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Life QUESTIONS

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WHAT IS *chapter 1* THE PURPOSE OF LIFE?

What if you were born to live for something big? Something more fulfilling than what pulls most people out of bed each morning. Something far more fascinating than the daily discipline imposed by your alarm clock. Something more satisfying than your income, however substantial that may be. Something worth *all* of your life, not just the eight-plus hours of the day you devote to your career. Something more compelling than the products marketed by the commercials during Monday night football. What if you were born to live for something so central, it works its way into every answer to every important question you'll ever ask?

So, what wakes you up every morning and motivates you to press on? Could you define your purpose for being here? Right now? Right here? And, if you could, what size and shape is that purpose? Is it so small it fits only the boundaries of your own life, or is it so large you're still discovering its dimensions?



What Do People Say?

"He who has a why to live for can bear with almost any how." *Friedrich Nietzsche, German philosopher (1844 – 1900)*

"Everything—a horse, a vine—is created for some duty... For what task, then, were you yourself created? A man's true delight is to do the things he was made for." *Marcus Aurelius, Roman Emperor (161 – 180 AD)*

"How strange is the lot of us mortals! Each of us is here for a brief sojourn; for what purpose he knows not, though he senses it. But without deeper reflections one knows from daily life that one exists for other people." *Albert Einstein, physicist*

"One never really lives unless he has something to die for." *Soren Kierkegaard, Danish philosopher (1813 – 1855)*

"A tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing..." *William Shakespeare, Macbeth*

“The tragedy of modern man is not that he knows less and less about the meaning of his own life, but that it bothers him less and less.”

*Václav Havel, writer and former
President of Czech Republic*

IN THE SPACE BELOW, BRIEFLY DESCRIBE THE PURPOSE OF YOUR LIFE:

Having It All

In the history of our country, we've seen men who were legendary for their ability to make money through the financial markets of the world. Some of them have become heroes and trendsetters. Here are a few examples.

- Jesse Livermore (1877 – 1940) was a legend on Wall Street. As a teenager, he made over \$1,000 by gambling on stock prices, which was small fortune in the 1890s. When he took up legitimate stock trading, he lost everything in six months, but he kept going. After the market crashed in 1929, Livermore was still worth \$100 million. He said, “It took me five years to learn to play the game intelligently enough to make big money when I was right.” His trading techniques are still used in the market today.

“THE PROBLEM WITH THE RAT
RACE IS THAT EVEN IF YOU
WIN, YOU'RE STILL A RAT.”

Lily Tomlin, comedienne

- Arthur W. Cutten (1870 – 1936) was one of the wealthiest Americans in the 1920s. He foresaw a grain shortage coming in 1924 and by buying up grain futures, made several million dollars in eight months. He was called “the wheat king.”

- Ivar Kreuger (1880 – 1932) was called “the match king” for his European monopoly on the match industry. For 25 years, he was a Swedish hero for the money and business he brought to his country.

These men were among the best in the marketplace, some willing to sacrifice everything to achieve worldly success.

Did they find success, purpose and significance in life?

As Paul Harvey would say, “Here’s the rest of the story:”

- Jesse Livermore deteriorated into depression over the years following the stock market crash. He was bankrupt by 1934 and killed himself in 1940. In his suicide note, he told his wife he was a failure, unworthy of her love.

- Arthur Cutten’s speculations along with a few others may have lead to the market crash. The U.S. government prosecuted him on fraud and tax evasion, selling his properties and taking most of his actual wealth. He died of a heart attack.

- Not long after the news came out of instability and deception in his many business holdings, Ivar Kreuger killed himself. Kreuger’s companies owed more than the Swedish national debt.

Like many others who never make the headlines, these men could make a living, but they never learned how to live.





what is the purpose of life?

*These men could make a living,
but they never learned how to live.*

Reflection

HOW DOES EARNING A LIVING IMPACT A PERSON'S *quality* OF LIFE?

HOW DOES IT IMPACT A PERSON'S *purpose* IN LIFE?

SHOULD NET WORTH BE CONSIDERED A FACTOR IN DEFINING A PERSON'S SIGNIFICANCE IN LIFE?
WHY OR WHY NOT?

We're All Wondering

All people, in all cultures, in all eras, have attempted to answer the same basic questions about life. These include:

- > Who am I?
- > Why am I here?
- > Where did I come from?
- > Where am I going?



By answering these questions, we can begin to reveal our purpose in life.



Why Am I Here?

From Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* (ranked one of the top 100 movies of all time):

It is Christmas Eve, 1946. George Bailey is on the verge of suicide. With his business collapsing, he faces the scandal of bankruptcy. To top it off, he is wanted by the police for misappropriation of funds. In a desperate outburst, he declares that he wishes he'd never been born. In the midst of it all, the prayers of his family alert heaven to George's state of mind. Soon, arrangements are made to send angel Clarence Oddbody to earth to transform George's hopeless perspective.

