the death sentence; the verdict on the many sins that followed was this wonderful life sentence. If death got the upper hand through one man’s wrongdoing, can you imagine the breathtaking recovery life makes, sovereign life, in those who grasp with both hands this wildly extravagant life-gift, this grand setting-everything- right, that the one man Jesus Christ provides?

Here it is in a nutshell: Just as one person did it wrong and got us in all this trouble with sin and death, another person did it right and got us out of it. But more than just getting us out of trouble, he got us into life! One man said no to God and put many people in the wrong; one man said yes to God and put many in the right.

All that passing laws against sin did was produce more lawbreakers. But sin didn’t, and doesn’t, have a chance in competition with the aggressive forgiveness we call grace. When it’s sin versus grace, grace wins hands down. All sin can do is threaten us with death, and that’s the end of it. Grace, because God is putting everything together again through the Messiah, invites us into life—a life that goes on and on and on, world without end.”

Having read the passage, write down three ideas/insights describing what you believe the right response should be to what God has done.

01

02

03

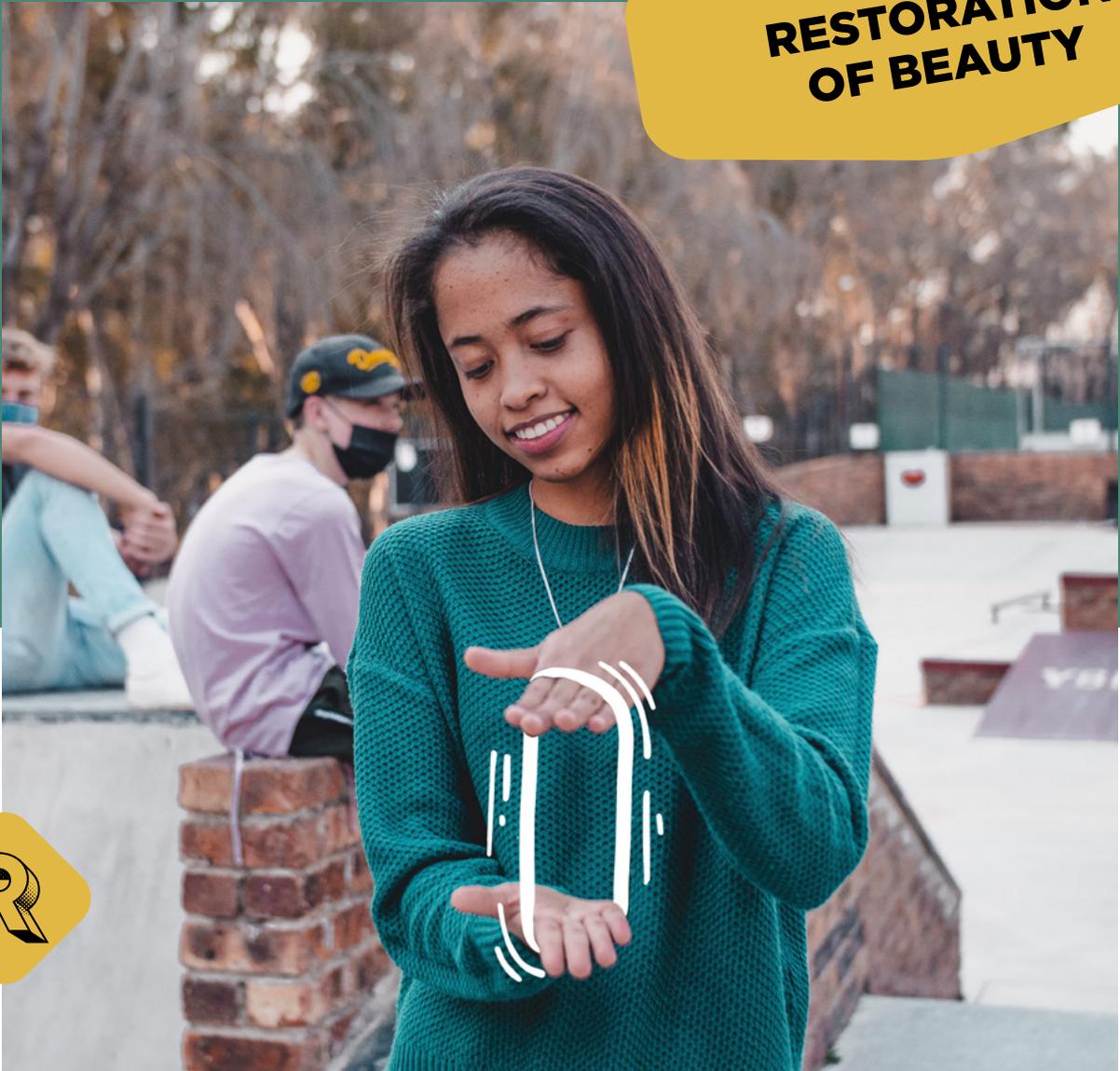


13



DAY 14

**R - FOR
RESTORATION
OF BEAUTY**



R

**Andrew E. Hill &
John H. Walton**

“Though God created everything just right, sin drew people away from God - so much that they no longer had an accurate view of what God was like. This is why God decided to make a covenant.”

Big Idea

THE DEVIL KNOWS YOUR NAME BUT CALLS YOU BY YOUR SIN. GOD KNOWS YOUR SIN BUT CALLS YOU BY YOUR NAME.



Elastic Band

Peter Senge (*lecturer at MIT Sloan School of Management*) once held an elastic between his hands. As he stretched his hands apart from each other, his right hand moving up and his left hand moving down, the elastic band started experiencing tension.

This example demonstrated that there is a tension between a *Preferred Future* and a *Current Reality* in every person's life. Peter went on to illuminate the engineering reality that tension will always seek to resolve itself to the more stable state.

If our preferred future (the hope of a restored relationship with God and an eternal reward) is more stable, more thought of, more talked of ... the tension will automatically begin resolving itself upward. However, if our current reality (the world we live in now) is more stable, all of our aspirations, hopes, and dreams will always resolve themselves downward to the problems of this life.

The reality is that God has a preferred future for each one of us. His desire is to first restore *brokenness* to *beauty* within us and then through us.

Our preferred future begins to be outworked in this world when we accept Jesus as our Saviour and Lord. It then extends to us ruling and reigning again with Jesus in the promised *new Heaven* and *new Earth*,

when He returns as triumphant King (we will chat about this a little more tomorrow).

Journey Of Restoration - Pt 1

Any journey of true restoration begins through salvation.

So, today we're going to start a two-part exercise as we look at an illustrated *Journey of Restoration* that each of us is invited on. You will see an illustrated journey that tells something of the story of the Bible, but this time it's more personal. The journey involves eleven elements that would be good for each of us to understand. It may seem like a lot, but there is a saying that says,

“The longest way round is the shortest way home.” It pretty much means that doing something carefully and properly will ultimately be the best way, causing fewer problems in the long run.

We will cover the first five elements of the journey today and the second six elements tomorrow. Have a read through the illustrated journey, and then consider the more detailed explanation of the five elements we are dealing with today.



14



Journey Of Restoration



01

GOD'S 1st PRIZE
GOD-AND-US - was the grand design and God's ultimate prize.

02

THE FALL
 Humanity **CHOSE SIN OVER GOD** and were separated from God.

SIN →

← GOD

04

CALLING

RESPONDING to God's saving grace by **NOT RESISTING** His grace in our lives.

03

COMMON GRACE

God's **GOODNESS** towards all He created as a sign of His desired redemption.

05

PREVENIENT GRACE

God's supernatural work in our lives to **UNBIND THE WILL** of the fallen person before we can respond to **THE GOSPEL**.

06

FAITH AND REPENTANCE

Establishing Jesus as Saviour and Lord in our lives through **INITIAL AND CONTINUED** faith and repentance.

GOD →

08

JUSTIFICATION

Jesus Christ's **RIGHTEOUSNESS** imputed to us.

← YES

NO →

07

REGENERATION

Being **BORN AGAIN**, establishing a loving relationship with God, and a **DECISIVE BREAK** from sin and sinning.

09

TRANSFORMATION

Our **UNLIKENESS** to Jesus being shaped into a **LIKENESS OF HIM**.



10

GLORIFICATION

HEAVEN



11

GOD'S FINAL PRIZE

Re-establishing the grand design of **GOD-AND-US** to be enjoyed in the New Heaven and New Earth for eternity.



01

God's 1st Prize

God's original intent in the very beginning was always one of enjoying a personal relationship with you. It's not that God needed a relationship with humanity to feel complete – God is perfect and lacks nothing. But we can see through Jesus' relationship with God the Father that God wanted to invite humanity into His family so that we could also experience His love. God-and-Us was the grand design and God's ultimate prize. Psalm 139:16 describes it beautifully, "Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them."⁵⁸

02

The Fallout

We've already discussed the idea of the fallout of humanity from God. In short, humanity chose sin over God. Let's make it personal now. Remember we've already mentioned that sin entered the world through the door Adam opened, establishing the sin-death connection. This sin-death disease is now inherent in all humanity – it's like a genetic disease passed down through our family lines. It's in you and me, separating us from God and inclining us to also choose **sin over God**.

03

Common Grace

Common grace is God's grace to all of humanity that is not part of salvation. It demonstrates God's goodness towards all that He has created, regardless of whether we have chosen to serve Him or not. From a functional family unit and a working government to the beauty of nature, everyone gets to enjoy these things. It is seen in society when unredeemed sinners can do good and bring progress, reflecting the wisdom of their Creator. But common grace also warns of final judgment where the principle of **good = blessing** and **bad = destruction** is played out. Most of all, common grace points humanity to God's goodness and His desire to redeem the beauty within us.

04

Calling

The good news message of Jesus has always been for everyone. This is what makes the salvation story of the Old Testament different from the New Testament. In the Old Testament, the invitation was limited to a single people group, the Israelites. But when Jesus arrived, He threw the invitation open to all people. **Calling** is the reason why Christians need to share their faith with others. The Bible asks the question, "But how can people call for help if they don't know who to trust? And how can they know who to trust if they haven't heard of the One [Jesus] who can be trusted? And how can they hear if nobody tells them?" (Romans 10:14, MSG). When we share our faith in the goodness of God – that He **can** be trusted, we allow God to start working in the hearts of other people.

05

Prevenient Grace

Because of the fallout and the sin-death disease the human soul is infected with, we are not able to choose God out of our own strength. Remember the example of me needing to do our 0% so that God's grace can do His 100%? The term for this is **Prevenient Grace**. It is where God's grace allows the worst effects of our sinfulness to be overcome to enable us to freely respond to God's offer of salvation – by not resisting His grace. Roger Olson describes a person's non-resistance to God's grace like this: "It is merely deciding to allow grace to do its work by laying down all attempts at self-justification and self-purification, and admitting that only Christ can save."⁵⁹

**God's grace is His way of showing you that He knows your sin... but calls you by your name!
To be continued...**



14





Practical Application

Beginning your *Journey of Restoration*.

Looking at the first five elements of the *Journey of Restoration* illustration, answer the following questions:

Q1: What one new insight related to the ideas of the first five elements of the journey do you have?

Q2: What are five aspects of God’s common grace that you are grateful for? (For example: family, nature, the food we eat etc.)

01

02

03

04

05

Q3: A common theme which has been highlighted a few times: *Our 0% is necessary for God to do His 100%*. How would you capture, in your own words, what this means to you? (You can also read Ephesians 2:8-10 for some help if you would like.)

DAY 15



**Y - FOR
YOUR ROLE
IN THE STORY**



15



Alasdair MacIntyre

“I cannot answer the question, ‘What ought I to do?’ unless I first answer the question, ‘Of which story am I a part?’”

Big Idea

**IN LIGHT OF YOUR
FUTURE, WHAT IS
THE WISE THING
TO DO?**



Journey Of Restoration - Pt 2

Remember Peter Senge's example of the elastic band between his hands from yesterday? Today we are going to continue the conversation around your *Journey of Restoration*. Yesterday we covered the first five elements of the journey, and today we will chat through the final six elements. Let's get to it!

06

Faith & Repentance

Although *Prevenient Grace, Faith & Repentance, Regeneration, and Justification* are shown separately in the illustration, the reality is that they all happen at the same time - God is doing a whole lot in the moment He saves you! To explain the different ideas, I have shown them separately. Ever heard of the term conversion?

People often use it to describe when they responded to God's call to salvation and there is a good reason why. The term conversion itself means turning and explains a turning away from sin and a turning towards Jesus. The turning away from sin is called repentance, and the turning towards Jesus is called faith - both are needed! But, faith and repentance don't only play a vital role in a person's conversion; they also play a role in each of our continuing Christian lives. Our continued faith is choosing to trust in Jesus again and again, regardless of the situations (or emotions) we may be facing. Continued repentance is not asking to be saved again - **His grace does a one-time work that can't be undone.**

Instead, it means always showing a soft heart towards God - remember, God is not looking for perfection from us, but He is looking for progress. Making mistakes, saying sorry, and changing our behaviour is all part of progress.

07

Regeneration

The Apostle John describes regeneration as being born again (John 3:3). The Bible tells us that we are **totally new** creations! God's power gives us a fresh start - our old sinful **life vanishes**, and everything in us is made new (2 Corinthians 5:17). Back to the example of the **Tree of Pride** and the **Tree of Love** - it is in this moment that God not only plants in our hearts a new seed of spiritual life containing Jesus' DNA, but He also takes us out of the **toxic soil** of the culture around us, and plants us into the **rich soil** of His love.

08

Justification

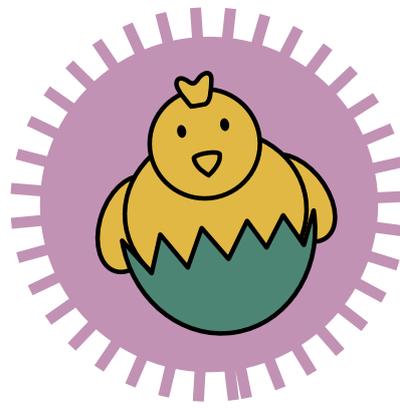
While *Calling, Regeneration, and Faith & Repentance* deal with the restoration of relationship with God, the legal consequence of our sin must still be dealt with (remember the story of Bianca and Shirley). This is where justification comes in! Imagine God is looking from His judge's seat towards you and Jesus. If you are standing next to Jesus, He sees you and you have to give your own account. But if you slip in behind Jesus (trusting in what He has done), when God looks at you He only see Jesus' perfection - your sins are forgiven and Jesus' righteousness belongs to you. Put differently, God sees Jesus' perfect life when He looks at you - just-as-if-you-never-sinned! It is a gift given to us in a moment, nothing of our own doing.

09

Transformation

God's grace doesn't only save us; it is present in our lives to transform us to look more and more like Jesus. When we are regenerated, we are set free from being slaves to sin, but that doesn't mean we will never sin again; it just means that sin is no longer our **master**. By submitting to the Holy Spirit's leading in our lives (He's so real and wants a relationship with us

- but more about that in Chapter 5), areas of our *unlikeness* to Jesus are transformed into His *likeness*. I love how Dallas Willard puts it, "Grace is opposed to earning, not effort."⁶⁰ This means that we don't need to earn God's favour, it is already given to us (remember justification), but our effort to become more like Jesus does carry with it a separate set of *rewards*.



Hatched Or Horrible

C.S. Lewis used a great example to describe an individual's journey of restoration. He put it like this: "It may be hard for an egg to turn into a bird: it would be a jolly sight harder for it to learn to fly while remaining an egg. We are like eggs at present. And you *cannot* go on indefinitely being just an ordinary, decent egg. We must be hatched or go bad."⁶¹

That is the decision each of us faces. Do you *hatch* into a new creation by being born again? Or do you stay in a state of sin and *go bad* (horrible thought right?) This is the choice that the **S.T.O.R.Y. of the Bible illustrates for you personally. You can choose to entrust your life and your future to Jesus, or you can choose to continue in your own ways.**

10

Glorification

Glorification describes the complete perfection of believers, where any brokenness is restored to the full beauty of being created in God's image. We will each look the same as Jesus, perfect and without sin. This will happen when Jesus returns as King to rule and reign forever. Some people talk about God's covenant being fully fulfilled, others about the Kingdom of God being fully established, and still others about the *new Heaven* and *new Earth*. All of these speak to the same event of *Glorification* - just seen from different angles.

11

God's Ultimate Prize

God's first prize is also His *ultimate prize* - God in unbroken relationship with humanity! The end of the story points to the complete restoration of God's original plan, to dwell with His people in a place where His goodness is expressed in every aspect of creation. We can't yet imagine what this ultimate prize will look like, and no amount of dreaming would ever come close. It's like trying to explain to someone who has only ever known riding a bicycle (never mind a car) what it feels like to fly in an airplane! The gap in their current experience to the new knowledge of flight would be a small drop in the ocean compared to the inconceivable joy which awaits believers in eternity one day.

**YOUR
ROLE**



15



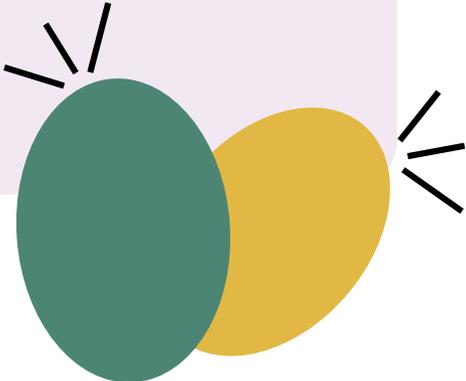
Practical Application

Choosing the right path in your *Journey of Restoration*.

The big idea today is: "In light of your future, what is the wise thing to do?" For the activity today, you will complete a Crossword Puzzle to see if you have grasped the concepts that we have covered. Hopefully, by understanding them, you will be better positioned to make a good choice about your future.

A crossword puzzle grid with 18 numbered starting points for words. The grid is composed of white squares for letters and empty spaces for gaps. The numbers are as follows:

- 1: Down, 10 squares
- 2: Down, 7 squares
- 3: Down, 7 squares
- 4: Down, 5 squares
- 5: Down, 7 squares
- 6: Down, 7 squares
- 7: Down, 5 squares
- 8: Down, 5 squares
- 9: Down, 3 squares
- 10: Across, 5 squares
- 11: Across, 7 squares
- 12: Across, 5 squares
- 13: Across, 3 squares
- 14: Across, 10 squares
- 15: Across, 3 squares
- 16: Across, 10 squares
- 17: Across, 10 squares
- 18: Across, 8 squares





15



DOWN		ACROSS	
1	God's ultimate desire with humanity can be summed up in one word.	10	Even if people think they know about religion, we should not take for granted that they know which message?
2	Many people experienced a poor representation of Christianity through this.	11	The Bible describes Babylon as a 'fallen _____' that opposes God's reign.
3	The tension in Israel's story in the Old Testament is between a _____ God and a much-loved-yet-rebellious people. (Hint: three words).	12	The anti-God state of mind that we inherited from the Fallout.
4	The great leader that the Old Testament promises will deliver Israel and restore all creation.	13	The central theme of the Bible is redemption, which means to pay a _____.
5	The key event that began the spread of a God-movement across the world.	14	What can our 0% response be described as? (Hint: two words)
6	The act of turning away from sin.	15	It breaks our close relationship with God, causes us to be afraid of God, and we end up living our lives outside of His good will for us.
7	The original mandate of humanity was to establish goodness and _____ wherever they went.	16	The invitation to Christianity has always been for them. (Hint: Romans 10:13)
8	The act of turning towards Jesus.	17	We are the _____ of all of God's creation.
9	Describes you accepting God's goodness rather than trying to earn His approval.	18	It is what God uses to bring you to a place of more-than-enough, overflowing joy.

CHAPTER

04



**IS THE BIBLE
TRUE AND
TRUSTWORTHY?**



DETAILED TESTING

In the audit process, Step 4 is where the detailed testing takes place. It is also where the concept of materiality (as previously discussed) really comes into play. The primary source of evidence for Christianity is found in the pages of the Bible. In this chapter, we will explore in more detail whether a book written over a 1,600-year period, around 2,000 years ago, can be considered reliable. Essential to this consideration is whether or not the Bible has proof that it is divinely authored. We also need to consider whether the perceived contradictions (or errors) in the Bible can be adequately explained or whether they render the entire Bible untrustworthy.

Josh McDowell

“Not accepting the Bible must result from being either biased, prejudiced, or simply unread.”

IN CHAPTER FOUR WE WILL:

- Consider the history of how the Bible came to be what we know today.
- Explore the claim that the Bible is divinely authored and address reasons for perceived contradictions in the Bible.
- Reach a conclusion as to whether the Bible is true and trustworthy, and if it is, what that conclusion would require of us.

Let me start this chapter by saying, the Bible is no ordinary book. In the book, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, the authors warn us that “we cannot simply pick up the Bible and read it like a familiar book.”⁶²

If we did this, we would run the risk of approaching the Bible with the lens of our preconceived ideas and experiences.

The Bible is an authentic compilation of historical literature, but it also claims to be *living and active* (Hebrews 4:12). So, when reading the Bible, we need to first be *looking back*, trying to find the intended historical meaning for the original audience. But then we also need to be *looking forward*, trying to find the significance of the text to the world we live in as believers today.