In a strange prophetic twist, Clarence shows George what the world would have looked like if he had never been born. At first, George is unaware of the change. But as he wanders through Bedford Falls, he begins to notice subtle differences. Once a picturesque village, his hometown is now run down. The fingerprints of his life are now missing from the lives of his neighbors, friends, and family. The blessings he has brought others are noticeably absent. When he encounters old friends on the street, they no longer recognize him. Even his wife reacts as if he is a stranger.

Startled by the experience, George suddenly realizes the value of his former life, even with all its flaws. He calls upon Clarence to save him. Immediately, he is transported back to normalcy. It is Christmas Day. His friends and family have organized and collected money to save George and his company from ruin. Upon seeing the lives he touched and the difference he made to the town, George Bailey concludes that he has a wonderful life after all.

"I FIND IT ASTOUNDING THAT THE BULK OF PEOPLE ON OUR PLANET SEEM TO JOURNEY THROUGH YEARS AND EVEN DECADES WITHOUT SERIOUSLY WRESTLING WITH THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION OF WHY THEY ARE HERE AND WHAT THEY WANT THEIR LIVES TO ADD UP TO IN THE END. MANY BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL PEOPLE GET ON A FAST TRACK IN PURSUIT OF AN ELUSIVE VISION OF SUCCESS WITHOUT QUESTIONING WHETHER THEY ARE SELLING THEMSELVES TOO CHEAPLY BY INVESTING THEIR PRECIOUS YEARS OF LIFE IN SOMETHING THAT, EVEN IF ATTAINED, WILL NEVER SATISFY.

"IT IS MUCH WISER TO FOLLOW KIERKEGAARD'S ADVICE TO DEFINE LIFE BACKWARDS AND LIVE IT FORWARDS—START FROM THE DESTINY AND DEFINE THE JOURNEY IN LIGHT OF IT."

Ken Boa, *Conformed to His Image*



It's a Wonderful Life EXPLORES THE IMPORTANCE OF ADDING VALUE TO OTHERS. WHAT ROLE DOES THIS CONCEPT PLAY IN SHAPING YOUR PURPOSE IN LIFE?

The 1995 movie, *Mr. Holland's Opus*, is also a study in purpose.

Glenn Holland thought his life was compromised when he reluctantly shelved his dream of composing an Opus and accepted a job as a teacher instead. His goal in life was to write one memorable piece of music to leave his mark on the world. But instead, he found himself on a most unlikely path, pouring his life into high school students while learning to channel his love of music in new ways. Although the job was a total compromise of his calling, his passion for music never faded.

Thirty years pass, and Mr. Holland learns the band and music program at his school will be cancelled because of budget cuts. His life is all but spent, his Opus never written, and his school is eliminating his position. Attempts to convince the school board to reconsider are without effect. Mr. Holland decides to retire from teaching. His dreams are packed metaphorically, along with the personal items from his office. A surprise farewell party is attended by hundreds of his former students. Now young men and women with productive lives and careers, they have gathered to acknowledge his impact on their lives. Topping the list is the governor of the state—also a former pupil—who addresses the gathering. Though Mr. Holland has never completed his planned masterpiece, she declares that his life work is a symphony of lives, “and we are your Opus.” According to *this* definition of success, Mr. Holland’s legacy is greater than he ever dreamed it could be.

WHICH OF YOUR ACTIVITIES MAKE THE GREATEST CONTRIBUTION TO YOUR LEGACY?

Consider: What Will Your Life Add Up To?

Every person possesses gifts, talents and opportunities in this life to use as they wish. Some simply spend their lives; while others invest it in things that reflect purpose.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE THINGS THAT WOULD CAUSE YOU REGRET, IF LEFT UNDONE? DESCRIBE.

“Those who are wise must finally die, just like the foolish and senseless, leaving all their wealth behind. The grave is their eternal home, where they will stay forever. They may name their estates after themselves, but they leave their wealth to others.” *Psalms 49:10-11*

“TWENTY YEARS FROM NOW YOU WILL BE MORE DISAPPOINTED BY THE THINGS YOU DIDN'T DO THAN BY THE ONES YOU DID DO. SO THROW OFF THE BOWLINES. SAIL AWAY FROM THE SAFE HARBOR. CATCH THE TRADE WINDS IN YOUR SAILS. EXPLORE. DREAM. DISCOVER.”

Mark Twain, author

Additional Resources

- > www.purposedrivenlife.com
- > www.everystudent.com
- > *Establishing Your Purpose* booklet, Vision Foundation

Note on Optional Application

The application section is to help you go a little deeper through challenging questions, Audio for Life Questions, and reflective exercises. This application section is optional for use in your study. You may do all of the sections, one section, or none of them. This section is provided for you.

[OPTIONAL APPLICATION]

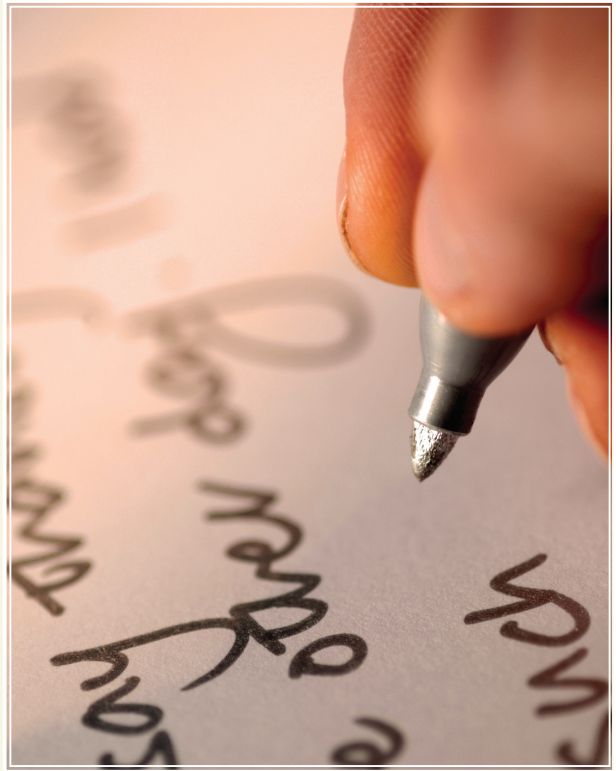
THINK: IF MONEY WERE NO OBJECT, WHAT LIFE DREAMS WOULD YOU PURSUE? WHY?

LISTEN: LISTEN TO THE AUDIO FOR LIFE QUESTIONS, CHAPTER 1, OR VISIT WWW.OPERATIONTIMOTHY.COM AND LISTEN TO SELECTIONS FOR THIS CHAPTER.

OBSERVE: WATCH THE MOVIE *AMAZING GRACE*, ABOUT WILLIAM WILBERFORCE'S DEDICATION TO ABOLISH THE SLAVE TRADE IN ENGLAND DURING THE 1800S. REFLECT ON THE IMPACT ONE PERSON CAN HAVE.







IS THE ^{chapter 2} BIBLE CREDIBLE?

What do you think about the Bible? Is there anything special about it? Is it possible to make too much of it? Why do some people call it an Owner's Manual for Life, while others call it science fiction or a collection of fairy tales?



What Do People Say?

"The Bible is a product of man, my dear, not of God." *Sir Leigh Teabing, The Da Vinci Code*

"Looking for loopholes." *W.C. Fields' reported reply when seen reading the Bible on his deathbed*

"No man ever believes that the Bible means what it says: He is always convinced that it says what he means." *George Bernard Shaw, playwright*

WHAT QUOTABLE SUMMARY WOULD YOU LEAVE THE WORLD REGARDING THE BIBLE? WRITE IT HERE:

WHERE DID YOU GET YOUR VIEW OF THE BIBLE? IS IT FROM YOUR UPBRINGING, A FRIEND, OR A MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE? EXPLAIN.

A Controversial Book

Heated discussions. Debate. Denominational splits. Military crusades. And the centerpiece of all this drama? The Bible.

What is it about this book that elicits a struggle? Is it the book itself or the people who handle it? It may be your own view of the Bible was formed within the crucible of conflict. Even if not, it's hard to miss the polarity of opinions in our culture about this controversial book. It isn't a benign coffee table book, that's for sure.

“Most people are bothered by those passages in Scripture which they cannot understand; but as for me, I always noticed that the passages in Scripture which trouble me most are those which I do understand.”

Mark Twain, author

The last words of the Scriptures were penned just a few decades shy of 2000 years ago. The Bible hasn't changed since then. Neither has the controversy. In the 1300s John Wycliffe translated the New Testament into the “Vulgate”—the common language—and risked excommunication for his efforts. Two centuries later William Tyndale, a contemporary of Martin Luther, translated the New Testament into English. He was burned at the stake for his belief that the Bible was written to be accessible to everyone.

“CERTAINLY THE BIBLE IS A REMARKABLE BOOK—UNQUESTIONABLY THE WORLD’S ALL-TIME BESTSELLER WITH COUNTLESS MILLIONS OF COPIES IN PRINT.”

United Bible Societies, 1999

Yes, the Bible deserves our attention. And our personal beliefs about this book require serious contemplation. In fact, an honest look at the Scriptures may spark an inner controversy. As you consider the questions on the following pages, two other questions will probably seep into your thoughts: What do you believe about the Bible? And what impact will you allow it to have on your life?