By approaching the Bible in this way (looking back and looking forward), you are setting yourself up for success. But there is another essential aspect to really understanding the Bible. In discovering the divine, always-inspiring, never-changing truth of God’s Word (another name to refer to the Bible), you should try to be aware of the Holy Spirit partnering with you as you read. One of the Holy Spirit’s functions is to lead us into all truth. When Jesus was telling His closest disciples that He was going to leave them, He said, “When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own but will tell you what He has heard. He will tell you about the future” (John 16:13, NLT).⁶³

The Holy Spirit helps us build a bridge from the ancient world of the Bible to our own time and culture in a way that allows us to apply God’s Word to our lives. When you discover the Bible to be *true* (historically) and *trustworthy* (for our lives today) ... everything changes!



DAY 16



HOW DID THE BIBLE COME TO BE?

Terran Williams

“With a cast of thousands scattered over thousands of years, it’s clearly not a simple story. But, see, that is what adds wonder and weight to the plausibility of its claimed supernatural orchestration.”

Big Idea

THE BIBLE IS AUTHORED BY GOD BUT WRITTEN BY PEOPLE.



16





St Paul's Cathedral was built by Sir Christopher Wren, the greatest English architect of his time. He started at the age of forty-three in 1675 and for thirty-six years, the cathedral was built under one architect. It was completed in 1711, when Christopher Wren was seventy-nine years of age.

Sir Christopher Wren *built* St Paul's Cathedral, but actually, he didn't lay a single stone. There were stonemasons, carpenters, builders, and many other people involved over a long period of time. But Sir Christopher Wren was the inspiration behind it all.

So it is with the Bible. There are many different writers; but ONE architect and ONE inspiration behind it all: God Himself.

All Scripture is *God-breathed*. That's the literal translation of the word *inspired* by God. Of course, there were human authors. Over a period of 1600 years, there were at least

forty authors, including: kings, poor people, philosophers, fishermen, poets, statesmen, historians, and doctors. They wrote different types of literature, such as history, poetry, prophecy, letters. So this book is 100 percent written by human authors. But it claims to be 100 percent inspired by God. How can that be? The same way that Sir Christopher Wren built St Paul's Cathedral.⁶⁴

Becoming The Bible

The Bible as we know it today is made up of two testaments, the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament is the name given to the books (39 in total) describing God's *Old Covenant* with the people of Israel. The Old Testament promises a *New Covenant* where all people will be invited into God's family (not just Israel). The New Testament books (27 in total) tell the story of how Jesus ushered in this new covenant and then how his disciples began to spread the good news of this new covenant throughout the known world.

Part of the wonder of the Bible is how it takes place over thousands of years, with thousands of cast members, yet tells the same story. Theologian, Terran Williams, thinks that this attribute alone adds *weight and wonder* to the divine authoring of the Bible - I have to agree with him!⁶⁵





How Did All The Pieces Of This Puzzle Come Together?

A great video to watch is The Bible Project's, *What is the Bible?*⁶⁶ It provides a great backdrop to what we will discuss below.



The 39 books of the Old Testament is called the *Tanahk* (TaNaK).

Tanahk (TaNaK) is an acronym:

- T** T stands for *Torah*, sometimes called *the law* - that's Israel's five-book foundation story
- N** N stands for *Nevi'ih*, - the Hebrew word for *prophets*. This represents Israel's story told from the prophets' view as well as their prophetic writings.
- K** The K stands for *Ketuvim* - the Hebrew word for *writings*. This is a diverse collection of poetic books, wisdom books, and more stories.

TORAH 'Law'	NEVI'IM 'Prophets'	KETUVIM 'Writings'
Includes:	Includes:	Includes:
Genesis • Exodus Leviticus • Numbers Deuteronomy	Joshua • Judges • Samuel (1&2) • Kings (1&2) Isaiah • Jeremiah • Ezekiel Hosea • Joel • Amos Obadiah • Jonah • Micah Naham • Habakkuk • Zephaniah Haggai • Zechariah • Malachi	Chronicles (1&2) Daniel • Ezra Nehemiah • Psalms Proverbs • Job Song of Songs • Ruth Lamentations Ecclesiastes • Esther

Remember, on Day 11, we discussed how the story of God's covenant with Israel depicts the tension between a good-yet-just God and a much-loved-yet-rebellious people? Well, the Old Testament ends building the people's hope towards a new leader that will come and deliver God's people once-and-for-all, renewing all of creation as he does it. But then, like the anti-climax of all anti-climaxes, the Tanahk ends without this leader arriving!

The Jewish people believed that the writings making up the Tanahk were inspired by God and that He was speaking to them through what they called the *Scriptures* or *God's Word*.



16





After four hundred years without a single utterance from any prophet, a new *Jewish prophet* arrives on the scene and claims that He was carrying the story of the Tanakh forward. But this *prophet* was different from all of the rest, His name was Jesus.

He didn't only claim that He was delivering a message from God, He claimed to be the *Son of God*. Jesus said that He had come to fulfil the prophecies of the Old Testament *deliverer* who was promised. But, Jesus was soon killed, and the story seemed to have ended. But had it?

Jesus' first followers, called *the Apostles*, claim that He rose from the dead and appeared to them, instructing them to continue the work which He had begun.

These Apostles then composed new literary works about the story of Jesus, called *The Good News* or *The Gospel*. They also formed an account of the spread of the Jesus movement, called Acts, and then they circulated letters to Jesus- followers all around the ancient world. The Apostles wrote everything as a fulfilment of the epic story found in the Tanakh.

The church was formed directly after Jesus' resurrection, and together with the Tanakh also regarded the Apostles' writings as *Scripture* and *God's Word*.

The Council

However, before the Bible could become a single collection of all of the God-inspired *Scripture*, one obstacle needed to be overcome. At the time of the early church, there were other ancient Jewish writings that some claimed had the same authority as Scripture - although this was less contested. Far more contested were other first-century writings from witnesses giving accounts of the life of Jesus - why were they not to be regarded as having the same authority as the writings that were included?

There was actually a lot of debate, and some confusion, about what should qualify as the inspired *Word of God* - or *Scripture*. So, in CE 363, the *Council of Laodicea*, which consisted of the early Church fathers, gathered together and decided that only the 39 books of the Old Testament should be regarded as Scripture, together with 27 books now regarded as the New Testament. These combined 66 books were to be read in the churches and form what we know as the Bible today.

Terran Williams describes the three tests that the Council of Laodicea used to formulate and finalize their list of 27 New Testament books:⁶⁷

1. *The Test of Apostolicity*. This first test asks, 'Is the author an apostle or do they have a connection with an apostle?'
2. *The Test of Content*. This second test asks, 'Does the book reflect consistency of moral values and doctrine with what had been accepted as orthodox teaching?'
3. *The Test of Acceptance*. This third test asks, 'Was the book accepted by the church at large?'



Practical Application

Getting ready for an investigation.

There is still a way to go before being able to conclude that the Bible is true and trustworthy, but this was only laying the foundation for our investigation. Before we continue, take some time to match the concepts necessary in a good investigation with the correct explanation of the concept.⁶⁸

Concept	Description
1 Presumption	A Two people may witness the same event yet see or hear it differently. That doesn't mean they are lying.
2 Witness Accounts	B When two or more people work together to do something harmful or illegal and then lie about it so no one will find out. Often, the longer the time from the event, the harder it is to keep a made-up story from being found out.
3 Inference	C Used to figure out if a piece of evidence has been altered by asking two important questions: 1. Who handled it? 2. How did they describe it? If there is consistency in the evidence trail, it can be relied on.
4 Chain Of Custody	D Something you assume to be true, even before you begin investigating.
5 Conspiracy	E When we come to a reasonable conclusion based on the evidence.

As we continue the investigation, these terms will be important, so you will need to remember them. The answer sheet to the *Match The Columns* is included in Appendix 1.



16



DAY 17



**IS THE
BIBLE CREDIBLE?**

F.J.A. Hort

(World Renowned Textual Critic)

“In the variety and fullness of the evidence on which it rests, the text of the New Testament stands absolutely and unapproachably alone amongst ancient prose writings.”

Big Idea

IF YOU ACCEPT JULIUS CAESAR LIVED, YOU SHOULD HAVE NO PROBLEM ACCEPTING JESUS DID TOO.

Sayings Stick

Sometimes, sayings just stick. Ever heard any of these sayings:⁶⁹

- You need to be a *peacemaker* - or *hold out an olive branch* (similar meanings).
- He was the *scapegoat*.
- She *hoped against hope*.
- They handed their project in at *the eleventh hour*.
- What about someone who is a *thorn in the flesh* or a *wolf in sheep's clothing*?
- Have you ever been encouraged to *fight the good fight* or heard it said that you made it by the *skin of your teeth*?
- Have *the powers that be* ever made a decision that was out of your control?
- Or have you seen *the blind leading the blind*?
- Some people are a *law unto themselves*, and a *leopard can't change its spots*.

These are just a few of the many sayings that we use today that actually come from the Bible. Isn't it incredible how things can pass down from generation to generation, span across cultures, and still be as relevant today as they were hundreds or thousands of years ago?

Well, that's what we are going to be exploring today - how do things get passed down accurately over an extended period, where the original writings are no longer around to be inspected.

Textual Criticism

One of the concepts that investigators need to be familiar with when evaluating the reliability of evidence is the *Chain of Custody*. Yesterday we learned that the *Chain of Custody* is used to figure out if a piece of evidence has been altered by asking two important questions: **1. Who handled it? 2. How did they describe it?**

If there is consistency in the evidence trail, it can be relied on.

The Bible is so vast and covers such an extended period that for the purposes of today, *we will just be considering the validity of the New Testament - after all, this is where we find Jesus, the cornerstone on which all of Christianity is built*. While there are vital external sources confirming the validity of the New Testament, most of what we know is from the New Testament itself.

Now, remember, the New Testament was written on materials like papyrus almost 2,000 years ago. So, there are no longer original copies available to inspect. But, we can take the same principle as *Chain of Custody* and apply it to these ancient texts. In fact, there is actually a whole science dedicated to the verification of ancient documents; it's called *textual criticism*.





Textual criticism is the study of copies of any written document where the original is not available. By looking at the copies, we can discover the original manuscript's wording. And like our *Chain Of Custody* concept, textual criticism has two important criteria when testing:⁷⁰

1. *Firstly, the more copies of the manuscripts that you have that corroborate each other (meaning they are the same), the more we can place reliance on the copies.*
2. *Secondly, the shorter the period between the original manuscript and the copies been written, the more accurate they are likely to be.*

So, looking at the table below, let's evaluate the reliability of a number of historical documents.⁷¹

- *Herodotus and Thucydides* were ancient historians and both were written in the 5th century BC. Earliest copies we have are CE 900. So there's a 1,300-year gap, and we have only eight copies of each. Yet, no classical scholar would doubt that these writings have come down to us in a form that is true to their original copies.
- *Livy's Roman History*: 900-year gap, 20 copies.
- *Caesar's Gallic War*: 950-year gap, 9-10 copies.
- *Tacitus*: 1,000-year gap, 20 copies.
- Then we come to the *New Testament*: written between CE 40-100, earliest manuscript CE 130, 5,309 Greek manuscripts, 10,000 Latin, 9,300 others. Totally unique amongst ancient prose writings.

WORK	WRITTEN	EARLIEST COPY	TIME LAPSE	COPIES
HERODOTUS	488-428 BC	CE 900	1,300 YEARS	8
THUCYDIDES	460-400 BC	CE 900	1,300 YEARS	8
LIVY'S ROMAN HISTORY	59 BC- CE 17	CE 900	900 YEARS	20
CAESAR'S GALLIC WAR	58-50 BC	CE 900	930 YEARS	9-10
TACITUS	CE 100	CE 1100	1,000 YEARS	20
NEW TESTAMENT	CE 40-100	CE 130 (FULL MANUSCRIPTS CE 350)	30-310 YEARS	5,000+ GREEK 10,000 LATIN 9,300 OTHERS



As you can see, the historical accounts of Jesus are as solid (if not more) than those related to Caesar. Caesar also had people close to him compile the ancient writings documenting his endeavours, *so why are people happy to accept Caesar but not Jesus?* Professor Darrell Bock provides some helpful insight here,

“The nature of the claims tied to Jesus often gets in the way of such an assessment. Many hesitate to see Jesus in the same light as Caesar since the Gospel sources testify that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God and performed unusual signs and wonders to validate his claim.”⁷²

Professor Bock provides evidence of contemporary writers in Jesus’ time (non- Christian) *who don’t argue that He didn’t perform miracles*; instead, they argue that He performed miracles because he was a magician - not the Son of God. Bock notes,

“This is significant since it demonstrates no one was arguing that the accounts of Jesus’s actions were fabricated or mythical. An argument so popular today

(partly because of our distance to the events) isn’t even made by ancients in their public discussion of Jesus.”⁷³

So, if you are happy to accept that Julius Caesar lived, you should have no problem accepting Jesus did too ... and believing that His miracles were real!



17





Practical Application

The New Testament is super reliable.

So there you have it. When evaluating the New Testament writings on the same basis that all other ancient texts are authenticated, it is clear that the New Testament accounts are super reliable - we're off to a good start in our investigation.

Capture three key ideas that you can share with others to explain why Jesus was a real man, or why the New Testament is reliable.

01

02

03

DAY 18

Written By
Men - Inspired By
God



Photo by [Pixabay](#) from [Pexels](#).

D. James Kennedy

“Of all the attacks that have ever been made upon the Scripture, there has never been one book written by a skeptic to disprove the prophecies of the Scripture. Though the Bible has been attacked at every other place, the one place where God rests his inspiration is that the things he foretells come infallibly to pass.”

Big Idea

**THE EXTRAORDINARY
DOES NOT HAPPEN
APART FROM
THE ORDINARY.**



18





Route 66

Perhaps you have heard of Route 66 in the USA? Route 66 is one of the most iconic highways in the world. Route 66 is affectionately known as *America's Main Street* or *Mother Road* and runs from East to West across America.

Let's carry the idea of Route 66 across to the Bible for a moment. Firstly, Route 66 should help you remember how many books of the Bible there are – you guessed it, 66 (39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament). But to take it a step further, you will find that each of the books of the Bible finds an *onramp* to Jesus, the one who calls Himself *The Way* (John 14:6). One defining characteristic distinguishes the Bible from any other religious or holy book on the planet. That characteristic is the hundreds of predictive prophecies that the Old Testament makes that are fulfilled in Jesus – all roads in the Bible lead to Him. In no other religious writings do we find predictive prophecies like we do in Scripture.

“You will find no predictive prophecies whatsoever in the writings of Buddha, Confucius, Mohammed, Lao-Tse, or Hinduism”⁷⁴ – this is a significant consideration when determining who is the one true God.

If a religious book claimed to be divine in nature but carried no divine inspiration, its authors would be hesitant to make any definitive predictions (prophecies) in the book that couldn't be verified in the future. Why? If what was predicted did not

come true, the book's claim to be divine would be quickly dismissed.

Guess Who

Let's play a game. I am going to list eight separate statements. All of these statements describe a single historical figure. After you have read the list of statements, I want you to say who you think it is.

- The Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem.
- He would be preceded by a messenger (John the Baptist).
- He was to enter Jerusalem on a donkey.
- He would be betrayed by a friend, and his hands and feet pierced.
- His betrayer would be given thirty pieces of silver.
- The betrayal money would be thrown into the house of God and used to buy a potter's field.
- He would be silent before his accusers.
- His hands and feet would be pierced and he would die accounted among criminals.

So, who do you think the statements are talking about?

You guessed it, Jesus.

But here's the incredible significance! All of those statements are taken from Scriptures in the Old Testament, which was completed some four hundred years before Jesus was born. D. James Kennedy notes,

“No critic, no atheist, no agnostic has ever once claimed that any one of those writings was written after his [Jesus'] birth. *In fact, they were translated from Hebrew*

into Greek in Alexandria some 150 years before he was born. If this is merely a book written by men, would you please explain to me how these words were written?"⁷⁵

But these statements only account for eight of the many prophecies that Jesus fulfilled! In *The Basis of Christian Faith*, Floyd Hamilton writes, "there are in the Old Testament **332 distinct predictions** which were literally fulfilled in Christ."⁷⁶

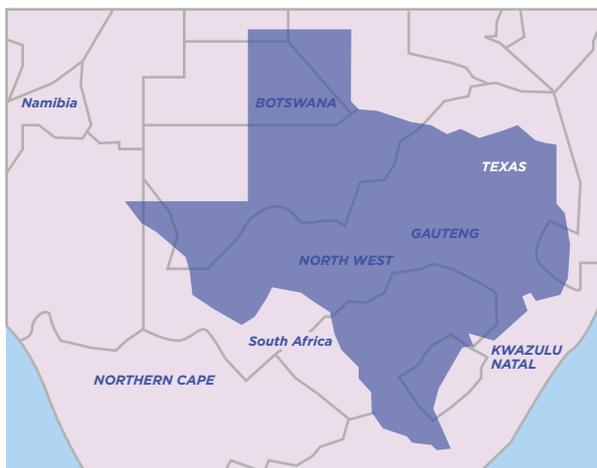
What Are The Chances

Peter Stoner, Chairman of the Departments of Mathematics and Astronomy at Pasadena City College until 1953, examined the mathematical possibility of **just eight predictions** (like those listed above) being fulfilled by **one person** (never mind all 322 of them).

His calculations found that the chance that any man might have lived down to the present time and fulfilled all eight prophecies is 1 in 10¹⁷ (10 to the 17th power). That would be 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000 (17 zeroes after the one).



To help us comprehend this staggering probability, Stoner (who was American) used a silver dollar coin in an illustration – the silver dollar is slightly bigger than South Africa’s five rand coin. If you had to lay 10¹⁷ silver dollar coins all over Texas (a state in the USA), they would cover the entire state – two feet deep! The whole of South Africa is just less than twice as big as the state of Texas (1.7979 to be exact).⁷⁷ So that would mean the dollar coins would be 34 cm deep all across South Africa – you get the idea, that’s a lot of coins! Let’s continue with Peter’s example.



South Africa is 1.8 times larger than Texas

Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man, from their day to the present time, providing they wrote them according to their own wisdom.

Now these prophecies were either given by inspiration of God or the prophets just wrote them as they thought they should be. In such



18





a case the prophets had just one chance in 10¹⁷ of having them come true in any man, but they all came true in Christ.

This means that the fulfilment of these eight prophecies alone proves that God inspired the writing of these prophecies to a definiteness which lacks only one chance in 10¹⁷ of being absolute.⁷⁸

**What is the more reasonable explanation?
Answer: The Bible is written by men but inspired by God.**

What About Errors?

Remember when we discussed the concept of materiality when doing detailed testing in auditing? I mentioned that no audit will be 100% free of misstatements or errors. However, we must evaluate the *nature* or *quantity* of the mistakes to determine if they are *significant enough* to actually impact the stakeholders' decisions when reading the business' records. If they won't affect the stakeholders' decisions, the accounting information is still reliable, and the errors are therefore immaterial (not material).

**So are there errors and inconsistencies in the Bible?
Answer: Yes.**

Some sceptics have devoted much of their lives to disprove the Bible, so you can imagine that there are many arguments around this topic. But for today, let's discuss one of these areas. Different versions of certain New Testament passages arose from differences in the copies of manuscripts used when translating.

You can imagine that with over 20,000 ancient manuscript copies, there could have been a copying error here and there. But are these inconsistencies material or not?

When you consider New Testament variants, they are generally clustered into four categories:⁷⁹

1. *Spelling differences;*
2. *Minor differences that don't affect translation;*
3. *Differences that affect the meaning of the text but aren't viable; and*
4. *Differences that affect the meaning of the text and are viable.*

Of these four categories, the only one that we really need to be worried about is the fourth category. And as it turns out, *less than one percent of all textual variants belong to this group.*⁸⁰

Even Dr. Bart Ehrman, a Bible sceptic and atheist, has acknowledged, "Essential Christian beliefs are not affected

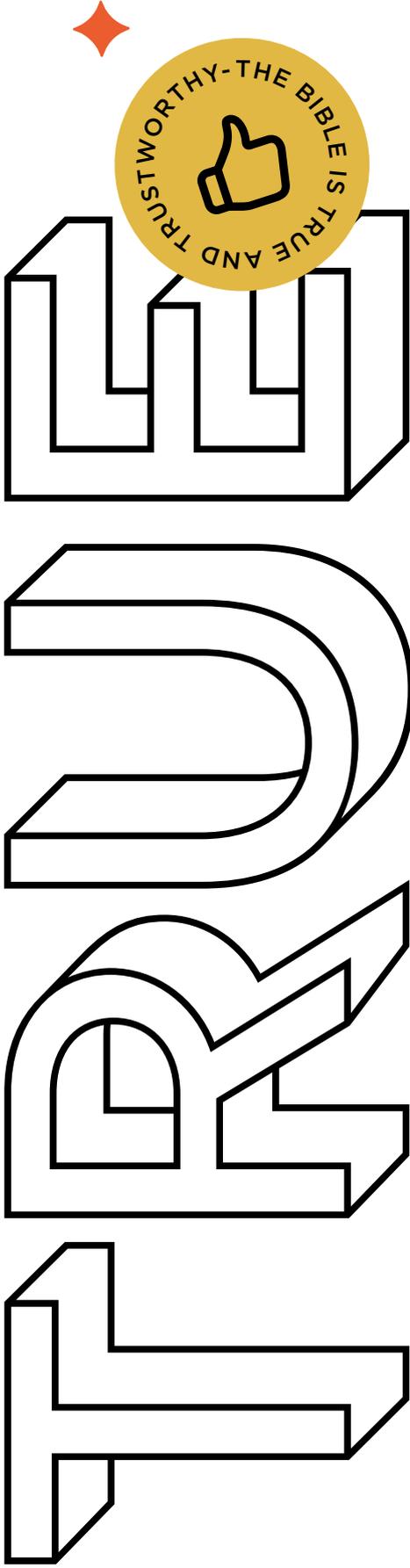


by textual variants in the manuscript tradition of the New Testament.”⁸¹

As in this example, what you will find with the many arguments is that each of them can be refuted to ensure the internal consistency and authenticity of the Bible.