We'll be exploring these questions:

- I. What is the Bible?
- II. Why was the Bible written?
- III. Is the Bible credible?
- IV. What does the Bible say about itself?



I. What is the Bible?

How do you begin to discuss a book like the Bible? Try a few vital statistics:

- > It's actually a library of 66 books, ranging from Genesis to Revelation. These are divided in two principle parts, the "Old Testament" (39 books) and the "New Testament" (27 books).
- > Forty different writers took over 1500 years to produce it. These included kings and peasants; philosophers and fishermen; poets and scholars.
- > It was written on three different continents in three different languages.
- > Despite all of the above, a consistent, complete message unfolds across its pages.
- > It has been read by more people and published in more languages than any other book.

WHICH OF THESE STATEMENTS IS MOST NOTEWORTHY TO YOU?

II. Why Was the Bible Written?

Let's examine three purposes for the Bible.

Ruth Graham once declared that she would rather spend what little time she had with Billy than spend a lot of time with anyone else. And as the wife of "America's Pastor," she had ample opportunity to prove that sentiment. Much of the Graham's long, satisfying marriage was spent apart, without the connecting tissue of cell phones or email. During those years when their children were small and Billy's travels kept him away for months at a time, they wrote letters. Lots of them.



In 1955, Billy wrote to Ruth from Glasgow:

I don't have to tell you that you are in my mind every moment and that I love you with all my heart, and miss you so much that it hurts... Naturally, I think of you a thousand times a day and each little experience I wish I could share with you.

Billy Graham's letters reveal a surprising vulnerability in the very public man. He wrote, not only to keep his wife informed, but to solicit her help. He expressed the tenderness that was understood between them. Ruth, on the other hand, often wrote to lighten his load with humor and truth. She reserved her loneliness for her prayer journal. The sum of their letters reflect a growing intimacy and devotion that flourished despite—perhaps because of—their many separations.

Could it be the Bible is meant to connect us this intimately and personally to God? That would make it far more than a theological treatise, wouldn't it? Instead of a document designed to fill us with knowledge, might the Scriptures do for us what only a love letter can do?

1. For God to reveal Himself to people

The Bible gives finite people a way of knowing something about an infinite God.

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” *John 1:14*

“Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.” *John 14:21*

“YOUR LETTERS HAVE GIVEN
ME INSPIRATION, QUIETED
MY NERVES. THEY BRING ME
SO CLOSE TO YOU.”

Billy to Ruth, Glasgow, 1955

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE IDEA THAT GOD USES THE BIBLE TO REVEAL HIMSELF? WHY IS THIS A GOOD IDEA? HAVE YOU EVER SEEN THIS IDEA MISUSED?

2. To reveal to people how to live

Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.”
Deuteronomy 4:6

TODAY WE POSSESS SOME 5,000 ANCIENT GREEK COPIES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, AND 10,000 COPIES IN OTHER ANCIENT LANGUAGES. LATIN AND COPTIC COPIES GO BACK TO THE 2ND CENTURY; FRAGMENTS OF PAPYRUS DOCUMENTS GO BACK TO A.D. 130. COMPLETE VOLUMES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT DATE TO THE 4TH CENTURY.

COMPARE THIS WITH THE SECOND BEST-PRESERVED LITERARY WORK OF ANTIQUITY, HOMER'S *ILLIAD*, WHICH HAS ONLY 643 PRESERVED MANUSCRIPTS DISCOVERED TO DATE. THE *ILLIAD* IS BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN WRITTEN IN THE 8TH CENTURY B.C.

“For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” *Romans 15:4*

WHAT DO GOD’S INTERACTIONS WITH ANCIENT PEOPLE SUGGEST ABOUT HIS NATURE? IS THIS INFORMATION USEFUL TODAY? WHY OR WHY NOT?

“Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.” *Joshua 1:8*

DOES THE BIBLE STRIKE YOU AS PRACTICAL AND RELEVANT FOR LIFE IN THE WORLD TODAY? WHY OR WHY NOT?

3. To reveal how God interacts with people through time

“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways.” *Hebrews 1:1*





is the Bible credible?

*Today we possess some 5,000 ancient Greek copies of the
New Testament, and 10,000 copies in other ancient languages.*

III. Is the Bible Credible?

Passing it On

It's easy to forget that the Bible predates the printing press by over a thousand years. To preserve it, the words were copied laboriously on papyrus. Very few people ever saw a manuscript. That privilege was reserved for religious officials. Over centuries, the Jews nurtured and preserved the writings, carefully recopying each letter and punctuation mark. They adhered to strict guidelines. If a single letter or syllable was wrong, the entire copy was destroyed and the process was started over. The early Christians continued the practice of precision, passing the written Word along carefully from generation to generation.

Archaeological Findings

"Probably the Dead Sea Scrolls have had the greatest Biblical impact. They have provided Old Testament manuscripts approximately 1,000 years older than our previous oldest manuscript. The Dead Sea Scrolls have demonstrated that the Old Testament was accurately transmitted during this interval. In addition, they provide a wealth of information on the times leading up to, and during, the life of Christ." (*Dr. Bryant Wood, archaeologist, Associates for Biblical Research*)

Fulfilled Prophecy

Fulfilled prophecies also validate the authenticity of the Bible's contents—including Jesus' claim to be the Son of God. There is an amazing consistency between the prophecies which preceded Jesus by hundreds of years and His fulfillment of those ancient words. The predictions and the features of Christ's life cohere at every detail. The chart on the next page is a brief list of some of the prophecies made concerning the Christ and how Jesus fulfilled them.

"APPROXIMATELY 2,500 PROPHECIES APPEAR IN THE PAGES OF THE BIBLE, ABOUT 2,000 OF WHICH ALREADY HAVE BEEN FULFILLED TO THE LETTER—NO ERRORS. SINCE THE PROBABILITY FOR ANY ONE OF THESE PROPHECIES HAVING BEEN FULFILLED BY CHANCE AVERAGES LESS THAN ONE IN TEN, AND SINCE THE PROPHECIES ARE FOR THE MOST PART INDEPENDENT OF ONE ANOTHER, THE ODDS FOR ALL THESE PROPHECIES HAVING BEEN FULFILLED BY CHANCE WITHOUT ERROR IS LESS THAN ONE IN 10^{2000} !"

Hugh Ross, astrophysicist, www.reasons.org

Late on Christmas Eve, a frustrated father sits on the floor in front of the tree. Stray parts of a new bicycle litter the room. His wife surveys the mess, and says, "When all else fails, read the instructions." Are you the type who likes to skip the manual? When you travel do you stubbornly refuse to stop and ask for directions?

A recent bestseller is entitled *Life's Little Instruction Book*. Actually, that title better fits the Bible. God knew we would frequently need to "read the directions"—perhaps before we find ourselves in a mess!



Prophecies about Jesus Christ

TOPIC	PROPHECY	FULFILLMENT
Place of Birth	"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." <i>Micah 5:2</i> (700 BC)	"Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea." <i>Matthew 2:1</i>
Born of a Virgin	"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel" <i>Isaiah 7:14</i> (700 BC)	"His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit." <i>Matthew 1:18</i>
His Triumphal Entry	"Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." <i>Zechariah 9:9</i> (500 BC)	"They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord ! Blessed is the King of Israel! Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it." <i>John 12:13-14</i>
Betrayed by a Friend	"Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me." <i>Psalms 41:9</i> (1000 BC)	"Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them." <i>Mark 14:10</i>
His Rejection	"He was despised and rejected by men... Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not." <i>Isaiah 53:3</i> (700 BC)	"He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him." <i>John 1:11</i>
Crucified with Sinners	"He... was numbered with the transgressors." <i>Isaiah 53:12</i> (700 BC)	"Two robbers were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left." <i>Matthew 27:38</i>
Hands and Feet Pierced	"They have pierced my hands and my feet." <i>Psalms 22:16</i> (1000 BC)	"Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side." <i>John 20:27</i>
His Resurrection	"You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay." <i>Psalms 16:10</i> (1000 BC)	"You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead." <i>Acts 3:15</i>
His Ascension	"You ascended on High." <i>Psalms 68:18</i> (1000 BC)	"He was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight." <i>Acts 1:9</i>

IV. What Does the Bible Say about Itself?

Let's say you've written an email to one of your top employees. The sole purpose of your message is to commend a job well done on a recent project. You're not only grateful for this man's performance, you know the value of good people and you're making sure you accurately express your thoughts. You copy a draft to a co-worker before sending it.

Imagine your chagrin when your employee tenders his resignation that afternoon. You have a glowing email in your outbox ready to send to him and you mention it. "Oh, I know about that," says the man, "I heard you were about to fire me, so I decided to save you the trouble." Somehow—you can't imagine how—your co-worker could have misrepresented your words and passed along a completely erroneous message. He didn't allow your words to speak for themselves—with disastrous results.