In his book, *New International Encyclopaedia of Bible Difficulties*, Gleason Archer (who taught for more than thirty years in the field of Biblical criticism) concludes: “There is a good and sufficient answer in Scripture itself to refute every charge that has ever been leveled against it. But this is only to be expected from the kind of book the Bible asserts itself to be, the [transcription] of the infallible, inerrant Word of the Living God.”⁸²

Enough said. The Bible IS true and trustworthy and IS divinely inspired!





Practical Application

Reflecting on a *lot* of information.

We have worked through a lot of information over the past few days! Now take the time to answer the question below. But don't just write the first thing that comes to mind. Be like an investigator, and reflect on all of the evidence you have read.

Q1: What five new insights or ideas do you have about Jesus, the Bible, or the New Testament based on our investigation so far?

01

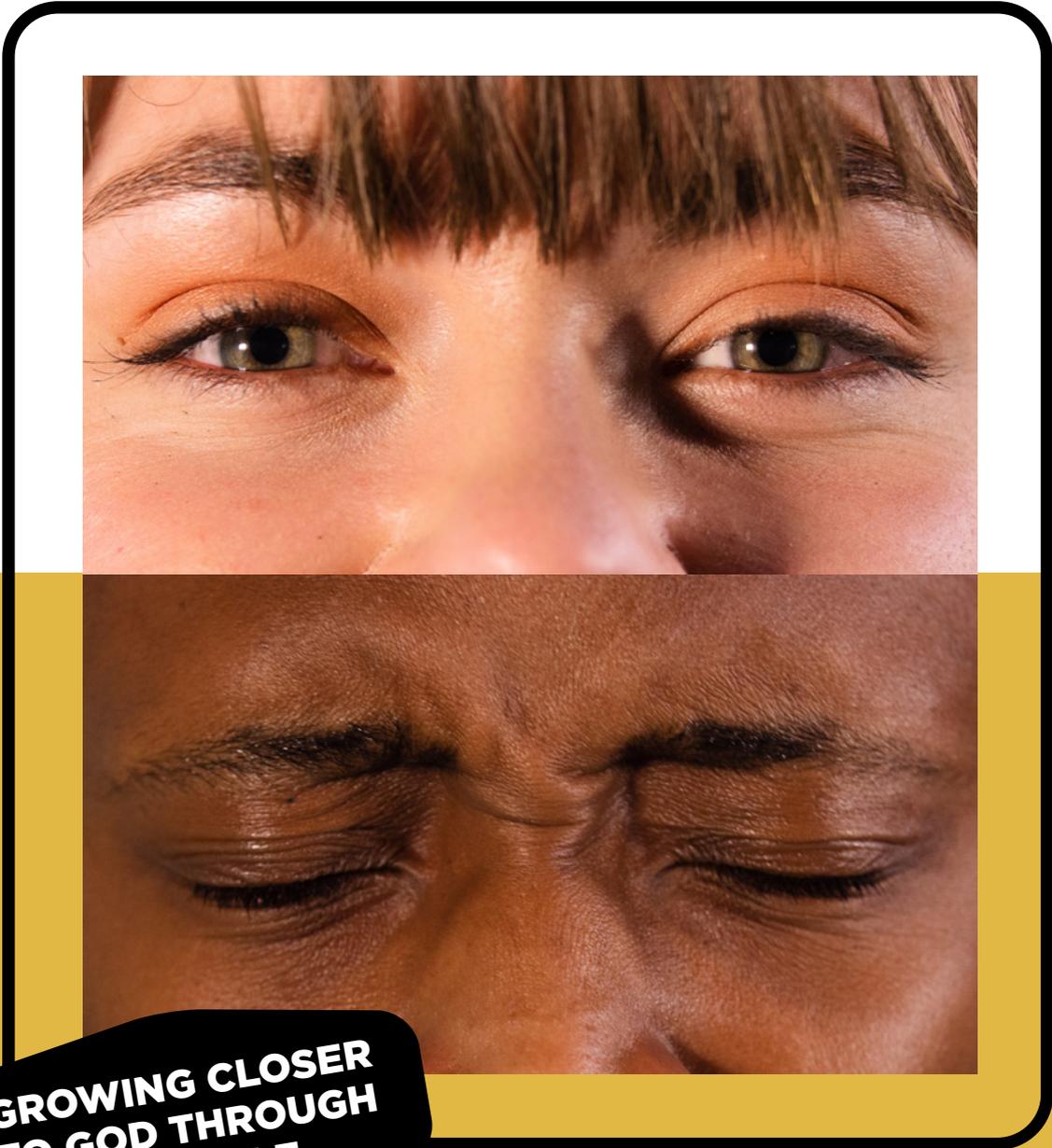
02

03

04

05

DAY 19



**GROWING CLOSER
TO GOD THROUGH
THE BIBLE**

Terran Williams

**“I have this in common
with you: neither of us
is neutral when we come
to the Scriptures.”**

Big Idea

**JESUS IS THE
PICTURE THAT GOD
USED TO REVEAL HIS
CHARACTER.**



19





Not Neutral

When it comes to the Bible, everyone has a lens through which they view it. Those who want to disprove it approach the Bibles as sceptics. Those who see it as a rule book approach the Bible as a *fun police manual*. Because of our backgrounds and past experiences with Christianity (and those who call themselves Christians), each of us approaches the Bible with a specific lens, whether we know it or not. So what is the best way to approach reading the Bible?

A helpful way to see the Bible is as a love letter from God to you. I remember when my wife, Abigail, and I used to write each other letters before we were married. Now I'm not the most romantic guy out there, but I just loved receiving Abigail's letters – it wasn't even about the letter itself; it was far more about who was sending it.

And it's the same with the Bible. The Author of this great love letter views you with such immense delight and value that not even the love of every person in the world towards you could compare. God's love for you is so great, and when you comprehend this, you may just view the Bible differently.

The Apostle Paul reflects on the love of God towards us when he says, "I'm absolutely convinced that nothing—nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable—absolutely nothing can get between us and God's love because of the way that Jesus our Master has embraced us" (Romans 8:38-39, MSG).

Jesus' Embrace

The text we've just read speaks of *Jesus' embrace*. One of the ways that you can experience Jesus' embrace is by reading the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). The Gospels are a great place to start if you really want to discover who Jesus is. *Time Magazine* described Jesus as "the most persistent symbol of purity, selflessness and love in the history of humanity."⁸³ He doesn't sound like someone you would need to be afraid of meeting. But how can you meet Him? The Apostle John's first written words give us insight into how someone can *meet* Jesus. Most Bibles translate this passage from the original Greek by referring to the *Word who became flesh* – referencing John's description of Jesus coming to earth in human form. But I really enjoy the way Brian Simmons explains the idea of Jesus as the full embodiment of God's Word – he talks about Jesus as the *Living Expression*. Let's read how John introduces Jesus (John 1:1-5; 9-11, TPT):⁸⁴

In the very beginning the Living Expression was already there. And the Living Expression was with God, yet fully God. They were together—face-to-face, in the very beginning. And through his creative inspiration this Living Expression made all things, for nothing has existence apart from him! Life came into being because of him, for his life is light for all humanity. And this Living Expression is the Light that bursts through gloom – the Light that darkness could not diminish!

For the Light of Truth was about to come into the world and shine upon everyone. He entered into the very world he created, yet the world was unaware. He came to the very people he created – to those who should have recognized him, but they did not receive him.



Turn The Lights On

You can see from this text that Jesus came to **turn the lights on**. Have you ever been in a very dark room (maybe during a power outage) when you literally can't see anything in front of you? It's interesting how you can almost sense where things are, although you can't see anything. On one such occasion, our electricity tripped, and I was trying to make my way through our house to the electric board to turn the power back on. As I navigated through the pitch-dark house, I could **sense** where items of furniture were as I neared them. I walked slowly and cautiously and used my hands to **feel my way in the dark**. I eventually reached the electric board. As soon as I turned the power back on, everything was visible, and I could move freely again.

Jesus came to serve the same function – to turn the lights on.

Remember, for the longest time, the people of Israel had no idea what their God was like. I mean, they could **sense Him** through the way He spoke through the prophets and through the signs and wonders He did (similar to sensing the furniture in the dark). But God wasn't visible to them and they often didn't engage Him with absolute confidence – similar to me, they were trying to **feel their way in the dark**. But, when Jesus arrived, He turned the lights on, and everyone could see exactly what God was like. They could walk with Him and talk with Him, listen to Him and learn from Him, experience His compassion and evidence His care. Everything changed when Jesus came on the scene!

Sadly, the very people who had been patiently waiting for their promised leader (remember Chapter 3) – the ones who should have recognised Him, didn't receive Him. Jesus is on every page of the Gospels, his fingerprints on every page of the Bible. But to truly recognise Him, you have to first be open to **receiving** Him.

What have you got to lose – want to meet the greatest man in history?

John's Jesus

If we considered that the Apostle John was described as the disciple "who Jesus loved,"⁸⁵ it could be fair to expect that we may be introduced to Jesus in a way that differs slightly from the other three gospels. Let's quickly consider the background and structure of John's book about Jesus.

Background

01

If John's gospel had to be described in a single idea, it would be to *believe*. The word *believing* is found one hundred times in John's gospel, no surprise then that John's book about Jesus has been referred to as "the Gospel of believing."⁸⁶ John shares the central purpose of his writings in John 20:30-31 (MSG):

Jesus provided far more God-revealing signs than are written down in this book. These are written down so you will believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and in the act of believing, have real and eternal life in the way he personally revealed it.



19





◆ STRUCTURE ◆

02

JOHN'S SEVEN SIGNS OF TRANSFORMATION

John's gospel has a very specific structure:

1. He introduces Jesus as the *Living Expression of God's Word* - (John 1:1-18)
2. He recalls seven specific signs that demonstrate Jesus as the Son of God - (John 1:19-12:50) - while the other Gospels often call these events miracles, John specifically calls them signs as if directing us to who Jesus really was (the leader that Israel was promised - the Messiah).
3. Jesus' goodbye message and the telling of The Passion (crucifixion) - (John 13:1-20:31) - John's book is by far the longest account of The Passion when compared to the other Gospels.
4. Jesus redeems Peter's betrayal of Him - (John 21:1-25) - three times Jesus affirms Peter to contrast the three times that Peter denied Jesus.

Just over half of John's gospel is dedicated to the seven signs, which symbolize the transformation that Jesus brought through the *New Covenant*. We are going to very briefly look at the themes they reveal to us.



John's Seven Signs Of Transformation

1

Turning of Water into Wine (John 2:1-11)

The first of Jesus' signs was performed at a wedding in Cana and was significant as it symbolized the Gospel (Good News of Jesus) replacing a religious mindset (Judaism).

There is a lot of more profound symbolism and additional meaning to get out of this text. But if you can see that Jesus desires you to experience *relationship* over *religious duty*, that is a great start. John ends this first account off by saying this, "was the first sign Jesus gave, the first glimpse of his glory. And his disciples *believed in him*" (John 2:11, MSG *emphasis* added).

2

Healing a Roman Official's Son (John 4:46-54)

With the theme of *believing* having been initiated through the first sign, Jesus returns to Cana for his second sign. The second sign should be seen in light of Jesus' famous declaration in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."

In John's story leading up to this moment, Jesus had brought the gospel to a respected Jewish teacher (John 3:1-21), then to an outcast Samaritan woman (John 4:1-42), and now to an official working for the great enemy - the Roman government. This love story was revolutionary at the time - everyone expected the Messiah to save the Jews, but definitely not the Samaritans and the Romans. Can you see that Jesus was showing everyone is included?

3

Healing a Lame Man on the Sabbath (John 5:1-15)

Again, this is a sign where much symbolism and meaning can be mined. But, at the very least, here you have a man who does not ask Jesus for help, Jesus asks the man if he wants to get well. This shows that we are saved through God's grace alone (His 100%), it is nothing of our own doing (our 0%).

As an added point of interest, the story references the man being lame for thirty-eight years. Perhaps a reminder that God's people (Israel) had been *lame* in the desert for thirty-eight years because of their stubbornness towards God (Deuteronomy 2:14).



19





4

Feeding the Five Thousand (John 6:1-14)

Jesus' multiplication of the bread and the fish was significant because John describes it as being around the time of the Passover – this was a huge festival held to remember how God fed the people of Israel miraculously in the desert for forty years.

This sign caused the people to rightly recognise that the miracle was a sign of the promised leader – the Messiah.⁸⁷

5

Walking on Water and Stilling the Storm (John 6:16-21)

This fifth sign takes place on the Sea of Galilee. In the Old Testament, God alone rules the seas,⁸⁸ and this sign reveals Jesus's deity and His sovereignty over the world He created.

Interestingly, the city that the disciples were headed to when the storm hit them was called Capernaum and means *village of comfort*.⁸⁹ Jesus' intervention to rescue His disciples from the storm, and deliver them to a *place of comfort*, could also be seen as a sign of the one who is to come once Jesus is rose to Heaven, someone called the *Comforter* and the *Helper* - the Holy Spirit (John 14:26).

6

Healing of a Man Born Blind (John 9:1-12)

The sixth sign of bringing sight to a man born blind carries forward the theme of Jesus declaring, "I am the light of the world" in John 8:12. This sign happened after a lengthy argument between Jesus and the Jews, where Jesus contrasted darkness and light (v. 12); sin and truth (vv. 32-36); slavery and freedom (vv. 32-36); and ultimately, death and life (v. 51).

The Jewish leaders were so *blinded* by hate towards Jesus that when the man who had been healed declared that Jesus must be from God (vv. 33), they kicked the blind man out of their religious community (vv. 9:34).

Are past hurts and negative experiences blinding us to who Jesus really is?

7

Raising Lazarus from the Dead (John 11:1-44)

The seventh sign reveals Jesus not merely as the giver of life, but also the giver of eternal life (vv. 25-26). While life demonstrates the power to exist, resurrection evidences the power to conquer all, even death itself.

Only John's gospel mentions the raising of Lazarus from the dead. And according to John, this is what convinced the religious leaders that they should kill Jesus.



Throughout John’s gospel, there appears to be the golden thread that salvation is obtained through believing in Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God. However, in John 13:34-35, Jesus provides His disciples with the blueprint of what believing in Him would look like as a lifestyle being lived out:

So I give you now a new commandment: Love each other just as much as I have loved you. For when you demonstrate the same love I have for you by loving one another, everyone will know that you’re my true followers.

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19



Relationship



Practical Application

Growing closer to God through the Bible.

For today's activity, you can choose to either have a *Casual Introduction* or a *Proper Introduction* to Jesus.



Casual Introduction

STEP 1: Read each of the passages of scripture that are recorded for the seven signs (will take about 15 minutes).

STEP 2: Based on your readings, complete the two activities below that will help you **see** Jesus more clearly.



Activity 1: Describe THREE attributes of Jesus that you noticed.

01: _____

02: _____

03: _____

Activity 2: List THREE principles/instructions Jesus gave that is good advice.

01: _____

02: _____

03: _____



Proper Introduction

OR

STEP 1: Read the entire book of John (21 chapters - you could do it over a week if you read 3 chapters a day).

STEP 2: Based on your readings, complete the two activities below that will help you **see** Jesus more clearly.

Activity 3: Record THREE questions Jesus asked people that stood out to you.

01: _____

02: _____

03: _____

Activity 4: Having completed Activities 1-3, how would you describe Jesus to someone in THREE words?

01: _____

02: _____

03: _____

DAY 20



**READING FOR
TRANSFORMATION,
NOT INFORMATION**

Photo by [Jonathan Portillo](#) from [Pexels](#). Original photo retouched.

Chris Tomlin

The life that Jesus calls us to is absolute craziness to the world. Sure, it's fine and politically correct to believe in God, but to really love Him is a whole different story."

Big Idea

**WE DON'T NEED AN ALLY;
WE NEED A SAVIOUR
AND LORD. THE BIBLE IS
SUPPOSED TO CHALLENGE
OUR THINKING.**



Eyes To See

Your eyes are one of the most wonderful gifts from God, and they already began some super complex development when you were still in your mother's womb.

After about five months of development in the womb, you had one million optic nerve endings stretch out from your brain to connect with another one million nerve endings that stretched out from your eye. These two million optic nerves then matched up perfectly with one another – that's precision on a whole other level!

But even though all of those perfect matches happened, you still couldn't see because your eyeballs were covered with skin. At about the sixth month, something amazing happens; the skin on your eyeballs splits in two, giving you eyelids.

Without this *SPLIT*, the mystery and magnificence that had gone on before would have all been wasted.⁹⁰

Another 'Split'

In Chapter 3, we learned about the difference between *Regeneration* and *Transformation*. Regeneration happens in an instant when we surrender our lives to Jesus. But transformation occurs over a lifetime as we continue yielding to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. One of the main ways this transformation occurs, is through us reading (and understanding) the Bible and *applying* it to our lives.

Allow me a bit of poetic license here. In the same way that a *split* allows all the mystery and magnificence of our eyes to be realised, I want to suggest a very simple *S.P.L.I.T.* that will allow the mystery and magnificence of the Bible to be realised.



20





Submit To God's Authority

Let's be honest; reading the Bible and applying its truth is going to be really challenging.

The reason is that God's ways are not the ways of the culture we live in. The *sacrificial love* of the Bible goes directly against the *self-serving* practices of the world we live in. But, if we allow the Bible to shape our thinking and instruct our lives - it will change everything! You will find the Holy Spirit empowering you to live a life that looks more and more like Jesus. Rick Warren explains that when we accept God's words as the defining authority in our life, they...

*generate life, create faith, produce transformation, cause miracles, heal hurts, build character, transform circumstances, impart joy, overcome adversity, defeat temptation, infuse hope, release power, cleanse our minds, bring things into being, and guarantee our future forever!*⁹¹



Prevent Bad Interpretations

My brother, Jono, is always up for getting a reaction out of people. He recently sent me an image of a t-shirt with the words, "I can do all things through a verse taken out of context."

It's a play on a Scripture in Philippians 4:11, which people often take out of context - it reads, "I can do all things through him who strengthens me." However, the two verses preceding it talk about learning to be content in every situation, whether in hunger or need. Terran Williams offers some good advice when he suggests that we all go and revisit our favourite verses (usually the one's on *quotable-style* images) to explore the context and discover the actual application.⁹²

Seven questions (the simplified version) that I use when studying a passage may help you - even if you pick three or four of these questions to start with, it will really help you.

Setting Questions

1. Who is the author or speaker? Who were the original recipients?
2. Why was this book written?

Positioning Questions

3. What is the overall message of this book (and genre - poetry, prophetic, narrative, etc.)?
4. What precedes this passage? What follows?



Image source: www.redbubble.com



Structural Questions

5. What verbs are used to describe actions in the passage?
6. Does the author: Make any comparisons? Draw any contrasts? Repeat phrases? Use any figures of speech? Point out any cause and effect relationships?

Summarizing Question

7. What is the big idea of the passage (in your own words)?

Listen To The Timeless Message

When we read passages, not everything we read will be able to be applied to our lives in a significant way.

Some passages are cultural to that time, not universal to ours; some are figurative, not literal; others are peripheral, not primary; perhaps descriptive, not prescriptive – this is the beauty of understanding Scripture and your journey into the Bible.

Terran Williams provides some very practical advice when he encourages Bible readers to search out the timeless messages in Scripture. Depending on the particular passage, this timeless message might be some ...⁹³

- *principle to apply*
- *example to follow*
- *warning to heed*
- *promise to believe*
- *wisdom to learn*
- *instruction to obey*
- *understanding of God and His kingdom to grasp*

Infuse Truth Into Your Lifestyle

It's not enough that I believe the Bible or even memorise the Bible. I actually have to infuse it into my thinking and doing!

Imagine that you have a ten-year-old sister, Thato. Your parents have asked you to look after Thato for two days while they're away. You had gone into Thato's room and it was an absolute mess. So, you asked her to tidy the room and were very specific in terms of your instructions. *"Please pick up all of your clothes off the floor. Place the dirty clothes in the washing bin and those that are clean, fold neatly and pack into your cupboard. Please tidy your school desk. Please pack your books back onto the bookshelf and make your bed. Finally, please remove your three-day-old lunch from your lunch box and take it to the kitchen to wash."* As you leave, you say that you will be back in an hour and you would like to see the room tidy. After the hour is up, you return only to find your sister lying on her bed and the room in the same state as when you left. When you ask why she hasn't done anything, Thato responds with an adequate level of shock,

"Oh, but I have!" "I have memorised everything that you asked me to. Not only that, but I have even visualized how I would go about doing it and how clean my room will look once it's done!"

The story sounds ridiculous, but, too often, that is how many Christians live out their Christianity. Somehow, we have believed the lie that as long as we know what Jesus taught, we don't actually have to do it. When it comes to Biblical truth, *doing a little is far better than knowing a lot.*



20





T Tools, Times, And Teams To Help You

Having discussed all of the above, it really helps to have the right tools to set you on your journey. A great starter pack can be found in the [You Version Bible App](#), which is easy to load on any smartphone.

They have loads of free Bible translations (without adverts) and excellent resources. You can connect with friends on reading plans, create verse images to save and memorise, and much more.

If you want to go a bit deeper, I recommend getting a Bible commentary – verse-by-verse explanations written by brilliant Bible scholars. Two that I have found particularly helpful are:

ESV Study Bible Notes (either on a Bible software or a hard copy), or NIV Application Commentary (book-by-book commentary with modern-day application).

Reading the Bible is a long-distance race, not a short sprint. Daily reading plans are a great way to start allowing God's Word to transform your life. Start small! Even five minutes a day will begin making a difference. Also, remember, you are not reading to *finish* but reading to *understand*. Sometimes I will spend all my allocated time reading a single verse and asking the Holy Spirit to speak to me about it.

Finally, continuing on this journey with the right team of people around is a sure way to succeed. While reading the Bible can be a private devotion, a great expression of studying the Bible is in a group environment. You can often learn much more from having people around you than just trying to understand things by yourself.

I hope that you feel encouraged to get serious about allowing God's Word to transform you.

God's Word

Practical Application

Right now is the best time to start.

A lot of research has been done about people starting to action their thinking in the form of simple goals. Today we're going to help you set some goals when it comes to exploring the Bible.

Q1: What three distractions do you have to let go of that are stopping you from exploring the transforming power of the Bible?

Three empty rounded rectangular boxes for writing answers to Q1.

Q2: What three things do you want to focus on to move yourself forward?

Three empty rounded rectangular boxes for writing answers to Q2.

Time Frame	Q3: What are you going to commit to do in each of the timeframes?	Q4: Who will help you stay accountable to the commitment?
In the next hour I will ...		
In the next day I will ...		
In the next week I will ...		
In the next month I will ...		

Time Frame	Q3: What are you going to commit to do in each of the timeframes?	Q4: Who will help you stay accountable to the commitment?
In the next hour I will ...		
In the next day I will ...		
In the next week I will ...		
In the next month I will ...		



20





**WHAT'S
STOPPING YOU
FROM KNOWING
GOD?**



CHAPTER

05



STEP 5: FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Step 5 in the audit process looks back on all of the work performed, considers the various findings, and makes recommendations for improvements moving forward. You could say it's the *next steps* of the process. Having come this far in considering the Christian faith, Chapter 5 recommends the *next steps* in your personal journey. God is the central theme and focus of our journey to faith and hope. But, true faith is not a religious knowledge *about* God; it's a relational intimacy *with* God.



IN THIS CHAPTER WE WILL:

- Realise that there is a mystery to God that cannot easily be explained - it requires faith.
- Understand that a relationship with the Godhead includes a relationship with God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
- Be invited to enter into a personal relationship with God through the door of faith.

A.W. Tozer

“WHAT COMES INTO OUR MINDS WHEN WE THINK ABOUT GOD IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING ABOUT US.”



If I had to pick the most important chapter of this entire workbook – hands down – it would be Chapter 5!

Hopefully, by taking the time to work through the first four chapters of this workbook (and diligently do the practical application activities), you would have seen there is overwhelming evidence to support a belief in God, faith in Jesus, and the importance of a Christian worldview. Too many Christians, having placed their trust in Jesus, continue in a lifestyle very similar to that of the world they live in, denying the true power of the Christian faith – a relational intimacy with God!

Have you ever heard that saying, “If someone can convince you into something, someone else will be able to convince you out of it?”

The purpose of the first four chapters was not to convince you into believing in Jesus. Instead, it was to help remove any obstacles (or biases) that you have had because of incorrect information about Jesus and the Christian faith.

Earlier, we mentioned that whether you accept or reject God, faith is required to fill the gap of the unknown. Chapter 5 is the faith chapter, where I encourage you to accept the invitation to a *real* relationship with a *real* God!

My daughter, Tyra, was recently given our family’s first pet – a bunny called *Midnight*. One day, Tyra

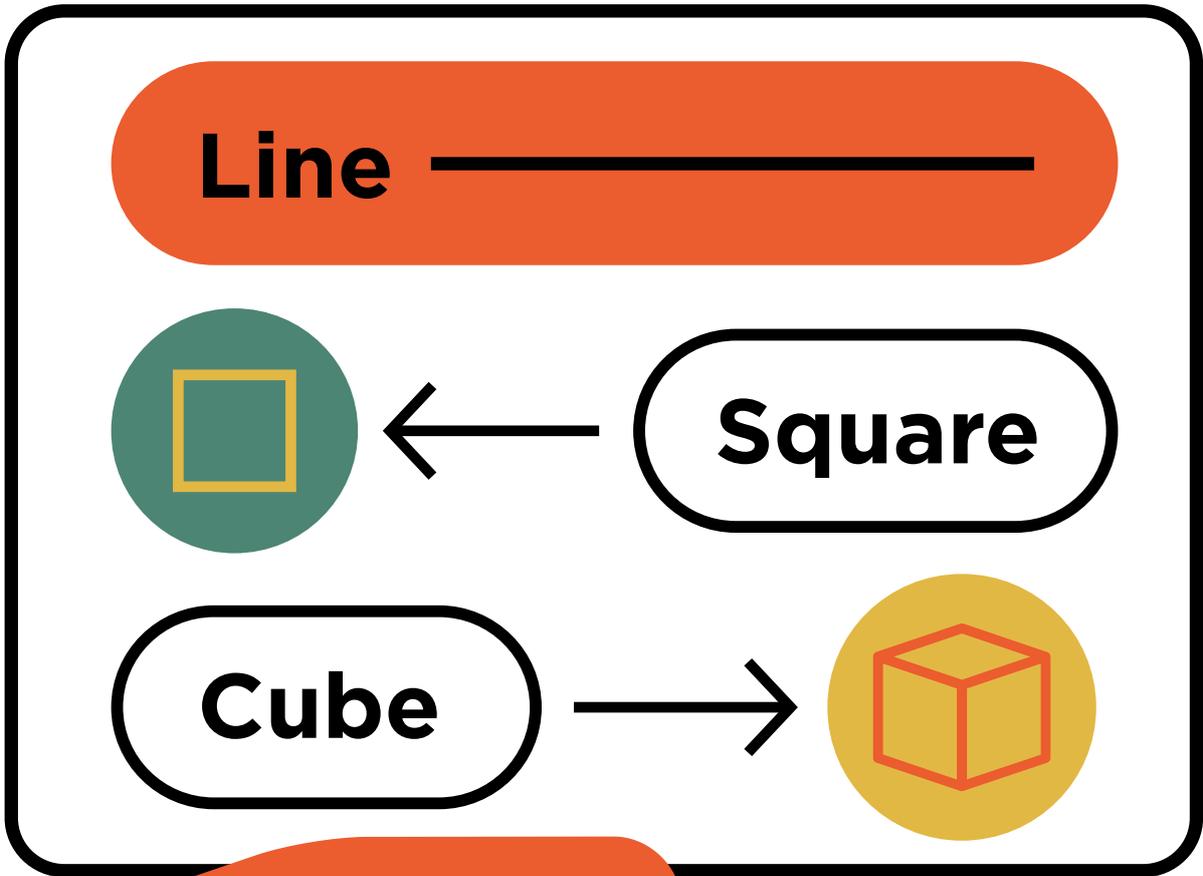
and I were talking about Heaven and spending eternity with God. She had loads of questions, good ones at that, but questions that were hard to answer. Eventually, I used *Midnight* as an example to explain something about Heaven and eternity. *Midnight* has a comfortable life as far as a bunny goes. He is spoiled with all types of bunny treats, gets rocked in Tyra’s arms like a baby, and has a bunny hutch that is like a hotel! But even with everything he enjoys, if Tyra had to try to explain to *Midnight* what a *fridge* was and all of the delicious food that it holds, he would have a hard time understanding. The next day Tyra walked into my study, and with a huge grin across her face, proudly stated, “Daddy, I’ve solved the problem. I took *Midnight* to the fridge, opened it up, and explained everything to him. He now knows what a fridge is!”

The eternity that we will spend with God will be as different to our current lives as what a fridge is to *Midnight*. But the *relational intimacy* that the Bible invites us to enjoy with God here on earth provides a short preview of what eternity will be like.

The Apostle Paul encourages us: “God’s Way is not a matter of mere talk; it’s an empowered life” (1 Corinthians 4:20, MSG). Friends, let’s not dilute Christianity to a mere intellectual debate; that would be to miss the whole point! The Christian life – lived in a demonstration of God’s power – is what is intended for every believer. It is a faith that does have *reason* but is grounded in God’s *power*! As the Apostle Paul says (1 Corinthians 2:4-5, TPT),

“The message I preached and how I preached it was not an attempt to sway you with persuasive arguments but to prove to you the almighty power of God’s Holy Spirit. For God intended that your faith not be established on man’s wisdom but by trusting in his almighty power.”

DAY 21



BEING COMFORTABLE WITH THE MYSTERY OF THE TRINITY

Big Idea

GOD IS SO MUCH BIGGER THAN WE THINK AND MORE REAL THAN WE FEEL.

Andy Stanley

“The bridge from wishful thinking to faith is the revelation of God.”

A Line, Square And Cube

When thinking about God, it is helpful to think of how things in our everyday life can be experienced in *different dimensions*. Different dimensions allow you to take the elements of one dimension and build on them in a *different* way. This is what I mean:

- *One-dimensional* - if we look at things in one dimension, we could draw a simple line.



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- **Two-dimensional** – if we added a second dimension, we could take our line and add three more lines to form a square – consisting of four lines.
- **Three-dimensional** – building on the idea of the square, we could create a cube by adding five more squares in a third dimension – remember, a cube is made up of six squares.

This illustration is straightforward, but it helps explain how the line, square, and cube build on each other in a more complex way when expressed in another dimension.

If we only lived in a two-dimensional world, can you imagine how difficult it would be to try to imagine what a cube was? But once we eventually saw the cube, we would have been like, “That totally makes sense now!” The cube has a level of similarity to what we would have experienced in our two-dimensional world but is also different.

That’s how it is with God. God has chosen to reveal Himself to us as the **three-in-one God** – known as **the Holy Trinity**. We will be looking at getting to grips with God as the Trinity, but remember, we’re going to be trying to explain **someone** who lives in an **eternal dimension** using the ideas and language of the dimension we live in.

The Trinity

The word *trinity* is not actually found in the Bible, although the idea of the three-in-one God is emphasized in many places. Theologian, Wayne Grudem, helps us to better understand who God has revealed Himself to be using three statements:⁹⁴

- 1 **God is three persons.**
- 2 **Each person is fully God.**
- 3 **There is one God.**

People have used different analogies drawn from nature or human experience to try to explain the Trinity. Some examples include:

- The analogy of the three forms of water: steam, water, and ice – all in a different state.
- The analogy of a tree with three parts: the roots, trunk, and branches – all constitute one tree.
- The analogy of a man who functions in different roles: as a father, the chairperson of a soccer club, and a company’s CEO.

Although these analogies are helpful at a very basic level, if you try to draw too much symbolism out of them, they end up falling short or become misleading. It is interesting that **nowhere in the Bible** does God use any analogies to explain His three-in-one identity.

Maybe it is best to conclude that because no analogy in the current dimension of this world adequately describes God, He is happy for there to be a certain degree of mystery around His identity?

A Lot Of Threes

Although there is a level of mystery in the Trinity, God provides us sufficient *reason* to fill the gap of the *unknown* with faith!



You don't have to look any further than the first verse of the Bible to find a clue in the beautiful pattern of **threes**. Genesis 1:1 says, "In the **beginning** [time] God [**Elohiym**] created the **heavens** [space] and the **earth** [matter]" (*emphasis added*).

Unfortunately, when reading the Bible in English, we sometimes miss the original text's message. For example, many different Hebrew words are used in the Bible that are all translated as **God** in English. The Hebrew word in the text above is **Elohiym**, which is the **plural for God** - meaning that God is already pointing to the Trinity of His identity from the first verse of the first chapter in the first book of the Bible! What's even more interesting is that the remaining three emphasized words of the verse also all have **three expressions** of the same thing.

- 1 **Time:** has a past, present, and future expression.
- 2 **Space:** has a length, breadth, and depth/height dimension.
- 3 **Matter:** has a solid, liquid, and gas form.

Later in the first chapter of Genesis, God is recorded as saying, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Genesis 1:26, emphasis added). Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that from the very beginning, God was setting the scene to reveal Himself to us as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit - His three-in-one identity.

3 IN 1

Roles Of The Trinity

It is vital to know that there is no difference between God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit when it comes to their divinity, essential nature, or key attributes - they are exactly the same person. The only real distinction between the members of the Trinity is how they relate to each other and the rest of creation - their function. What do I mean? Let's look at **Creation** and the work of **Redemption**:

Creation

- God the Father spoke the creative words to bring the universe into existence (Genesis 1:3-31).
- God the Son, the eternal *Word of God*, Jesus, carried out these creative decrees (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16).
- The Holy Spirit was also active, *moving or hovering* over the waters, appearing to manifest God's immediate presence in creation (Genesis 1:2).

Redemption

- God the Father came up with the plan of redemption and sent His Son, Jesus, into the world (John 3:16; Galatians 4:4; Ephesians 1:9-10).
- Jesus the Son obeyed His Father and carried out the Father's plan of redemption (John 6:38-41; Hebrews 10:5-7).
- The Holy Spirit was then sent by the Father and the Son to apply redemption to us (John 14:26; 16:7), regenerating us (John 3:5-8), transforming us (Romans 8:13; 15:16; 1 Peter 1:2), and empowering us to be His witnesses (Acts 1:8).

Jesus' final words in Matthew's gospel are also a clear indication of the working together of the Trinity in our lives. Jesus instructed His disciples, "Now go in my authority and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19, TPT).

The Trinity For Me

You may be thinking, what's the relevance of the Trinity to me? I want to encourage you, it is the most important thing in the world! You have been created to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. But how can you truly **enjoy** someone you don't really **know**. Over the next few days, I hope to light a fire in your heart to desire relational intimacy with a **loving Father**, a **glorious Son**, and a **personal Holy Spirit**.



21





Practical Application

Expecting God to be more real than I currently feel.

The Apostle Paul writes to the Church in Ephesus, encouraging them that he is praying for them to *know God through a deepening intimacy with Him* (Ephesians 1:17, TPT). My prayer for you is the same.

Take some time to write an *honest* sentence describing your current view of each of the persons of the Trinity.

God the Father _____

Jesus the Son _____

The Holy Spirit _____

If there was ONE question that you could ask each of the persons of the Trinity, what would it be? Capture your questions below.

God the Father _____

Jesus the Son _____

The Holy Spirit _____

For each of the persons of the Trinity, complete the sentence describing how you would like to know them more. You could also think of how you have heard others talk about their relationship with God to help you with this activity.

Father God, I desire _____

Jesus, I desire _____

Holy Spirit, I desire _____

DAY 22

EMBRACING
THE LOVE OF
THE FATHER



Photo by [cottonbro](#) from [Pexels](#)

Louie Giglio

**“God is not a reflection
of our earthly fathers;
He is the perfection of
our earthly fathers.”**

Big Idea

**CHRISTIANITY IS NOT
A DUTY TO PERFORM;
IT’S A RELATIONSHIP
TO ENJOY.**



22





Fatherly Love

I want to start today off by telling you a true story that I heard about a devoted father and his son. What I am about to share took place during the devastating Armenian earthquake in 1988.⁹⁵

On what appeared to be just another ordinary day, Samuel was about to send his young son, Armand, off to school. But before allowing him to rush out of the door, Samuel bent down to his Armand, and looking him in the eyes, lovingly said, "Have a good day at school and remember, no matter what, I'll always be there for you." A few hours had passed when a powerful earthquake hit the area. Having not been able to get hold of anyone at the school, Samuel rushed off to see how Armand was doing. When he arrived, he found the multi-level school building had collapsed. Where Armand's classroom had once stood, there was now only rubble. Many people were standing by, looking on in disbelief, some crying, but Samuel went to the area where Armand's class had been and began digging in the rubble with his hands. Samuel had already been digging for hours when the darkness of night set in. He even requested people passing by for help, but no one would join him. Samuel kept shovelling the rubble with his now cut and bloodied hands right through the night and into the next day. At daybreak, when other parents had already begun bringing flowers to the site to mourn the loss of their children, Samuel broke into the room where Armand and his thirteen classmates had been trapped. Rather than clambering to the embrace of his dad, Armand let all of his classmates climb to safety first. When Armand eventually emerged from the rubble into the loving embrace of his father, he said, "I told the kids not to worry because you told me that you'd always be there for me."

What an incredible story. I have retold this story to people on several occasions, and I find myself fighting back my emotions each time. The thought of such a devoted and loving father, fighting against all of the odds and an overwhelming sense of hopelessness, to eventually rescue his son and all his classmates ... is no small thing!

Your Heavenly Father

In one of Jesus' famous sermons, He was asking the people if earthly parents (who are imperfect) know how to

care for their children, how much more won't our heavenly Father (who is perfect) do what is best for us (Matthew 7:11, TPT):

If you, imperfect as you are, know how to lovingly take care of your children and give them what's best, how much more ready is your heavenly Father to give wonderful gifts to those who ask him?

If Samuel demonstrated such love and devotion to rescue his son, how much more devoted will our heavenly Father be to save us when we need Him.



An Evil Strategy

The enemy (the devil) knows that if he can distance people from the love of their heavenly Father, half the battle is won. The strategy is simple, use whatever means possible to **distract** people from the Father’s love, **distort** their view of Him, or **disappoint** them with His perceived lack of care. Because a child’s identity is primarily instilled by a father figure in their lives, the enemy knows that if he can have people reject their heavenly Father, their Godly identity will not be properly formed.

Psychologist Paul Vitz performed a fascinating study. He studied some of the significant atheist figures of the past, people like Bertrand Russell, Jean Paul Sartre, Karl Marx, Camus, and Nietzsche. Remarkably, he found the vast majority of these atheists had either **dead**, **distant**, or **disappointing** fathers.

He concluded, “If our own father is absent or weak or abandons us, even by dying, or is so untrustworthy as to desert us, or is so terrible as to abuse and to deceive us in various ways, it’s not hard to put the same attributes on our heavenly Father and reject God.”⁹⁶

What’s Your View?

The Los Angeles Times conducted an interesting study of how American people viewed God. They summarised their findings into four main categories:⁹⁷

- 1. **Authoritarian God** – people see God as wrathful and ready to punish the evil and unbelieving among humanity.
- 2. **Benevolent God** – people see God as the caring Creator who is not judgmental and is actively involved in human affairs.
- 3. **Distant God** – people see God as removed from human affairs, watching things unfold from afar.
- 4. **Critical God** – people see God as not interacting with the world, but any connection He has with events on earth is one of disapproval.

If you had to choose one of these four views of God, what would your default view be?

1 2 3 4



DISTORT

Disappoint





Practical Application

Embracing the love of the Father.

I once heard a preacher share an illustration that our heavenly Father is someone who has a *Long Fuse*, a *Short Memory*, a *Thick Skin*, and a *Big Heart*. Each of these attributes is important when we consider God the Father. He does not have a bad temper. Instead, He is patient (Long Fuse). He remembers our sins no more when we repent (Short Memory). He isn't easily offended when we mess up (Thick Skin). His love is a defining attribute (Big Heart).

King David was a man that truly knew God. After reading the passage from Psalm 103 (that David wrote), capture attributes of God that stand out to you under each of the descriptions: *Long Fuse*, *Short Memory*, *Thick Skin*, or *Big Heart*.

Psalms 103:2-17 (AMPC)⁹⁸

2 Bless (affectionately, gratefully praise) the Lord, O my soul, and forget not [one of] all His benefits— **3** Who forgives [every one of] all your iniquities, Who heals [each one of] all your diseases, **4** Who redeems your life from the pit and corruption, Who beautifies, dignifies, and crowns you with loving-kindness and tender mercy; **5** Who satisfies your mouth [your necessity and desire at your personal age and situation] with good so that your youth, renewed, is like the eagle's [strong, overcoming, soaring]! **6** The Lord executes righteousness and justice [not for me only, but] for all who are oppressed. **7** He made known His ways [of righteousness and justice] to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel. **8** The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy and loving-kindness. **9** He will not always chide or be contending, neither will He keep His anger forever or hold a grudge. **10** He has not dealt with us after our sins nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. **11** For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great are His mercy and loving-kindness toward those who reverently and worshipfully fear Him. **12** As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. **13** As a father loves and pities his children, so the Lord loves and pities those who fear Him [with reverence, worship, and awe]. **14** For He knows our frame, He [earnestly] remembers and imprints [on His heart] that we are dust. **15** As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. **16** For the wind passes over it and it is gone, and its place shall know it no more. **17** But the mercy and loving-kindness of the Lord are from everlasting to everlasting upon those who reverently and worshipfully fear Him, and His righteousness is to children's children.

Q1: Which ONE attribute in the Psalm speaks to you MOST about God's *Long Fuse*?

For example: v9 ~ He will not always chide or be contending.

Q2: Which ONE attribute in the Psalm speaks to you MOST about God's *Short Memory*?

For example: v3 ~ Forgives [every one of] all your iniquities.

Q3: Which ONE attribute in the Psalm speaks to you MOST about God's *Thick Skin*?

For example: v8 ~ The Lord is ... rich in mercy and loving kindness.

Q4: Which ONE attribute in the Psalm speaks to you MOST about God's *Big Heart*?

For example: v17 ~ But the mercy and loving-kindness of the Lord are from everlasting to everlasting.



DAY 23

Worshipping THE RISEN SON

Francis Chan

“The greatest knowledge we can ever have is knowing God treasures us.”