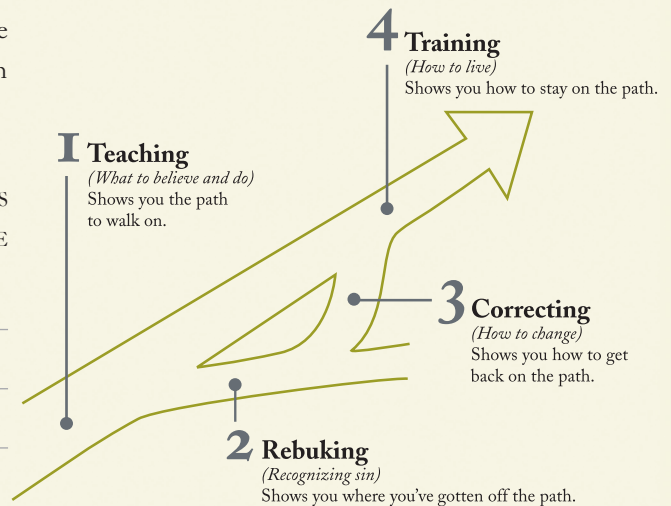
If God has spoken, shouldn't we let His words speak for themselves? In addition to the abundance of commentaries about the Bible, the Bible makes some important statements about itself. Consider what the apostle Paul wrote to his protégé Timothy about the Holy Scriptures:

"But as for you, continue in what you've learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."


II Timothy 3:14-17

The words "God-breathed" in this passage can also be translated "filled with the breath of God."

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF PAUL'S CLAIM THAT THE BIBLE'S CONTENTS ARE INSPIRED BY GOD?



HOW DOES THE DIAGRAM ILLUSTRATE THE PRECEDING VERSE?



In the Old Testament alone, the writers claim to be writing or speaking God's words over 2600 times. The New Testament writer refers to these men in II Peter 1:19-21:

“And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”



ACCORDING TO THESE VERSES, WHERE DID THE PROPHECY ORIGINATE?

Additional Resources

- > *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, Josh McDowell
- > www.jcstudies.com
- > “How Can the Bible be Authoritative?” by N.T. Wright (published in *Vox Evangelica*, April 1991, 7 – 32)

[OPTIONAL APPLICATION]

THINK: What problems arise when a book gives endorsements for itself?

LISTEN: Listen to the Audio for Life Questions, Chapter 2, or visit www.operationtimothy.com and listen to selections for this chapter.

OBSERVE: Watch the film, *The Da Vinci Code*. Do you notice any factual claims that challenge the Bible's authenticity? How would an historian set out to resolve the conflict? Is it possible to distinguish conclusively between what is fact and fiction?

CONSIDER: Listen to "A Celebration," by U2. Is there a message about the truth of the Bible in the words of this song?



NOTES



WHERE ^{chapter 3} IS GOD?

If God is there, where is He when I really need Him? I have questions and struggles and needs and I'm not sure He even knows about them. Is He relevant to my daily life? Does He even care?

WHAT THOUGHTS ABOUT GOD ARE FOREMOST IN YOUR MIND?



What Do People Say?

"If someone were to prove to me right this minute that God, in all his luminousness, exists, it wouldn't change a single aspect of my behavior." *Luis Buñuel (1900-1983), Spanish filmmaker*

"One must keep pointing out that Christianity is a statement which, if false, is of no importance, and, if true, is of infinite importance. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important." *C. S. Lewis, professor and author*

"The trouble with many people today is that they haven't found a God big enough for modern needs." *J. B. Phillips, English theologian*

"To you I'm an atheist; to God, I'm the Loyal Opposition." *Woody Allen, actor*

What's God Got to Do with It?

In his book *The Portable Atheist*, Christopher Hitchens makes a distinction between the existence of God and the existence of an *intervening* God. As an articulate representative of atheism today, Mr. Hitchens points out that his dispute is primarily with the latter. He recognizes that any belief system regarding a god presumes that God's "wishes have been made known or can be determined."

This, then, is the hinge of all human thought about God: not *does He exist?*, but *is He relevant?* As Christians, we affirm God's relevance in our lives. But what about our day to day experience? What about real life? Where is God? What do we do with the confusion we often feel about Him? We look at someone we love who is suffering, and find it impossible not to ask, "God, where are you?" We're at best, confused, and at worst, cynical.

But we just discovered God's desire to reveal Himself in His Word. We know He has something to say, that He is relevant. So, what does that look like?



Consider these typical depictions of God:

Absentee Landlord: He created the world, then moved on to another project.

Cosmic Bellhop: God provides what we need if we simply have the faith.

WHAT IS YOUR DEPICTION OF GOD? DESCRIBE IT HERE.

TO WHAT EXTENT IS GOD INVOLVED IN EVERYDAY WORLD EVENTS?

TO WHAT EXTENT IS HE INVOLVED IN YOUR PERSONAL LIFE AND CONCERNS?

Food for Thought

Gallup and other polls indicate that 90% of us in the USA believe in a “Higher Power.” At the same time, the same pollsters tell us that fewer and fewer people make faith a part of their daily lives.

HOW DO YOU ACCOUNT FOR THIS DISCREPANCY?