Big Idea

**WORSHIP IS
AN EXPRESSION
OF WORTH.**



The Risen Christ

In Chapter 4, we spent time searching out evidence that the Bible is *true* and *trustworthy*. We considered the various scenarios surrounding the death and resurrection of Jesus. We noted that it was *reasonable* for us to conclude that Jesus did, in fact, rise from the dead. However, one of the things we didn't consider as validating the claims of the *Risen Christ* is the evidence of a transformed life of one who accepts Jesus as their Saviour and Lord. The Bible teaches us that our personal testimonies are one of the greatest weapons to share the good news of Jesus and overcome the devil (Revelations 12:11). Today, I want to share a testimony of a very close friend of mine, Fraser.

God Invaded My Life

I met Fraser when I was in my early twenties. I had finished university and had started working at the accounting and auditing firm I mentioned previously. One evening, I arrived home and was introduced to one of my dad's friends staying with us. But there was a catch, my dad's friend had brought his nephew with him, and I was asked to entertain the tag-along nephew while my dad and his friend caught up, enter Fraser. Fraser was a similar age to me, but the last thing I felt like doing after my busy day was to entertain him. What began as polite conversation soon developed into absolute intrigue as Fraser began to retell his story of how Jesus had saved him.

Fraser had been living in Germany and was caught between pursuing a career as a professional golfer (following in his dad's footsteps) or studying to be a chef. He had been raised in a conservative Christian family but never had a real relationship with God. When he left school, it was his opportunity to cut loose and experience the *picture of freedom* that the world tries to sell every young person - freedom that promises happiness but delivers destruction! The next few years of his life exemplified a lifestyle pursuing every sinful distraction the world has to offer - his life was literally an advertising board for the seven vices we spoke of earlier! He had become addicted to drugs, was drinking and partying day and night, had several run-ins with the police and hairy moments with drug dealers, had lost his job, quit his studies, and was pretty much on a downward spiral to certain death. Enter Jesus.⁹⁷ Fraser writes of his conversion moment in one of his books. He had been out partying in a nightclub when a young lady with dreadlocks came up to him, handed him a New Testament Bible, and said, "Jesus loves you and has a plan for your life!"⁹⁹

He didn't appreciate her efforts and told her off, but when he returned to his apartment later that night, he took the Bible out of his back pocket and tossed it across the room. A few days later, Fraser was about to smoke some marijuana in his apartment when he encountered Jesus!¹⁰⁰



23





As I fired up my first bong it was though the whole room lit up like the sun and I heard these supernatural words that went through me like a double-edged sword, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one will see the Father but through Me." I couldn't believe what just happened! It was like a lightning bolt had hit the room. I went to fire up the bong for a second time. The whole room lit up like the sun again but this time the light was even brighter and the words had more authority and power to them, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one will see the Father but through Me!"

Had I smoked one too many? Had I fried my brain? I had been on good and bad trips before. I had made contact with the spiritual realm, but this was different. It was terrifying but exhilarating at the same time. The room went dark once again. I went to fire up the bong for the third time. This time the light was like an exploding sun and the voice thundered, "Fraser, it's Me, Jesus speaking. I'm calling you for the last time. I AM the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through

Me!" I fell to my knees, my world shattered. It felt like my heart was breaking into a thousand pieces. The God of the universe was communicating with me. For the very first time in my life I knew there was a God and His name was JESUS.

My rebellion had been fully confronted! I was instantly born-again; my spirit-man was completely regenerated and renewed by the Holy Spirit. I can't explain it but I knew that God had taken up residency in me. I had become a son of God, a brand-new creation. My sin had been supernaturally removed by the blood of Jesus and my name was written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

I felt the Holy Spirit tell me to go to the book that I had thrown into the corner of the room the previous evening. I picked up the New Testament which was given to me by the girl who had told me that God loved me and had a plan for my life. In great suspense I opened the book and the pages fell to John 14:6 and I read, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

Fraser and I spoke long into the night. He told me testimony after testimony about his walk with Jesus. He shared stories of miraculous healings that he had experienced as *the God of the universe* broke into situations to extend His power through Fraser - lame people walking, blind people seeing, demon-possessed people being delivered, dead people being raised to life (however unlikely this may seem to you right now, it happened, and continues to happen)! Here was a guy in his early twenties, speaking with an authority and a confidence in Jesus that I had never experienced before.

Fraser shared a Scripture with me. The Scripture was one that the Apostle John penned in a letter most probably written to the church in Ephesus - a wealthy and highly influential city: "This is how we know we are in him [Jesus]: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did" (1 John 2:5-6). He then asked me a simple question that has changed my life, "Trevor, are you walking like Jesus did?" More than a judgment, this was an invitation to live a supernatural life (we will talk about this more tomorrow).

testimony

**1 John
2:5-6**

APPLY



A Life Journey

In talking with Fraser that night, I realised that I had become comfortable in my Christian walk.

The most valuable thing in my life wasn't Jesus if I was honest with myself. I was building a career, pursuing success, wanting a girlfriend ... and had every other distraction that a young person faces. Jesus was periphery, not the focus. That night left me desiring more of God - I had seen an authentic expression of Christianity that my heart so longed for. But while my introduction to Fraser was a crucial moment in my journey with Jesus, it was only a moment, a first step. In the years that followed, there have been

many more steps of choosing Jesus that I've needed to make. I have often gotten things wrong, but God's grace has been there for me, pointing me back to Jesus. Friends, that's what true worship is; it's a life dedicated to expressing worth to the thing we most value.

Do you really know Jesus? Is He really the focal point of your life? Does your behaviour show that He is of greatest worth to you?

I want to encourage you today. Many people think they need to get their lives in order before coming to Jesus - that is absolutely not the case! Like in Fraser's story, Jesus reaches out to rescue us where we are. Giving your life to Jesus does not involve a four-point checklist of things to do and prayers to pray. It's straightforward. Putting your trust in the work that Jesus has done is all that is required. Romans 10:9-10 says, "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."

Don't get too comfortable!!!

JESUS

Exciting times



23





Practical Application

What or who are you worshipping?

Take some time to read through Fraser’s testimony again. Then, answer the following questions:

01

Having read Fraser’s story, capture ONE aspect of his testimony that resonates with you.

Three horizontal lines for writing.

02

Do you feel that you really know Jesus?

MORE LESS

03

Is Jesus really the focal point of your life?

MORE LESS

04

Does your behaviour show that Jesus is of greatest worth to you?

MORE LESS

05

If you are completely honest with yourself, what would you say is the thing that you give most of your attention and time to (i.e. the real object of your worship)?

Three horizontal lines for writing.

06

What would you like to do differently when it comes to your relationship with Jesus?

Two horizontal lines for writing.

NOTE: If you’re looking for a challenging book to encourage your walk with Jesus, why not read Fraser’s story: *Living A Supernatural Life On The Road Less Traveled: An Invitation To Radical Discipleship.*

DAY 24



**ENGAGING THE
PERSON OF THE
HOLY SPIRIT**

Harry Jackson Jr.

“The purpose of the Holy Spirit in the life of every Christian is to empower regular people to do extraordinary works under His influence.”

Big Idea

**THE HOLY SPIRIT
WITH US IS THE SAME
AS IF JESUS HIMSELF
WERE HERE.**



24



Coke Or Pepsi?

I worked in the USA for a while, and one rather funny memory I have is how the different brands are allowed to rip one another off in their adverts. One of these big brand rivalries is between Coke and Pepsi. Because of this, you will generally have people who either love Coke or love Pepsi. Using the *Coke versus Pepsi* example, I wanted to illustrate the importance of understanding two Greek words that we will discuss a little later.¹⁰¹

The first is allos, which means another of the same kind. The second is heteros, meaning another of a different kind.

I'm sure there are some Coke or Pepsi fans among our readers. Imagine you are a Coke fan and I offered you an ice-cold can of Coke. After making quick work of the Coke (you were thirsty), I asked you if you would like *another*? If you responded that you would like a *heteros*, another of a different kind, I would be able to give you a Pepsi. A Pepsi is not a Coke, but it is another kind of soda drink. However, if you responded that you would like an *allos*, another of the same kind, I would have to give you another Coke.

The 'Same As' Jesus

In the Apostle John's gospel, he recalls a lengthy conversation that Jesus had with His disciples when He told them that He would be returning to Heaven. You can imagine their disappointment and confusion. Here was their promised Messiah, and just as He was getting started ... He tells them He's going to up and leave them! Jesus comforts His disciples by telling them, "I will ask the Father and he will give you *another Helper*, to be with you forever" (John 14:16, ESV, *emphasis* added).

Later, Jesus also says, "It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I

do not go away, the Helper will not come to you" (John 16:7, ESV, *emphasis* added).

Back to the Coke and Pepsi example. When Jesus says that His disciples will be sent *another* Helper, which word do you think He uses, *allos* or *heteros*? You guessed it!

The disciples would be sent another Helper who is *the same as Jesus* – *allos*.

Jesus also said that it would be to their *advantage* that He goes, why is this? Well, Jesus was limited to His physical form on earth, meaning He could only be in one place at one time. But the new Helper would be with them forever, wherever they were, whenever they needed Him. So who is this new Helper that is the same as Jesus?

THE HOLY SPIRIT

The new *Helper* is the third person of the Trinity, the person of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit represents God's promise of His continued presence in the lives of Jesus' disciples forever, empowering them to complete the work *planned* by the Father and *initiated* by the Son. The role that the Holy Spirit played all those centuries ago in Jesus' first disciples is the same role that He plays in our lives today – it's the same as if Jesus were with us in the flesh! In fact, in the same conversation that we have been referring to, Jesus said (John 14:12, TPT),

"I tell you this timeless truth: The person who follows me in faith, believing in me, will do the same mighty miracles that I do – even greater miracles than these."

HELPER



Walking Like Jesus Walked

All of a sudden, Fraser's challenge of walking like Jesus seems a whole lot more attainable with the *Divine Helper* (the Holy Spirit) at our side. The problem is that because we can't see the Holy Spirit with our natural eyes, we forget that He is with us. Let me ask you this:

How different would your life look if you were walking around with Jesus every day?

Imagine going to school with Jesus, sitting around the family dinner table with Jesus, engaging strangers in the mall with Jesus, and working through challenging life struggles with Jesus. Wow, there's a thought! The Bible tells us: "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work" (1 John 3:8b). Jesus also said, "The thief [the devil] comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10). Therefore, wherever there is **death**, wherever there is **loss**, wherever there is **destruction**, disciples of Jesus are called to **bring life!**

So here is the big question:

Why don't more Christians' lives resemble Jesus' life?

The simple answer is that we don't allow the Holy Spirit full access to our lives. The Holy Spirit is not only the greatest gift that Jesus gives to His disciples; He is also the giver of many other gifts that will allow us to **walk like Jesus walked**. 1 Corinthians 12 informs us of the type of gifts that the Holy Spirit gives as **He wills**. They include supernatural gifts like **wisdom, healing, miraculous powers, and prophecy** - just to mention some. In whatever situation we find ourselves, the full empowerment of the Holy Spirit, inclusive of all of the gifts He imparts, is available to any believer.

Our normal should not be defined by how we see other people living. Our normal should be determined by how we see Jesus living - shown on the pages of the Bible.

● AS REAL AS YOU! ●

The night with Fraser that I mentioned yesterday, he said something that has stuck with me:

“Trevor, the Holy Spirit is as real to me as you are, sitting next to me right now.”

Fraser helped me learn that the more I invite the Holy Spirit into the **conversation**, the more I will see Him working **in me** and **through me**. What do I mean? To receive a person's **full value**, I have learned that you need to invite them into the conversation. What would happen if you went out for a coffee with two other friends, and as the three of you were sitting at a table, they turned their backs to you and continued having a great conversation without acknowledging your presence? Do you think they would receive any of the value of who you are, the insights you carry, or the perspective you have? Probably not! Sadly, this is how far too many Christians treat the Holy Spirit, we never give Him full access into our lives, never ask for His insights, and never invite Him into our conversations.

I love the Holy Spirit so much, and my desire is to introduce you to Him as well. There is so much that could be shared, so much for you to experience, but we will take it one step at a time.



24





Practical Application

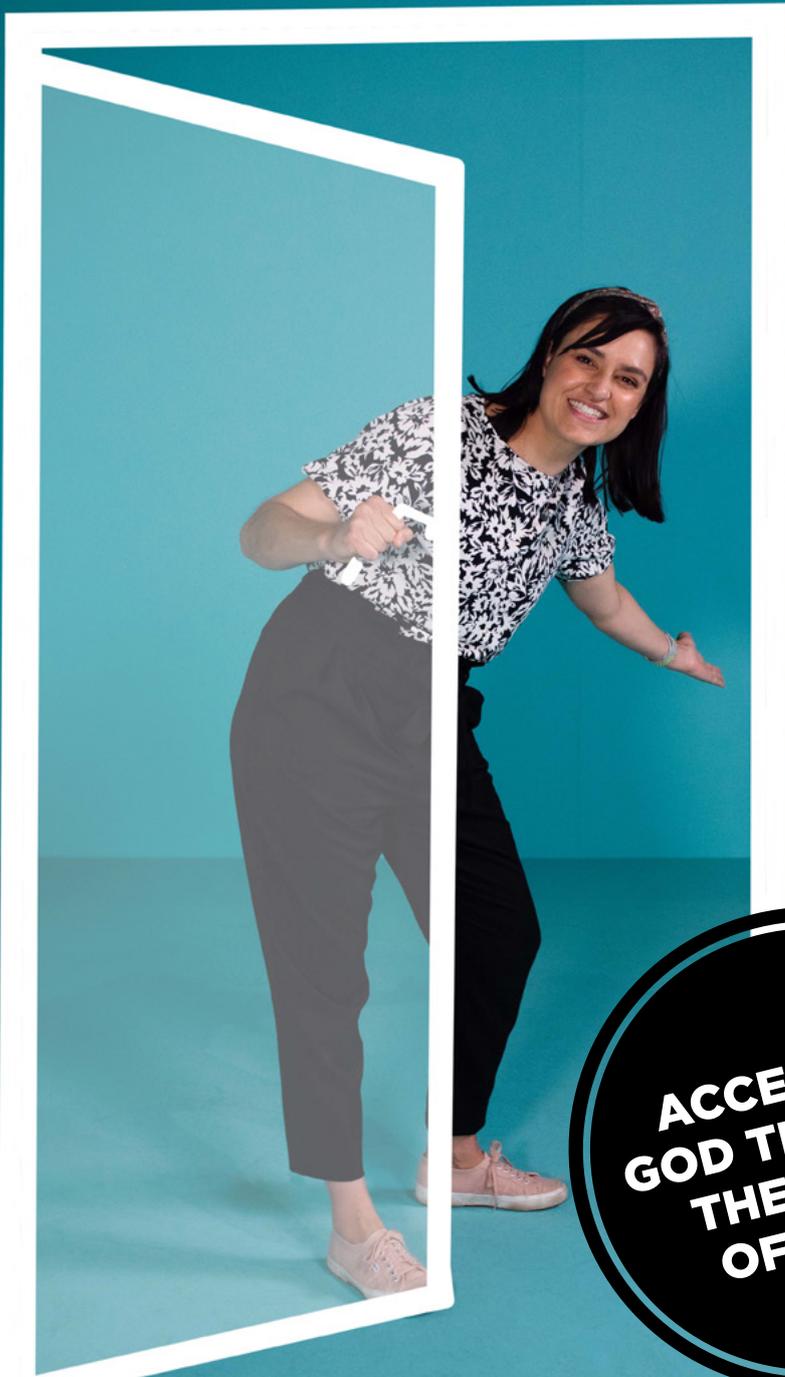
Engaging the person of the Holy Spirit.

Out of the three persons of the Trinity, I would suggest that the person of the Holy Spirit is probably the one that people know the least about. So, today, with the help of R.T. Kendall, I would like to tell you a little bit more about Him.

One of the ways to learn about a person, without actually meeting them, is to find out a bit more about what they do. It's like when you have to go for a job interview – you always have to send a personal profile beforehand, so people can get a sense of who you are. The personal profile will never replace actually meeting you, but it *whets the appetite!* R.T. Kendall provides us with twenty-one things to know about the Holy Spirit – think of it as His personal profile.¹⁰²

1. ***He is God (2 Corinthians 3:17).***
2. ***He is a person (John 14:16; 16:18).***
3. ***He is eternal (Hebrews 9:14).***
4. ***He is the Spirit of Truth (John 14:17; 16:13).***
5. ***He was involved in creation (Genesis 1:2).***
6. ***He, using people, wrote the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21).***
7. ***He is our teacher (John 14:26).***
8. ***He can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30).***
9. ***He can be quenched (1 Thessalonians 5:19).***
10. ***He is the one who convicts (John 16:8).***
11. ***He is our guide (John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2:14).***
12. ***He speaks only what the Father gives Him to say (John 16:13).***
13. ***He will predict the future (John 16:13).***
14. ***He will glorify Jesus Christ (John 16:14).***
15. ***He can be blasphemed (Matthew 12:31).***
16. ***He is our reminder (John 14:26).***
17. ***He gives power (Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 4:20).***
18. ***He manifests through various spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:7-10).***
19. ***He directs people to Jesus and makes Him real (John 15:6).***
20. ***He manifests through various fruit (Galatians 5:22-23).***
21. ***He gives renewed power (Acts 4:31; Ephesians 5:18).***

During the next week, I'm going to ask you to read through the Scriptures mentioned above. But as you do, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal Himself to you. At the end of the week, write down any thoughts/ insights/ ideas /feelings /questions that have come to you.



DAY 25

ACCESSING GOD THROUGH THE DOOR OF FAITH

Big Idea

KNOWING GOD IS INFINITELY GREATER THAN KNOWING ABOUT GOD.

Josh McDowell & Sean McDowell

“While God has not provided exhaustive knowledge of his existence, he has given sufficient knowledge for those with an open heart and mind.”



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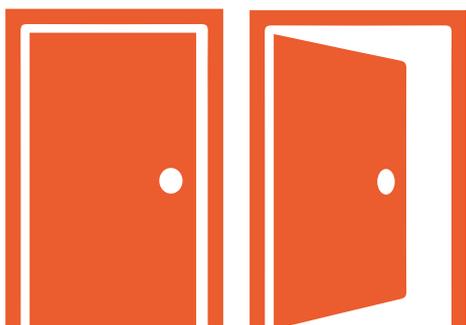


Two Doors

In Chapter 3, when we looked at the story of the Bible, we learned about some special people that God made a covenant with, Israel.

God's plan was to use the people of Israel to paint the picture of His plan of redemption. We saw how the whole of the Old Testament reflected the tension between a good-yet-just God and a much-loved-yet-rebellious people – remember? Israel's story was both a promise and a warning for you and me. Through Jesus, the promise of a new covenant relationship with God is available to us. But, there is also a warning - if we choose to rebel against God's offer of redemption, our lives will end in destruction. To use another illustration, each of us stands before two doors – a *Door of Eternity* and a *Door of Destiny*.

The *Door of Eternity* can only be opened by a perfect sacrifice – Jesus.



He opens it when you surrender your life to Him and trust in the work that He has done. Jesus' sacrifice for you restores your relationship with God and grants you access to your heavenly Father as a son or a daughter of God. You trust in Jesus by confessing with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead. When you do, you will experience a supernatural spiritual awakening.

This is the *conversion* we spoke about during Day 15, where God does His 100% and we do our 0%. Because Jesus is the reason this door is opened, not your efforts, He will continue to stand in the doorway and keep the door open. So, nothing you do can disqualify you from being God's redeemed son or a daughter from that moment on.

But, there is also a second door - The Door of Destiny. This door represents the unique purpose that God created you for and what you are to accomplish here on earth for His kingdom.

You see, your heavenly Father has planned an inheritance for each of us if we choose to serve as faithful servants in His kingdom. Heaven is not the end goal; Heaven is only part of the promise. While there is nothing that you can do to disqualify yourself as a son or a daughter once you have trusted in Jesus, there is a lot you can do to lose your inheritance. The daily decisions we make can either open or close this door of destiny. The Apostle Paul explains this concept when he writes: "We neither make nor save ourselves, God does both the making and saving. He creates each of us by Christ Jesus to



join him in the work he does, the good work he has gotten ready for us to do, work we had better be doing” (Ephesians 2:10, MSG).

We receive salvation as a gift, but we receive our inheritance as a reward.

God wants to reward us, the Bible says as much (Hebrews 11:6). But God can't reward us for receiving a free gift. Instead, He rewards our faith. Faith is when we choose to trust in God and obey His commands in the face of opposition. Faith requires choice, and as we choose to trust in God, our good choices unlock the door of destiny in our lives. But as much as good choices open the door, bad choices can close the door – the good news is that God is patient with us.

I've listed some ideas of the type of choices that open the door of destiny in our lives:

- Choosing to worship God above other things in our lives.
- Choosing purity before God over sexual immorality.
- Choosing gratefulness towards God over grumbling.
- Choosing to trust in God over anxiety and fear.
- Choosing to forgive others over holding onto bitterness.
- Choosing to honour those around you rather than badmouth them.

These are just some ideas, but you get the point.

Spirit-Filled

After reading the list of things that open (or close) the door of destiny in our lives, you may be thinking, “That sounds way too hard.” And it would be ... if you had to do it on your own. But remember, everyone who believes in Jesus has been given the gift of the Divine Helper – the Holy Spirit.

I find it helpful to think of the Holy Spirit's work in our lives by distinguishing between the Holy Spirit *in you* and the Holy Spirit *on you*.

The Holy Spirit in you (as working during salvation) is for your benefit, while the Holy Spirit on you is for the benefit of others – allowing you to walk as Jesus did (being His witness).

Jesus clearly describes the impact of the Holy Spirit coming on you when he says: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses” (Acts 1:8, *emphasis added*).

If you have surrendered your life to Jesus, the Holy Spirit is already in you.

Still, there is a greater experience of His power at work in and through you that you are invited to enjoy – this is called being filled with the Holy Spirit (or being baptized in the Holy Spirit). Again, the way you do this is simple and uncomplicated – **you ask!**

Three predominant things hinder us from being filled by Holy Spirit: *doubt, fear, and inadequacy.*

Doubt sounds like this, “I don't think that if I asked, I would receive.”

Fear says, “I believe that I would receive it, but I'm not sure if I want it. What would happen? Would something terrible happen to me?”

Inadequacy says, “I'm not good enough. I'm not worthy. You don't know what my life is like.”

Jesus addresses all three of these concerns when He says (Luke 11:11-13, MSG),

If your little boy asks for a serving of fish, do you scare him with a live snake on his plate? If your little girl asks for an egg, do you trick her with a spider? As bad as you are, you wouldn't think of such a thing—you're at least decent to your own children. And don't you think the Father who conceived you in love will give the Holy Spirit when you ask him?



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Practical Application

Knowing God rather than knowing about God.

We have been talking about God for a while now. Whether you have already surrendered your life to Jesus or not, hopefully, you've been challenged to see God in a new light over the past few days. This next activity will allow you the opportunity to reflect on where you find yourself with God.

01

Have you surrendered your life to Jesus yet?

YES

NO

02

Have you asked the Holy Spirit to come and fill you with His power yet (been baptized in the Spirit)?

YES

NO

03

If you answered NO to either Question 1 or Question 2, would you like to change that?

YES

NO

If you want to surrender your life to Jesus and have Him open the Door of Eternity in your life, read through the following four points:

01

REALISE that God has not been first place in your life and believe in Him for the forgiveness of your sins.

02

BELIEVE that Jesus died to pay for your sins and that He rose from the dead and is alive today.

03

ACCEPT God's free gift of salvation. Don't try to earn it.

04

INVITE Jesus Christ to come into your life and be the Lord of your life by praying this simple prayer:

Lord Jesus, the Bible says that if I confess with my mouth that "You are Lord," and believe that God raised You from the dead, I will be saved. I believe and I confess that You are the Lord and Saviour of my life Jesus. Thank you for saving me! Amen.

If you have just surrendered your life to Jesus, write the name of a friend or family member who you can tell and who can help you in the next steps of your Christian walk.



If you want to ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with His power, write a short note to Him describing what you desire (refer to today's content to help you if you need).

Now pray a simple prayer asking the Holy Spirit to fill you. Don't rush the moment, wait patiently, and trust God to answer your request.

If you have just asked the Holy Spirit to come and fill you, write the name of a friend or family member who you can tell and who can help you in the next steps of your Christian walk.



25



CHAPTER

06



**HOW DO WE
RESPOND TO BIG
QUESTIONS?**



SHARE OPINIONS WITH STAKEHOLDERS

The last step in the audit process is to provide assurance to the many stakeholders of a business that the financial records are true and correct. The *audit opinion* is the most important aspect of the audit because it influences the decisions of so many other people. It communicates that the business is *telling the truth* about its financial affairs. If we didn't express this opinion (based on all of the work that has been done), the decisions others make could be negatively impacted. Similarly, your faith is not just a *personal matter*. In Chapter 6, we will find that our personal testimonies to others can be a crucial part of their journey to establishing faith and hope in their lives.



IN THIS CHAPTER WE WILL:

- Consider how to reflect the heart of Jesus to people through a dialogue, not a debate.
- Provide some ideas on how to respond to the world's current narrative through a Christian worldview.
- Learn that being *tolerant* doesn't mean accepting the conflicting views of others as being equally true.

J. Gresham Machen

“FALSE IDEAS ARE THE GREATEST OBSTACLES TO THE RECEPTION OF THE GOSPEL.”

I remember when growing up, there were several sayings that I used to hear. Perhaps you have heard some of them too? If you touch a toad, you will get warts. Bats are blind. Bulls will charge you if you wear red around them. And an ostrich will stick its head in a hole when it is scared. For some time growing up, I accepted these sayings as **facts**. But the funny thing is I can't even remember who told me these things or when I began believing them as **fact**.

If you don't know the truth, the more you hear something, the more you think it must be true. But none of these sayings are factual.

You don't get warts from touching a toad. Bats mostly use sound to navigate, but they can also see. Bulls don't have any more dislike for red than what they do for pink, blue, green, or any other colour that is being waved in front of them. And ostriches don't stick their heads in the ground when they sense danger. If they can't run away, they usually flop to the ground and remain still, attempting to blend in with the terrain.

Again, we can't just assume things to be true because they are often spoken of.

We need to learn to discern what *is true* and what *is not*. This task is made a little more difficult because the devil is going around actively spreading lies and trying to deceive people. Jesus says that the devil's native tongue is lying - he is the master of deception and the father of all lies (John 8:44). Because of this, we need to be equipped to understand how to tackle tough conversations in a way that shines the light of God's truth into situations where the devil is trying to cause confusion and pain.

★ OSTRICH ★

◆ BULLS ◆

● Bats ●

Many people who would call themselves Christians have probably inherited much of their Christian expression from their families and the culture around them. But we need to wrestle with tough questions and find a conviction in our own hearts about what the Bible says - the Bible plus nothing; the Bible minus nothing! Understanding the real story of the Bible and being able to interpret Scripture through this lens is vital.

Being uncertain about what the Bible says and how to apply it can cause Christians to become defensive about their faith. **There is a difference between defending your faith and being defensive about it. Uncertainty about what you believe breeds insecurity**, which causes you to either avoid conversation with people or show hostility when your beliefs are challenged. Neither is the correct response.

We began this workbook with an instruction by the Apostle Peter (1 Peter 3:15),

“ALWAYS BE PREPARED TO GIVE AN ANSWER TO EVERYONE WHO ASKS YOU TO GIVE THE REASON FOR THE HOPE THAT YOU HAVE. BUT DO THIS WITH GENTLENESS AND RESPECT.”

As you have worked through the first five chapters of this workbook, I trust that you have established a firm foundation for the hope in Jesus that you have. Your next step is to now think about how you can share your faith with others - in gentleness and respect.

DAY 26



HOW TO ENGAGE IN DIALOGUE INSTEAD OF DEBATE?

Darrell L. Bock

“Christianity has an inherent critique of the way people live. That’s not an easy thing to deal with. They won’t care about your critique unless they know you care [about them].”

Big Idea

OUR LOVE IS ONLY COMPLETE WHEN WE EXPRESS IT.



26

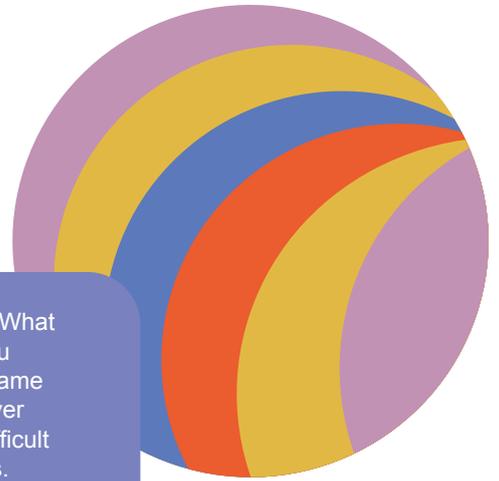


Our Beach Balls

Have you ever tried to hold a *big*, inflated beach ball under the water? What happens? It *restlessly* tries to come to the surface, no matter how much you try to keep it under the water. There is a powerful lesson in this. The exact same thing happens with people when we engage in tough conversations. Whatever we fill our lives with (like the air in the beach ball) will generally surface in difficult conversations, revealing clues to the deep beliefs that we carry in our hearts.

There is a wise saying, “A fool is in love with his own opinion, but wisdom means being teachable” (Proverbs 12:15, TPT). Being teachable means being willing to learn, and learning requires listening. The problem is that people in a conversation are often trying to be *interesting* instead of being *interested*! When you are genuinely interested in people’s stories, you can learn so much. You will be able to pick up clues as to where their hearts are at – and the restless beach balls of their beliefs that pop to the surface.

Much could be said about how to engage with people around our Christian worldview, but today I want to provide you with a *starter pack* of three ideas.



1

Caring Is Sharing

My wife and I have gone through the phase of having two small children in the house, and one of the mantras often used was: *sharing is caring* – ever heard that one? I would like to shuffle it around today as we talk about *engaging with people who may have a different worldview to us – caring is sharing!* Christianity is generally an uncomfortable topic when talking to people who have not yet trusted their lives to Jesus. In fact, the Bible refers to Jesus as the *rock of offense* (1 Peter 2:8). Why is this?

Because Christianity inherently holds up a mirror to our self-centred lives and challenges us to change.

The problem with this is that most people’s identities lie in what they *do* instead of who they *are*. **As Christians, we know that our value lies in who we *are*, not what we *do*. We have been created in the image of God, and that is why we are valuable – there is no other reason!**

But in the world, most people derive a sense of value from what they do – if we are honest,

many of us actually view ourselves more as human doings than human beings.

This means that our self-worth is attached to our *doings*.

That’s why when you point out things that are wrong in a person’s life, they get so defensive. Have you ever tried to give someone feedback about an unhelpful behaviour – how did that go? Even if you had the best intentions to help the person by providing the feedback, they often feel hurt or get upset (even if they don’t express it in the moment). This is because they don’t see you as helping them change a behaviour that could be damaging; they view your feedback as an attack on who they *are* (not what they have *done*). They actually feel the feedback is diminishing their *value as a person*.

So before we decide to share any Biblical truth with someone, we need to make sure that they feel our care for them as a person. Caring is the first step to us sharing!



2 Gather Information

Darrell L. Bock (a Bible scholar, author of over forty books, and apologist) gives some great advice when equipping Christians on how to share their faith:¹⁰³

Rather than rushing to explain the evidence for Christian truth claims, it is best to let others share their views first. This allows us to better understand the other person's spiritual concerns. Asking questions can help you learn what someone believes and why they believe it. Letting people share their views on God, Jesus, and the Bible is very important because they are giving you a gift—a window into their soul.

It is important that when engaging in difficult conversations, we try to facilitate a dialogue with the other person rather than have a debate.

In a dialogue, you are listening to *understand*. In a debate, you are listening to *respond* – also known as *pausing to reload!* The more we get people talking, the more we can get a picture of the lay of the land of their lives and beliefs – it's like a map of where the person fits in spiritually or culturally. Once we have a map, we can also ask better questions.

Asking questions can help us understand what someone believes and why.

Remember, whoever makes a particular claim bears the *burden of proof*. So, if a person brings an objection or challenge to

the Christian worldview, we don't need to immediately try and address their challenge. Instead, we can ask, **"What do you mean?"** Are we avoiding their objection? No, we're trying to get further clarity on their view. If a person shares a belief or idea with you, it is their responsibility to explain *why* that belief or opinion is valid.

Some people have thought deeply about their views, but many people's ideas about Christianity are based on what they have uncritically absorbed from the culture.

Often, **in asking more questions, people have to think through their own beliefs and ideas more deeply** – remember the *camel*, *kangaroo*, and *elephant* example in the introduction to this workbook?

By asking questions, we can also be suggesting that there might be another way to think about what they're talking about, **"Have you ever thought of it this way?"**

We're not trying to win an argument. We're trying to demonstrate the reasonableness of what we believe in a way that will cause people to consider what we are saying. Questions also invite people onto a quest. When you make a statement, people can immediately accept, reject, or ignore your statement. But when you ask a provocative question, people are forced to answer it – even if only subconsciously – and a quest for the answer can begin.





3 Understand the Layers

Darrell L. Bock notes that difficult conversations have *three layers*:¹⁰⁴ “There’s what you’re talking about. Then there’s the filter through which you’re looking at what you’re talking about. And then there’s your identity or your perception of yourself – what’s at stake in what you’re talking about.”

When most people are engaging in difficult conversations, they are only thinking of the first layer of the conversation. **But the second and third layers are what is generally driving the conversation – these are the layers where worldview filters and identity issues lie.**

When Jesus engaged with people, He was aware of what was happening in a person’s heart at the second and third layers. He also often spoke in stories and parables to challenge these layers.

As much as Biblical truths are *hard and fast* ways of living for Christians, they are not for others. Instead of quoting Scripture and verse, how can we suggest an idea that is actually helpful in showing how humans should interact and live with one another?

What is a story or illustration that can help people see Christianity not only as true, but as good?

For example, how would they treat a family member that acted similarly to the *prodigal son* in the story that Jesus tells in Luke 15:11-32? In Arab cultures, the son would have been disowned, not welcomed back in like in Jesus’ story!

Finally, the most aggressive objections that we will encounter from people are often because of pain or rejection at the identity level of the conversation. Understanding these deeper layers will also help us deal with people in a caring manner. The most important thing is *not* to win. The ultimate goal is to demonstrate the compassion and character of Jesus to the people that we are engaging with – valuing the individual and treating them with dignity is key!

So, in summary:

- 1** CARING IS SHARING
- 2** GATHER INFORMATION
- 3** UNDERSTAND THE LAYERS

Much more can be said about the topic of engaging with people in difficult conversations, but I will finish by saying that our love for God and for people is only complete when it is *expressed*. All of this may sound a bit too hard, but if we really love people, we need to express that love by having conversations that impact eternal futures!

In the words of the Apostle Paul – a man who arguably was able to connect with the most culturally diverse people groups out of all the apostles (Colossians 4:5-6, TPT):

“WALK IN THE WISDOM OF GOD AS YOU LIVE BEFORE THE UNBELIEVERS, AND MAKE IT YOUR DUTY TO MAKE HIM KNOWN. LET EVERY WORD YOU SPEAK BE DRENCHED WITH GRACE AND TEMPERED WITH TRUTH AND CLARITY. FOR THEN YOU WILL BE PREPARED TO GIVE A RESPECTFUL ANSWER TO ANYONE WHO ASKS ABOUT YOUR FAITH.”



Practical Application

Prepare to share.

For each of the starter pack points discussed today, write down your own ideas to help you prepare to share your faith with others.



01

Reflecting on the importance of *CARING IS SHARING*, what ONE idea or insight do you have for when you share your faith with others?

Four horizontal lines for writing.

02

Reflecting on the need to *GATHER INFORMATION*, what ONE idea or insight do you have for when you share your faith with others?

Four horizontal lines for writing.

03

Reflecting on the need to *UNDERSTAND THE LAYERS*, what ONE idea or insight do you have for when you share your faith with others?

Four horizontal lines for writing.

DAY 27



**HOW TO
SHARE THE
GOOD NEWS
OF THE
GOSPEL?**

Photo by [Mary Taylor](#) from [Pexels](#).

Michael Bird

“The Gospel is where God meets us and where we introduce the world to God.”

Big Idea

**LOVE NEVER
FAILS!**



Six Words

If you had to describe life in six words, what would they be? Pick from the list below.

- Relationships
- Confusing
- Fun
- Pleasure
- Influence
- Meaningless
- Freedom
- Unfair
- Friends
- Pain
- Purpose
- God
- Adventure
- Suffering
- Happiness
- Broken
- Family
- Struggles
- Routine
- Inspiring
- Other

Love Never Fails

Asking people what six words they would use to describe life is a great way to start a conversation about the Gospel.

Today, I want to encourage you that one of the greatest gifts that you can give to someone is pointing them towards the love of Jesus.



When we think of sharing our faith with people, many of us probably have images of people imposing their views on others – and who wants to *be that guy!* What if people don't want to hear? What if people reject me? What if people get offended and angry with me for trying to share my faith? These are the common arguments that we all experience when weighing up whether or not to take the *risk* of sharing our faith with someone. But, there is also a different lens to view this debate through. **The Bible teaches us that love never fails** (1 Corinthians 13:8)!

When we share our faith with someone *in love*, we are literally laying down a runway for God's love to land in their life. It doesn't even matter if things don't go as well as you would have hoped in the moment ... love never fails! When we are rooted in love, not pride (remember the two trees), we will find it easier to share the hope we carry with people. I once heard someone say, "The people who carry the most hope have the most influence." Let's be those people!





L I 6 W

A movement called *Dare 2 Share* has created an easy six-step process aimed at helping young people share the G.O.S.P.E.L. They call it *Life In 6 Words*:¹⁰⁵

- G** *GOD created us to be with Him.*
- O** *OUR sin separates us from God.*
- S** *SINS cannot be removed by good deeds.*
- P** *PAYING the price for sin, Jesus died and rose again.*
- E** *EVERYONE who trusts in Him alone has eternal life.*
- I** *LIFE with Jesus starts now and lasts forever.*

Let's take a look at these six words and provide some helpful conversation pointers that you can use to share the love of God with someone.

1 GOD Created Us To Be With Him

If I had two different two-hundred rand notes, one was crumpled and dirty, and the other was brand new, which is *more valuable*? Silly question, right!

The value of the two-hundred rand note is not determined by what it is used for or how new it looks. Its value was determined the day it was created and will not change. So it is with each one of us – no matter what we have done or how messed up our lives may seem, we are still valuable. But, if you remove the South African

Reserve Bank from the picture (the authority that creates the banknotes), the note is now just a piece of paper that carries *no value*. That's how it is with humanity. We have been created in God's image to carry a value that He determines – every person has equal value, we are worthy of love because we are *of worth* to God. But our true value can only be realised through our relationship with Him. People that we interact with need to know:

- You were created special and unique by God.
- You were created in the image of God.
- You were created to connect on the deepest level with God (that's where your true value is realised).

2 OUR Sin Separates Us From God

Have you ever been on a cell phone call with someone when all of a sudden the signal dropped and you were left in mid-sentence trying to communicate something important? It's not ideal!

That's how it is with God and us. Each of us has been created to have a direct, uninterrupted connection with God. Sadly, sin disrupted our connection and has cut off the conversation. But how do you know if your connection to God has been interrupted by sin? A good indicator is if you feel a sense of *shame* or *guilt* in your life. Remember, we previously mentioned that shame is feeling bad about *who we are*. Guilt is feeling bad about the *stuff we do*. And both shame and guilt are weapons that the devil uses to interrupt our relationship with God! We can all put on a front around others, but when you're alone what is your heart telling you?

It is interesting that the *first thing* Adam and Eve did after they sinned against God by eating the fruit was to try and hide from God. If you feel a sense of shame or guilt in any aspect of your life, you will experience a separation from God. And where there is separation you won't feel the peace and the joy that comes from His presence.

3 SINS Cannot Be Removed By Good Deeds

Have you ever tried to wipe a stain off of your clothes with



a dirty cloth? How did that work out for you?

The Bible explains that our good deeds are like dirty rags (Isaiah 64:6). There is no way to get rid of the *sin-stains* in our lives by ourselves – we need a *spiritual washing machine!* 1 John 1:9 (TPT) explains how to press *start* on God's washing machine for our lives; it says: "But if we freely admit our sins when his light uncovers them, he will be faithful to forgive us every time. God is just to forgive us our sins because of Christ, and he will continue to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

One of the ways to view all of the laws in the Bible (especially in the Old Testament) is as a mirror or a light, not a ladder to climb. Trying to do good things to climb out of our sin is not the answer. Instead, when we accept the Bible's truth as a mirror or a light in our lives, it allows us to identify sin, and all that we need to do is ask God to forgive us and help us. When we do, He automatically removes all of the sin stains in our lives, like a spiritual washing machine – how amazing is that!

4 PAYING The Price For Sin, Jesus Died And Rose Again

As you read this next section, look around where you are right now for the most worthless item you can see – it may be a gum wrapper or a piece of paper, but it must literally be the most worthless item you can find.

Now imagine that I had a two-hundred rand note and asked you to exchange the item you have chosen for the money I have. All you have to do is *believe* that I will make the swop and then *receive* the money.

What are you feeling? What are you thinking? Probably that there must be a catch. But there isn't. All you have to do is agree to the swop. That is how the Bible describes the swop that Jesus performed in paying the price for all of

mankind's sin: "For God made the only one who did not know sin to become sin for us, so that we who did not know righteousness might become the righteousness of God through our union with him" (2 Corinthians 5:21, TPT).

Jesus takes the worthless sin in our lives and exchanges it for His priceless righteousness – all we have to do is agree to the swop. It's that crazy but that real!

5 EVERYONE Who Trusts In Him Alone Has Eternal Life

This is a good section to talk about the *Door of Eternity* and the *Door of Destiny* that we discussed in Chapter 5. Christianity is unlike any other religion because it is open to all and only requires *our trusting, not our trying!*

We allow Jesus to open the door of eternity for us by not resisting His grace in our lives – He does His 100% and we do our 0%. That is the good news message of the gospel. Unless the Gospel we share sounds too good to be true, it probably isn't the *true Gospel*. The Gospel is extravagant, it's for everyone, but it's also exclusive – Jesus alone opens the door to eternal life!

6 LIFE With Jesus Starts Now And Lasts Forever

A life lived with Jesus is one of the most extraordinary adventures of all.

Eugene Peterson (author of The Message Bible Translation) describes Jesus' words in a language that so beautifully illustrates His invitation to us (Matthew 11:28-30, MSG):

Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me – watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.





Jesus doesn't ask us to do things *for Him*. He invites us to do things *with Him*. As we pursue a life with Jesus, we will learn to live in the *unforced rhythms of His grace* – a relational intimacy that leads us into true freedom and joy! This is the *felt difference* of Christianity ...