TAKE INVENTORY. FROM THE LIST BELOW, WHICH AREAS DO YOU CURRENTLY FIND TO BE A CHALLENGE AND WHY?

☐ OPPOSITE SEX

☐ JOB

☐ MARRIAGE

☐ FINANCES

☐ KIDS

☐ FAMILY

WHY ARE THESE A CHALLENGE?



where is God?



*Pollsters tell us that fewer and fewer people
make faith a part of their daily lives.*

COMPLETE THESE SENTENCES:

> IF GOD KNOWS ME COMPLETELY, IT'S A LITTLE SCARY BECAUSE:

> IF GOD KNOWS ME COMPLETELY, IT'S ENCOURAGING BECAUSE:

Pat Morley in his book, *Man in the Mirror*, asks: "Has anybody ever won the rat race?"

"The proverbial questions of the rat race—'What's it all about?' and 'Is this all there is?'—have tortured us all at one time or another. No matter how successful we become, these questions always lurk in the shadows, just waiting to pounce on us when life's inevitable problems overtake us. We strain to keep it all together, but the pressure is often like a tight band around our chest. Sometimes, the gravity of our debts and duties weighs us down so much that our interior posture is in a slump—even if we fake it and stand tall to the world."

DOES MORLEY'S WORD PICTURE DESCRIBE YOU AT ALL? EXPLAIN.

"THE PROBLEM WITH THE RAT
RACE IS THAT EVEN IF YOU WIN,
YOU'RE STILL A RAT."

Lily Tomlin

In the question of God's relevance, there are three life issues (work, relationships, and money) hanging in the balance.



God in the Workplace

Colossians 3:23-25 instructs workers in the following way: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism."



IN YOUR OWN WORDS, WHAT ARE THE PRINCIPLES
GOD GIVES ABOUT WORK IN COLOSSIANS 3:23-25?

HOW WOULD THE WORLD CHANGE IF PEOPLE
FOLLOWED THESE PRINCIPLES?

REFLECTING ON YOUR LINE OF WORK, HOW WOULD THE WORKPLACE BE DIFFERENT IF MOST PEOPLE
FOLLOWED THE STANDARD DESCRIBED IN THIS PASSAGE?

God and Relationships

THINK ABOUT YOUR SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIPS—SPOUSE, CHILDREN, PARENTS, FRIENDS AND LIST THE FIVE PEOPLE MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU:

Reflect on I Corinthians 13:4-7: “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”

HOW DOES THE QUALITY OF YOUR SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIPS COMPARE TO THIS DESCRIPTION?



WHICH ATTITUDES DESCRIBED PRESENT THE GREATEST CHALLENGE TO YOU?

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word.” *Ephesians 5:25*

HAVE YOU EVER SEEN A MARRIAGE THAT FITS THIS DESCRIPTION? DESCRIBE THAT RELATIONSHIP.

WHAT PRIMARY THEME(S) EMERGE FROM GOD'S ATTITUDE TOWARD RELATIONSHIPS AS REVEALED IN SCRIPTURE?

Author Ken Boa describes the Bible in one word—"relationships."

God and Your Wallet

God and money. The combination conjures up visions of televangelist's indiscretions or the discomfort of sitting through a sermon on tithing. It's fodder for late night comedy on TV and caricature in Southern novels. Funny stories about the offering plate are almost as prevalent as lawyer jokes.

Which means we don't like to talk about God and money. In fact, many would consider it seriously lacking in taste as subject matter for polite conversation. Does that mean we leave the matter alone? Would God prefer for us to "be nice" and never mention it?

You might be surprised to learn that the Bible has more to say about money than any other single subject—over 2300 verses make reference to it. Why? It has been said that our handling of finances conveys more about us—and our values—than anything else. Money is complicated today. So how could an ancient book like the Bible possibly advise us on money management? Is it relevant?

Money issues in the Bible:

"The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender." *Proverbs 22:7*

"For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it." *I Timothy 6:7*

CAN YOU GIVE EXAMPLES OF THESE PRINCIPLES IN ACTION TODAY?

WHICH OF THESE LIFE ISSUES—CAREER, RELATIONSHIPS, AND MONEY—PRESENT THE GREATEST CONCERNS TO YOU? EXPLAIN.

Crisis Management

“I’m thinking about you.”

We tend to hear those words from others when they don’t know what else to say. When our struggles either embarrass or concern them. It’s comforting to know someone is thinking of us. But it only goes so far to ease our pain, doesn’t it? Is this all the Bible has to say when we hurt? Are God’s words impotent when our hearts are injured and in danger of breaking? Perhaps there is truth, but is there relief? There may be answers, but is that truth satisfying? If God is thinking of us, what are His thoughts?