- *Atheists* don't believe in God.
- *Agnostics* don't know if there is a God.
- *Deists* think God wound up the *watch of creation* and then left the building.
- *Theists* believe in a god but not necessarily the God of the Bible – a god that must be pleased and appeased by our actions.
- *Christians* believe in the God of the Bible, the three-in-one God that desires intimacy with you – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Hopefully, the *Life In 6 Words* acronym (G.O.S.P.E.L.) and the illustrations above have provided you with some practical handles to share your faith with others. Why not start today?

Practical Application

Finding the words in a sea of opportunity.

We are going to have some fun today with a word search. But the word search is also a lesson in itself. Each day may not provide us with the opportunity to change the world, but each day gives us a chance to influence someone's life. If you are on the lookout for the right opportunity, using the right words may just create a runway for God's love in someone's life. Find the words listed on the next page in the word search, and when you do, think about how you might use them in a conversation with a friend.





Life
 God
 Relationship
 Sins
 Separates
 Interrupts
 Washing Machine
 Paying
 Everyone
 Eternity

Unforced Rhythms
 Grace
 Valued
 Special
 Unique
 Shame
 Stain
 Mirror
 Light
 Righteousness

Extravagant
 Exchange
 Jesus Alone
 Tired
 Burnt Out
 Worthless
 Door
 Trusting
 Trying
 Priceless

Z	K	D	S	J	A	Q	Z	Z	Y	Q	S	S	E	N	S	U	O	E	T	H	G	I	R
E	N	O	Y	R	E	V	E	E	N	I	H	C	A	M	G	N	I	H	S	A	W	C	S
C	Z	L	J	Y	N	R	P	N	T	P	J	D	U	X	L	Z	I	I	H	I	D	S	B
A	W	H	I	Z	H	T	R	Y	I	N	G	W	U	F	S	A	N	F	Y	F	B	U	P
L	N	D	S	G	W	K	E	U	D	Y	O	X	A	T	Y	T	I	R	A	Z	G	C	K
E	P	M	S	Q	H	F	X	U	E	S	E	F	A	F	E	W	G	C	O	N	L	O	U
P	I	T	A	E	W	T	C	I	E	F	D	I	N	R	V	G	W	V	E	O	D	L	N
H	H	H	I	B	U	N	H	T	I	F	N	D	R	N	M	N	S	T	S	P	D	E	F
G	S	X	W	V	B	C	A	L	E	V	K	U	O	W	W	I	Q	N	I	J	S	J	O
G	N	L	P	O	I	R	N	F	H	Q	P	Z	W	O	I	M	P	A	N	G	B	G	R
P	O	I	D	D	A	S	G	P	V	T	V	I	X	R	P	C	S	G	S	D	L	Y	C
A	I	Q	T	P	Z	N	E	A	S	B	U	R	N	T	O	U	T	A	H	C	I	K	E
Y	T	P	E	S	R	J	L	I	L	N	B	T	B	H	K	M	D	V	A	R	Q	B	D
I	A	S	G	A	U	U	H	M	Q	D	E	R	Y	L	M	I	R	A	M	N	D	P	R
N	L	Q	M	O	E	R	U	O	V	Z	E	F	Y	E	L	R	S	R	E	A	N	K	H
G	E	H	F	D	R	T	T	M	E	O	N	H	L	S	G	R	F	T	E	Y	R	E	Y
H	R	K	A	U	E	P	F	I	Y	J	O	N	X	S	E	O	V	X	B	N	K	T	T
Z	F	V	M	C	M	M	C	R	P	D	L	J	I	T	K	R	R	E	N	J	Q	E	H
G	T	W	R	E	C	A	R	G	P	I	A	E	X	O	F	N	T	S	T	I	Z	R	M
O	N	I	Y	P	L	Q	W	G	M	U	S	G	V	H	Q	S	I	U	M	O	Q	N	S
X	B	F	R	Z	E	F	Y	D	O	H	U	X	B	Y	U	Z	V	J	J	A	G	I	Z
M	N	T	K	E	Q	I	S	E	B	D	S	K	J	O	N	N	W	E	I	K	N	T	K
J	N	V	V	T	D	F	K	X	T	A	E	S	S	E	L	E	C	I	R	P	T	Y	O
B	U	N	I	Q	U	E	A	W	S	K	J	S	V	L	Y	I	K	T	Y	R	A	L	B

The answer sheet to the Word Search is included in Appendix 1.

DAY 28

← All-In

HOW TO ADDRESS
A MISCONCEPTION
OF CHRISTIANITY?

Lukewarm →

Josh McDowell &
Sean McDowell

“Many discount the Christian message not because they have examined the evidence and found it wanting, but because they are personally disappointed with Christians and churches.”

Big Idea

**IF THE CHRISTIAN
FAITH IS TRUE, IT WILL
STILL BE TRUE EVEN
IF EVERY CHRISTIAN
WAS A HYPOCRITE.**



A Hospital

In their book, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell address various misconceptions people use to argue why they do not believe in a Christian worldview. One of the significant misconceptions they identify is: “The hypocrisy of Christians undermines the reasonability of the Christian faith.”¹⁰⁶

In Chapter 5, we considered the research of psychologist Paul Vitz where he noted that some of the leading atheists had either *dead, distant, or disappointing fathers*. We noted the significant negative impact that a poor earthly father figure in a young person’s life can have on how they relate to their heavenly Father. But, another big hindrance to people believing in Jesus is the hurt that they have experienced in their lives from people who call themselves *Christian* (or the church in general).

Take the time to listen to people’s life stories. You will often find that those who struggle with Christianity have an area of past pain or rejection resulting from a disconnect between the love the Bible teaches and how people acted towards them – that’s called hypocrisy! But here’s the thing, does the moral failure of Christians (or the church) undermine the claim that Jesus is truly God? If the Christian faith *is true*, it will still be true even if every Christian was a hypocrite. The *expressions* of people should not undermine the *evidence* of Christianity.

After all, the whole message of the Bible is that human nature was gloriously made in the image of God but was seriously damaged by sin – that’s why we all need redemption!

Maybe people become disappointed because they interact with Christians expecting to find holy, perfect people. But that is definitely not the case. The church can more aptly be seen as a hospital. Jesus, Himself said (Luke 5:31-32, TPT):

Who goes to the doctor for a cure? Those who are well or those who are sick? I have not come to call the ‘righteous,’ but to call those who fail to measure up and bring them to repentance.

Churches are full of people who *fail to measure up* but recognise their *sickness* and are on a journey to wholeness and healing – sometimes, it’s a long journey. If you have been hurt or offended by people who call themselves Christians, I want to ask that you forgive them.

That doesn’t mean whatever they did is justified; it just means that you shouldn’t be put off seeing the greatest *Doctor* in the universe because of a sick person you met in the waiting room.

Following Jesus

Not too long ago, our family was looking to relocate to the Middle East to set up a business and help support a recently established church in the region. As you can imagine, being a Christian in a Muslim nation comes with several challenges – witnessing your Christian faith with others can actually get you thrown in prison if you are not careful.

In preparing for the move, I asked for some advice from a man who was a trusted advisor to one of the royal Arab families. One of the pieces of advice that he gave me would be helpful for any Christian.





He said that when people asked him if he was a *Christian*, he responded with a question: “What do you mean when you say Christian?” People’s answers to this question generally had a negative slant because of their perceptions or experiences of those who call themselves *Christians*. He would then say, “Well, in that case, I’m not a Christian.” People were often confused, “But we thought that you were a *man of faith*?” “I am. I follow the teachings of Jesus.”

This always opened the door for a conversation about the teachings of Jesus (who is actually a named prophet in *The Quran* – Islam’s holy book). Jesus’ teachings are transformational! If you want to read what is widely regarded as the most remarkable speech ever given, read Matthew chapters 5 to 7 – Jesus’ *Sermon on the Mount*.

Did you know the first time Jesus’ disciples were called Christians was at a church in Antioch (modern-day Turkey)?

People *outside* the church called them Christians (or *little Christs*) because their behaviour so closely resembled the life and teachings of Jesus. Do our behaviours reflect the life and teachings of Jesus to people outside of the church? Do we have to tell people that we are Christians, or are our lives *living proof of a loving God to a watching world*?

Earlier, I encouraged people who have been offended by Christians (or the church) to look past people’s imperfections and rather set their sights on knowing Jesus. But, I also want to encourage those who believe in Jesus that how we live our lives will either *draw people closer* to wanting to know Jesus or *put them off*.

We have a responsibility to grow in our faith and look more and more like Jesus as we do – not in our own strength but through the empowering of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Ambassadors

David Livingston, the great African explorer and missionary, famously said, “If a commission by an earthly king is considered an honor, how can a commission by a Heavenly King be considered a sacrifice?”¹⁰⁷

The only moment that Christianity is about you is the moment you surrender your life to Jesus. Every moment after that, you are living as an Ambassador of the King, and your actions need to be reflective of His Kingdom – a Kingdom described as having *righteousness, peace, and joy* in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17). Being an Ambassador of Jesus is a great privilege!

Follow

JESUS

Do

Practical Application

Looking past disappointment and being All-In Ambassadors.

In this activity, we are going to be answering questions in two parts. In Part 1, we will assess if people who call themselves Christians have let you down and what impact that has had on you. In Part 2, we will consider if you are living as an *All-In Ambassador* of Jesus or as a *lukewarm Christian*.



PART 1 - For Everyone

Q1: If you reflect on your life story, have people who call themselves Christians significantly hurt or offended you?

Y N

Q2: If you're honest with yourself, has this experience put you off fully exploring or pursuing the Christian faith?

Y N

Q3: Have you ever read Jesus' *Sermon on the Mount* (Matthew Chapters 5 to 7) to see the type of lifestyle people claiming to be Christians should be living?

Y N

Q4: If you answered YES to Question 2, what new beliefs or perspectives could you hold to help you be open to explore having a real (or deeper) relationship with Jesus?

PART 2 - For Ambassadors

Have you ever tried to walk with one leg in tracksuit longs and another not? It wouldn't only look funny, you would probably end up tripping! That's what it means to be a *lukewarm* ambassador - having one foot in Christianity and one foot living on your own terms. In his book, *Crazy Love*, Francis Chan challenges Christians to live as all-in ambassadors for Jesus. Using some of Francis' observations of *Lukewarm Christians*, tick whether or not the behaviour or thinking is MORE or LESS evidenced in your lifestyle.

Lukewarm Ambassadors:¹⁰⁸

MORE LESS

2.1: *You tend to choose what is popular over what is right when you are in conflict.*

MORE LESS

2.2: *You don't really want to be saved from your sin; you want only to be saved from the penalty of your sin.*

MORE LESS

2.3: *You are moved by stories about people who do radical things for Jesus, but you don't live a radical life for Jesus.*

MORE LESS



Lukewarm Ambassadors (continued):¹⁰⁸

MORE LESS

2.4: *You don't often share your faith with your neighbors, colleagues, or friends.*

2.5: *You say you love Jesus, and He is, indeed, a part of your life. But only a part.*

2.6: *You think about life on earth much more often than about eternity with Jesus.*

2.7: *You are thankful for your luxuries and comforts, and rarely consider trying to give as much as possible to the poor.*

2.8: *You are continually concerned with playing it safe; and are 'a slave' to the god of control.*

2.9: *You do not live by faith; your life is structured so you never have to.*

2.10: *You probably drink and swear less than average, but besides that, you really aren't very different from someone who doesn't follow Jesus.*

WOW! Thank you, Francis, for calling a spade a spade! Again, this activity is not meant to bring shame or guilt. But it is a mirror that we can hold up and see to what extent we represent Jesus as His ambassadors.

Based on your responses above. What is ONE commitment you want to make to be an *all-in ambassador* for Jesus?

DAY 29



**HOW TO
APPROACH
DIFFERENT
VIEWS ON
SEXUALITY?**

Lisa Bevere

**“Truth without
love is mean—but
love without truth
is meaningless.
We need both.”**

Big Idea

**YOUR DIET IS
WHAT RESULTS IN
YOUR DIFFERENCE.**



29



A Pink Bird

If I had to ask you what birds are beautiful, tall, leggy ... and pink, what would you say? When many of us think of a pink bird, we probably default to a flamingo.

But did you know that flamingos aren't born pink? They are born whiteish-grey in colour. You see, a flamingo's diet has a big influence on its colour. Flamingos can be more pink, or orange, or white, depending on what they eat. Where flamingos eat mostly shrimp and certain kinds of algae with lots of beta carotene (BAY-tuh KAR-uh-teen), they become pink or orange in colour - that's because beta carotene is a reddish-orange pigment. Ever heard of the saying, "you are what you eat?" Flamingos are a great example of your *diet* determining your *difference*.

What's Your Diet?

When we start heading down the road of discussing differences of a Christian worldview to any other worldview around the topic of sexuality, we have to understand that people's daily *diets* -



Flamingo Figurine - Photo captured by Koolshooters from Pexels.

the information and opinions they are consuming - are going to significantly colour their conversations.

Earlier in this chapter, we learned that there are three layers we need to be aware of in difficult conversations. The first layer is what is being said in the conversation, but the second and third layers are what is actually driving the conversation. They are the layers where *worldview filters* and *identity issues* lie. These are fundamental departure points when handling the sexuality conversation. I would recommend we always ask ourselves two questions as we discuss the topic with others:

What *diet* is informing the person's different worldview? And, how is this view impacting their identity?



Jesus always showed compassion towards people, no matter how different they were. But He also offered truth in a way that revealed the dignity of their identity as an image-bearer of God, inviting them to exchange their brokenness for beauty.

One of the greatest sexuality debates of our day is the LGBTQ conversation. Because this is a such a big conversation, I am going to be covering the discussion in two parts. Today we will be looking at the context for our differences, and tomorrow we will be looking at how Christians should be loving the LGBTQ community.

People Not 'Politics'

Before I begin this conversation, I want to say that the LGBTQ discussion is probably one of the most controversial topics to tackle. It is one that requires much thought and care. If I could, I would rather be sitting across the table from whoever is reading this today - I realise that so much of the *heart* of communication can be lost when it is done as words on a page. But it also *needs* to be discussed because there are far too many young people who are becoming casualties in this ever-increasing *culture war*.

We must be clear, this is not a *justice and equality* conversation, nor is it a *morality* conversation - this conversation is about *people*, not politics.

PEOPLE

NOT POLITICS

Culture War

Jon Tyson, the pastor of *Church of the City* (New York), is well studied in the topic of sexuality. He delivers an in-depth talk on *Jesus and the Gay Community* that I would recommend you take the time to watch (find a link in the endnotes).¹⁰⁹ He begins his talk by noting that each of us is a victim of the *Culture War* that has been raging since the 1960s. He explains that whether we are aware of it or not, we have all had our thinking influenced (to a lesser or greater extent) by either the pro-gay *justice and equality agenda* or the anti-gay *morality agenda*. The problem is that, as with any war, each of these camps has tried to villainize the other. Jon Tyson goes into much detail. But I wanted to contrast the overarching thinking that represents each of the camps. Please note that what is being shared is essential history because it will help us understand this *war's* influences on our thinking.





The Homosexual Manifesto

In a book called *After the Ball*, Harvard-qualified social scientist and activist Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen documented a **war conference** consisting of 175 leading gay activists who convened in Warrenton, Virginia, in February 1998.¹¹⁰ A **Homosexual Manifesto** was written to define the strategy of the gay revolution moving forward.

It was a three-pronged strategy:¹¹¹

1. **Desensitize America to gay relationships** - *if you can get straights to think that homosexuality is nothing more than just another thing meriting nothing more than a shrug of the shoulders, then your battle for social and legal rights is virtually won.*
2. **Jam up all opposition** - *block all dissent using economic, political, advertising, and any other means to push back on and attack anyone attacking the gay community.*
3. **Convert American opinion** - *remove homosexuality as a psychological disorder, get the law to support gay rights (gay marriage), and launch an attack on the church to get homosexuality removed as a sin.*

The Moral Majority

The rallying cry on the other side of the culture war can be illustrated by a group called the

Moral Majority.

Here are some of the statements made by Jerry Falwell, founder of the Moral Majority:¹¹²

- *AIDS is not just God's punishment for homosexuals; it's God's punishment for a society that tolerates homosexuals.*
- *Someone must not be afraid to say, 'moral perversion is wrong.' If we do not act now, homosexuals will 'own' America! If you and I do not speak up now, this homosexual steamroller will literally crush all decent men, women, and children who get in its way ... and our nation will pay a terrible price!*
- *If you are not a born-again Christian, you are a failure as a human being.*

Some parts of the church got so caught up in this war that they became far more **politically motivated** than **gospel orientated**, labelling themselves as anti-everything gay.

Neither of these camps represents a Biblical perspective on the matter. However, what each of us thinks about same-sex relationships has been deeply influenced by this cultural war. And it has led to much pain, hurt, and even fear.

A Biblical Perspective

We have already spent time considering whether the Bible is true and trustworthy (Chapter 4). Based on the findings and conclusions and a firm personal conviction, I am confident in my belief that the Bible is the inspired Word of God.

However, let's not forget the overarching story of the Bible (Chapter 3). We also learned that the Bible is an invitation from the God of the

universe to rescue and redeem a broken and sinful humanity. It's an invitation to a gay person and an invitation to a straight person – God, makes no distinction!

Before providing a Biblical perspective on same-sex relationships, I want to emphasize that we *all* wrestle with our sexuality (whether same-sex or opposite-sex attraction) and are merely at different places in our journey with the struggle. Could I be so bold as to say: *the moment we think that we have no struggle with sexual desires, we're at risk of stumbling!*



In talking about sexuality, we must first answer three important questions:¹¹³

- 01 **What is my definition of Godly marriage and sexuality?**
- 02 **How did I get this definition?**
- 03 **How do the Scriptures support this definition?**

If you have defined what Godly marriage and sexuality looks like from anything other than the Bible, then you are not an *All-in Ambassador* of Jesus. Yesterday, we discussed how you can't have one foot in Christianity and another foot living on your own terms.

Many people argue that parts of the Bible are no longer applicable for us, and they are right (in some regard). However, even aspects of the Bible that are not prescriptive for us today can reveal what Jesus has accomplished for us.

It is important that we distinguish which parts of the Bible are more or less applicable to us. But we can't pick and choose based on our personal preference and what is popular in culture.

An important book of God's Old Testament (OT) laws to Israel is the book called *Leviticus*. Leviticus reveals the absolute holiness of God, and the conditions on which Israel could approach Him. Leviticus explains matters involving *Ceremonial Law*, *Civil Law*, and *Moral Law*. Ceremonial law dealt with the need for people to be *clean* (not hygiene but ritual purity) before God. These laws are no longer applicable because they were all fulfilled in Jesus – that's why we no longer need to sacrifice animals. There are also aspects of civil law that we find are no longer applicable

because we don't operate as a *theocracy* (a system of government in which priests rule in the name of God) – that's why we no longer have the death penalty.

But when it comes to the moral law, nothing changes. In fact, Jesus increased the requirements of the moral law when He came (see Matthew 5:21-22; 27-28; 43-44):

- *OT law*: you shall not murder. *Jesus*: do not even be angry or insult your brother.
- *OT law*: you shall not commit adultery. *Jesus*: if you look at someone lustfully, you have already committed adultery in your heart.
- *OT law*: love your neighbor and hate your enemy. *Jesus*: love your enemy and pray for those who persecute you.

So, we can conclude that when the Bible talks of anything related to moral law, including sexuality, that it is still relevant (and prescriptive) for us today.

Three Scriptures

In Genesis chapter 2, there is an account of the creation in which we are introduced to the first mention of *gender* and *sexuality*. Verse 18 says, "The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'" God sees Adam (Adam literally means *man*) alone and miraculously forms a woman from one of his ribs to be his *suitable helper*. Again, there is a deeper message in the original Hebrew text that brings added clarity.

'Suitable' in the Hebrew is a word 'Kenegdo,' and it is only used here. It is a compound word made up of 'Ke,' which means 'like,' and 'neged,' which means 'opposite' or 'against.' Together, the word means 'as opposite him,' or 'like against him' ... God made Eve like Adam but different as well. If it was her humanness that made her an appropriate helper, then the word 'Ke' or 'like' would have been fine. But it makes the point that Adam needed a human that was a 'different sort,' and so God used





the word ‘Kenegdo.’ Human and the same, but woman and so different.¹¹⁴

Verse 24 continues, “*For this reason* a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame” (*emphasis added*). *For this reason* is referring to God’s original design for marriage – a male and female coming together in the union of marriage.

In Leviticus chapter 18, the Israelites are preparing to go into the promised land, and God is making it clear that they need to live according to a ***different standard*** from the culture they had come from (the Egyptians) and from the culture they were going into (the Canaanites).

Do not practice homosexuality, having sex with another man as with a woman. It is a detestable sin (Leviticus 18:22, NLT).¹¹⁵

The final Scripture passage we will look at today comes from the New Testament. The Apostle Paul is making the case to Gentiles (people who weren’t Jewish). They were acting sinfully in exchanging the Creator (God) for creation (idols), exchanging God (his commands) for self (their pleasures), and exchanging that which is natural (heterosexual relationships) for that which is unnatural (homosexual relationships).

They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen. That is why God abandoned them to their shameful desires. Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other. And the men, instead of having normal sexual relations with women, burned with lust for each other. Men did shameful things with other men, and as a result of this sin, they suffered within themselves the penalty they deserved (Romans 1:25-27, NLT).

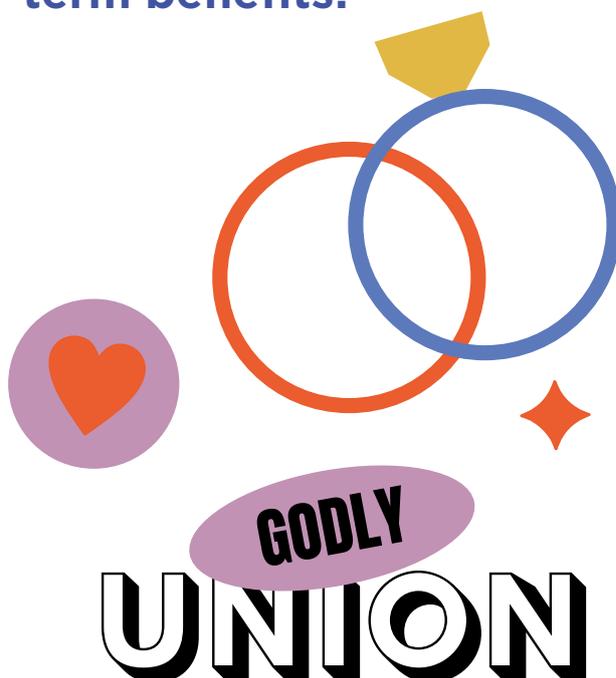
These are only three Scripture passages of many in the Bible around what Godly sexuality looks like.

To summarise:

- **Sexual intimacy is to be expressed only in a union of marriage.**

- **The Godly design of marriage is between a man (husband) and a woman (wife).**
- **Any sexual expression other than between a husband and wife in the union of marriage is sin, is not God’s plan for us, and separates us from God.**

I would encourage you with one thought before we move on: *Rejecting God because we don’t like his sex ethic is like walking away from the best doctor in town, because we don’t like the taste of her medicine.*¹¹⁶ The initial discomfort of wrestling through this discussion has incomparable long-term benefits.





Practical Application

Learning to see through a Biblical lens.

We've looked at the context for the discussion around sexuality today. But we need to understand **why** the Bible says what it does. On Day 9, we noted that God is more concerned with our **joy** than our **obedience**. But obedience is the necessary vehicle the Lord uses to lead us into a place of abundant joy in Him. In today's activity, we will consider one of the great accounts of Jesus' grace, love, and truth being displayed.

Read the story of Jesus and the woman caught in the act of adultery from John 8:3-12 (MSG), then answer the questions below.

The religion scholars and Pharisees led in a woman who had been caught in an act of adultery. They stood her in plain sight of everyone and said, "Teacher, this woman was caught red-handed in the act of adultery. Moses, in the Law, gives orders to stone such persons. What do you say?" They were trying to trap him into saying something incriminating so they could bring charges against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger in the dirt. They kept at him, badgering him. He straightened up and said, "The sinless one among you, go first: Throw the stone." Bending down again, he wrote some more in the dirt. Hearing that, they walked away, one after another, beginning with the oldest. The woman was left alone. Jesus stood up and spoke to her. "Woman, where are they? Does no one condemn you?" "No one, Master." "Neither do I," said Jesus. "Go on your way. From now on, don't sin."

The lady in the story, an image-bearer of God, is exposed in her sin and is surrounded by her self-righteous accusers who want to kill her. But Jesus intervenes in an awe-inspiring act of grace and love and literally saves her life. But here's the point, in not condemning her, He didn't leave her in a place of brokenness. Instead, He invited her into a place of fulfilled joy and beauty when He said, "From now on, don't sin."

WHY did Jesus instruct this dear lady not to sin anymore? Lisa Bevere explains it well when she says:¹⁷

Because He knows she's been looking for life in places she can't find it ... Because He sees the broken ways of living she's embraced, and is inviting her to leave them behind. Because His desire for her is that she run fully in the identity He created her for, and He knows she's been living far below it. He sees the pain her choices have caused in her life and in the lives of others, and He has so much better things in store.

Q1: What ONE lesson on the importance of love and truth can you take out of the story of the restored lady?

Q2: What new Biblical insight(s) can you take from the content covered today?



DAY 30

HOW TO
LOVE THE
LGBTQ
COMMUNITY?

→ Jesus' Example 

Truth ← 

Tolerance ← 

Tiffany Williams

“Remember, most people in a gay lifestyle have probably endured rejection, have been misunderstood, and may even have been physically or sexually abused. Help your kids understand that gay people are treasures! Jesus died for them, as He did for all of us!”

Big Idea

**THE GOAL ISN'T
STRAIGHT;
THE GOAL IS
REDEEMED.**

Truth & Tolerance

I specifically chose the quote by Tiffany Williams to begin with. Tiffany is the wife of Ken Williams, a man who left a gay identity behind and went on to be one of the co-founders of the **CHANGED Movement**, an international Christian network that ministers to the LGBTQ community (we will reference **CHANGED** again later).

Tiffany again reminds us that this conversation is about *people*, not *politics*. It is vital that we continually remind ourselves of this. The culture we live in attacks any Christian standard as *intolerant*. But tolerance actually requires disagreement (we will discuss this in a moment). Can I ask you a very real question:

Do you believe that God's ways in our sexuality provide a greater wholeness for our friends or family who are struggling with same-sex attraction than their own ways?

If your answer to this question is **NO**, can I suggest that you haven't yet experienced the joy that comes from fully surrendering your ways to God's ways in every aspect of your life? If your answer is **YES**, then just like Jesus lovingly restored the woman caught in the act of sin to wholeness (yesterday's activity), He can use you as an ambassador of restoration to others.

Two words that get thrown around a lot are *truth* and *tolerance*.

Without spending too much time on this, it is important to know that we need to determine the difference between *subjective truth* and *objective truth*. Subjective truth is something that can be true for one person and not for another.

My wife and I have very different tastes when we go shopping for household items. I will often see something and say: look at that *lovely* table, or pillow, or picture. My wife doesn't even need to respond; she just gives me *that look* – I'm sure you know the look I'm talking about! When I say something is *lovely*, it's subjective. Not everyone will see what I see as *lovely*. But if I had to say South Africa had its first democratic election in 1994, that's not subjective truth. It can be proved by evidence – it's objective truth. As Christians, we need to realise that because the Bible is the inspired Word of God, it *IS* objective truth. However, truth and tolerance actually go hand in hand – when tolerance is properly defined. Tolerance does *not actually* mean accepting the conflicting views of others as equally true. Instead, tolerance implies a willingness to recognise and respect people that have values, beliefs, or practices that are different (or in conflict) from your own. This correct definition of tolerance means caring for people but not affirming their values, beliefs, and practices that conflict with the truth of the Bible. Hopefully, this explanation of tolerance helps you.

Understanding Gay Orientation

In 2019, the results of a 30-year study on genetics relating to same-sex relationships were released.¹¹⁸ It concluded, "there are multiple genetic (biological) factors involved, but that they have only a small fraction of influence in the development of same-sex sexuality."¹¹⁹ Instead, it is *environmental factors* that play the largest role in shaping a person's same-sex orientation.





Fundamentally, 'gay' people are the same as everyone else at birth - no determinative genetic factor was discovered. What happens as we mature inspires the development of sexual desires or gender confusion. That is, one's family, community, social status, ethnicity, [and] even religion all play a role in the development of same-sex sexual behavior.¹²⁰

Based on this extensive study, we can dismiss the claims that people are *born gay*.

However, it is far too complex a matter to be sitting on the side-lines passing judgment if we have not had to deal with the struggles that some of our friends and family have had to deal with in this regard.

The encouragement is this: wherever there is a struggle there still remains a choice. Just because we are experiencing a particular attraction or sexual drive doesn't mean that it is alright to act on it or let it define our identity. Elizabeth Woning, one of the co-founders of the *CHANGED Movement* and a lady who previously identified with lesbianism, warns:¹²¹

Simply embracing the desires as innate and determinative keeps many from adequately addressing relational dysfunction (such as codependency), issues relating to sexual abuse, abandonment or rejection wounds, and self-rejection. We tend to protect gay identity above resolution of these problems, which means that adequate wholeness never comes.

The answer to any person finding true wholeness (whether identifying as being straight or gay) lies in the invitation to find our identity in Jesus Christ. It means laying down our own preferences, desires, and struggles to take hold of the life of freedom and joy offered by Jesus. Being *born again* is the doorway to belonging as a son or daughter of God and finding true restoration as men and women.

It is worthwhile pointing out that even Jesus had to submit to the identity assigned to Him by His Father when He came to earth as a man. *Jesus' divinity needed to be expressed through the limitations of His humanity* - He was born as a baby from a human mother (Luke 2:7;

Galatians 4:4), He became weary (John 4:6), thirsty (John 19:28), and hungry (Matthew 4:2), and He experienced the full range of human emotions including deep sorrow (John 11:35). Jesus knows our struggles and provides us the example of living obediently to God's plan for us, despite them.

Loving The Gay Community

For some reason, the church has not always reflected Jesus to those people identifying with homosexuality. Maybe we forgot that Jesus was a friend of all the social outcasts and those regarded as the worst of sinners in His time?

Maybe we haven't known how to approach the subject of LGBTQ? Maybe we have forgotten that every person is an image-bearer of Jesus, regardless of the struggles they face? Whatever the reason, this is for sure; we need to get back to walking as Jesus did - loving people for who *they are*, not for who they *could be*. The goal isn't straight; the goal is redeemed - because a redeemed person who truly understands the extent of Jesus' sacrifice, won't settle in a life of sin.



So, how do we love someone who is struggling with their sexuality in a way that represents Jesus well? Kris Vallotton provides some very practical handles:¹²²

- 01 *Be humble by remembering where you came from* (we all have struggles in different areas).
- 02 *Give people hope without requiring them to change* (people need to feel that they belong - not only once they have behaved a certain way).
- 03 *Listen from the heart without feeling the need to correct their opinions* (true love cares about what people are feeling, not just about what they're saying).
- 04 *Show an interest in their lives* (if we place any goal to help someone above God's love for them, we quickly turn people into projects).
- 05 *Find a way to give people a sense of hope* (trust the Holy Spirit to lead you in this).
- 06 *Fellowship with each other is the pathway to purity* (Godly fellowship destroys shame, but shame keeps people from Godly fellowship).

LOVE PEOPLE



**BUT SHAME
KEEPS PEOPLE
FROM FELLOWSHIP**





Practical Application

Making an effort to understand.

As we complete today's activity, let's be aware that Jesus loves each and every person that we encounter with the same great love that He has for us!

Q1: What ONE key insight can you take from the content covered today?

Please pick one of the articles to read and then answer the questions below.

**Article 1: Is There A Better Way Forward With LGBTQ?
(about 20 min reading)**

Elizabeth Woning shares her struggle of feeling called to ministry while also experiencing same-sex attraction. Her story ends in finding restoration of her identity in Jesus.

Source: <https://changedmovement.com/a-better-way-forward>

**Article 2: How To Talk To Your Kids About Homosexuality.
(about 10 min reading)**

Tiffany Williams shares some practical advice on how to engage in honest conversations with your children. She provides age-appropriate conversation pointers for 0-5 year olds; 5-11 year olds; and children over 11 years of age.

Source: <https://www.moralrevolution.com/blog/how-to-talk-to-your-kids-about-homosexuality>

Q2: What additional insights have you taken from the article(s) you read?

Q3: Describe, using THREE words, how you would like a person identifying with an LGBTQ lifestyle to feel after interacting with you.

Conclusion

If you have just completed the thirtieth day of the 30-Day Challenge, congratulations! But I want to encourage you that this is only the beginning. When I set out to write this workbook, I had one goal in mind:

To provide an engaging resource that encourages young people in a journey of faith in Jesus by equipping them with a reason for the hope that they carry.

However, along the way, I became increasingly aware of just how critical the partnership between adults and young people is on this journey.

If you are an adult, I want to encourage you to use this workbook and the learnings that you have taken from your journey through the content to encourage and equip the young people in your life. They desperately need people with a bit more life experience looking out for them and cheering them on in their faith. Know that in the same way the Holy Spirit is your guide, He can use you to guide young people.

If you are a young person, thank you for taking the time to invest in your (eternal) future by joining me on this journey. I trust that you are already feeling more confident that the Christian faith and Christian worldview represents the things of greatest value in this life. My prayer for you is that you would be bold and courageous in your pursuit of Jesus and that you would be able to share your faith with those the Holy Spirit leads you to.

Sustaining Change

When I was involved in large change management projects during my business consulting days, I learned that the most likely reason why change fails is because people don't remain **engaged** in the change process. I imagine that for those of you who took the time and effort to diligently work through the content and the practical application activities in this workbook, God has been speaking to you and revealing aspects of your thinking or behaviour that may require change - even in writing the content He has been speaking to me! So, allow me to offer some of my learnings that could potentially help you sustain the change God has begun in your life.

When engaging people in a change process, you must continue to engage them at three levels: Head (cognitively), Heart (affectively - or emotionally), and Hands (behaviourally). If I could offer you three simple ideas to help you continue on the journey you have started, they would be this:

- **Head** ~ understand the formative impact of culture on a person's worldview and how true and trustworthy the Christian worldview is.
- **Heart** ~ commit to continue developing your relationship with Father God, be shaped in the likeness of Jesus by His Word (the Bible), and desire a greater intimacy with (and infilling of) the person of the Holy Spirit.
- **Hands** ~ regularly engage in dialogue with different people around questions of faith and life in a way that reflects the character of Jesus.

Harry Emerson Fosdick famously said, “He who chooses the beginning of a road chooses the place it leads to. It is the means that determines the end.”¹²³

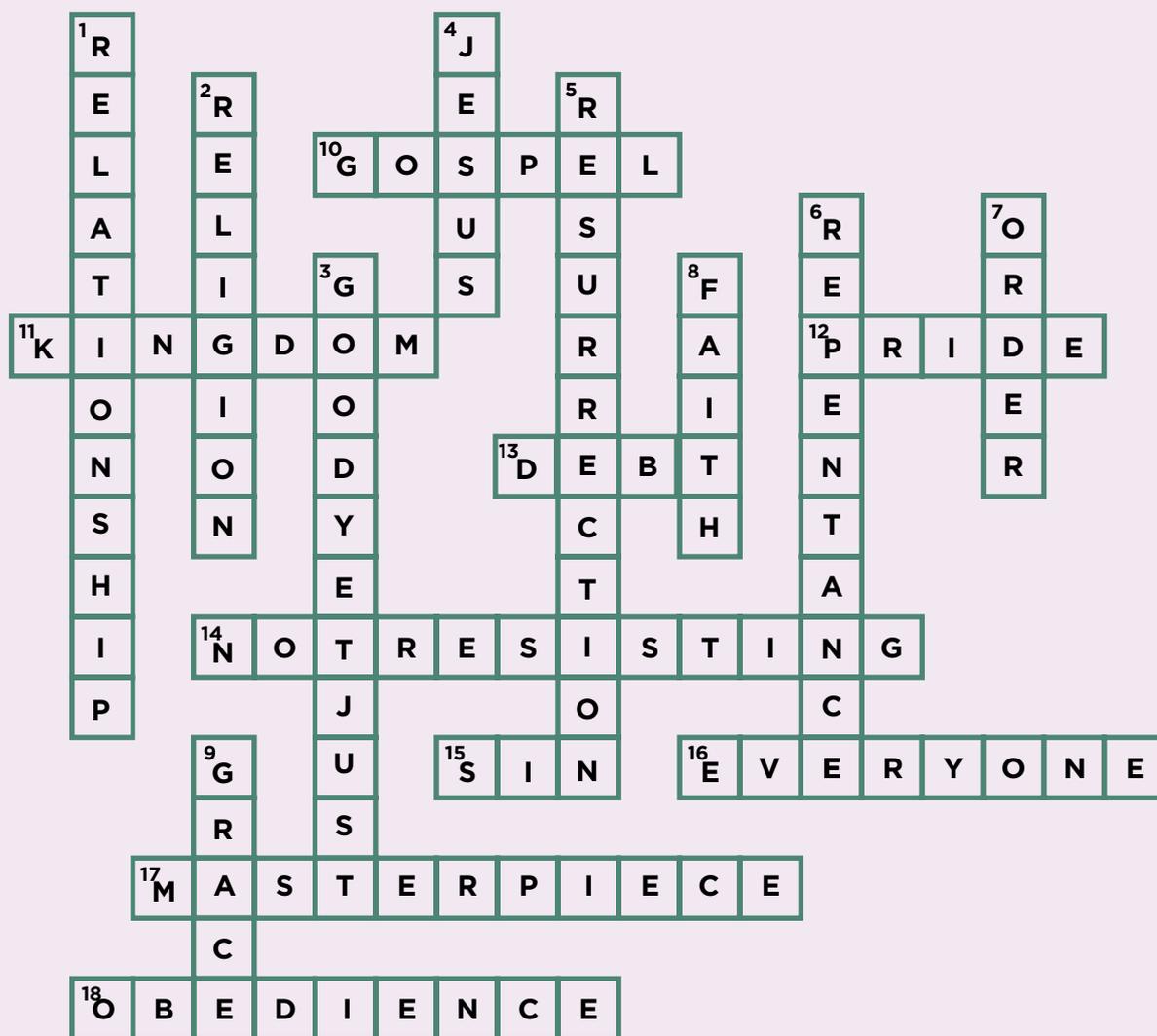
By choosing to take up the challenge to establishing a *reason* for the hope that you have, you have begun a most exhilarating adventure – I pray that our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ, would sustain you on your journey.



Appendixes

Appendix 1: Solutions

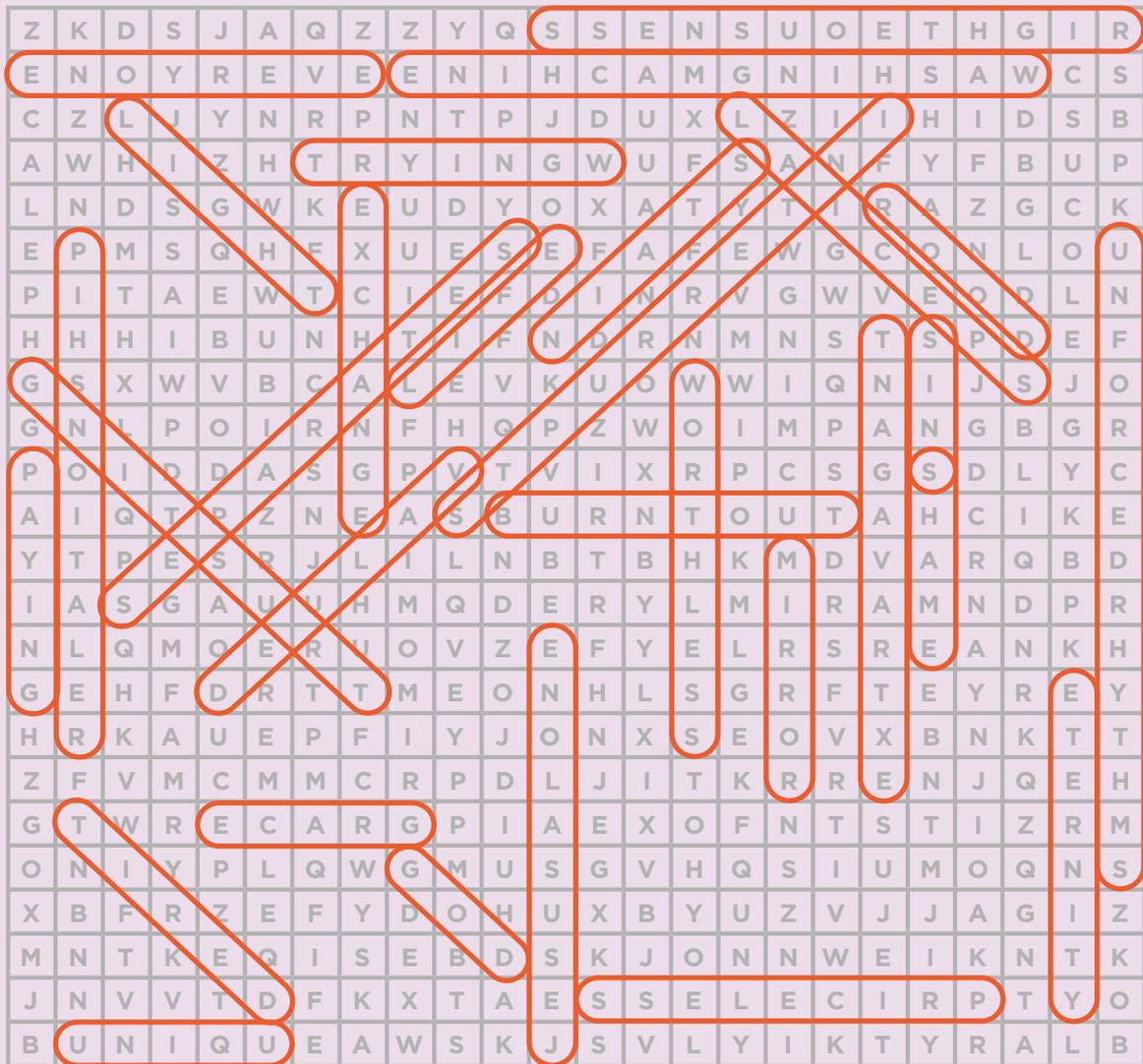
Day 15 - Cross Word Puzzle solution.



Day 16 - Match The Columns solution.

- 1 = D
- 2 = A
- 3 = E
- 4 = C
- 5 = B

Day 27 - Word Search solution.



Footnotes

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