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” *John 16:33*

“...mourn with those who mourn.” *Romans 12:15*

“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” *Proverbs 15:1*

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” *Philippians 4:6,7*



HAVE YOU EVER SENSED GOD'S PERSONAL CONCERN FOR YOU IN THESE TYPES OF STRUGGLES? DISCUSS.

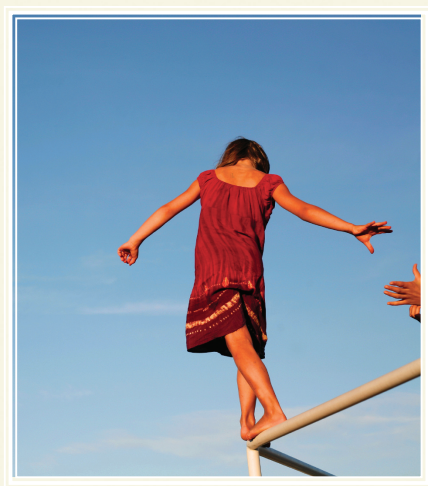
Can You Really Trust God with Your Needs?

Life teaches us to be skeptical. Everywhere we turn, it seems someone is out to take advantage of us. Spam solicitations, telemarketers, opportunistic co-workers, deceitful business partners, and selfish relatives. There's no end to the list of people who might hurt and disappoint us.

HOW DOES OUR SKEPTICISM TOWARD PEOPLE INFLUENCE OUR ABILITY TO TRUST GOD? EXPLAIN.

In some cases, it might even seem like God is directly responsible for disappointing circumstances or failed ambitions.

WHAT ARE SOME REASONS A PERSON MIGHT HAVE THIS IMAGE OF GOD?



Read Hebrews 13:5, 8: "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.'...Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."

DO THESE STATEMENTS SPEAK TO YOU PERSONALLY? WHY OR WHY NOT?



The Bible is clear on two points about God:

1. He cares.
2. He gets involved.

What Does God Care About?

“O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD. You hem me in—behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.” *Psalm 139:1-8a*

ACCORDING TO THIS PASSAGE, HOW MUCH IS GOD INVOLVED WITH US?

DO YOU BUY IT? WHY OR WHY NOT?



HOW IS GOD INVOLVED PERSONALLY IN EVERYDAY LIFE?

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

Matthew 6:25-34

WHAT PROMISES DOES GOD MAKE? HOW ARE THESE PROMISES RELEVANT TO YOUR LIFE?

Additional Resources

- > *Man in the Mirror*, Pat Morley
- > *Disappointment with God*, Philip Yancey

[OPTIONAL APPLICATION]

THINK: IF GOD CARES SO MUCH, WHY IS LIFE SO HARD AT TIMES?

LISTEN: LISTEN TO THE AUDIO FOR LIFE QUESTIONS, CHAPTER 3, OR VISIT WWW.OPERATIONTIMOTHY.COM AND LISTEN TO SELECTIONS FOR THIS CHAPTER.

OBSERVE: WATCH THE FILM *BRUCE ALMIGHTY*. WHAT LESSONS ABOUT GOD DOES THIS STORY PRESENT?

CONSIDER: WHICH OF THE ISSUES DISCUSSED IN THIS SESSION CAUSE YOU THE MOST DIFFICULTY? WHAT DO YOU WISH GOD WOULD DO TO HELP YOU?

CONSIDER LISTENING TO "IN GOD WE TRUST" BY RACHEL LAMPA. HOW COULD THIS APPLY TO YOU?



NOTES



WHO IS ^{chapter 4} JESUS?

If you want to create an awkward silence at a business lunch or dinner party, ask the question, “Who is Jesus?” Mention God and you’re within most social boundaries. But, Jesus, He provokes intense reactions. What is it about God’s Son that triggers that kind of response? Could it be that Jesus causes people to examine their lives with more honesty? If Jesus is the flashpoint, does that mean our feelings about Him must be examined as well? Are we free to be bored with Him or to embrace faith in Him disinterestedly?



What Do People Say?

“I am an historian, I am not a believer, but I must confess as an historian that this penniless preacher from Nazareth is irrevocably the very center of history. Jesus Christ is easily the most dominant figure in all history.” *H.G. Wells, British author (1866 – 1946)*

“As a child I received instruction both in the Bible and in the Talmud. I am a Jew, but I am enthralled by the luminous figure of the Nazarene....No one can read the Gospels without feeling the actual presence of Jesus. His personality pulsates in every word. No myth is filled with such life.” *Albert Einstein, mathematician*

“I know men, and I tell you, Jesus Christ was no mere man... Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and myself founded empires; but on what did we rest the creations of our genius? Upon force. Jesus Christ alone founded his empire upon love; and, at this hour, millions of men would die for him.” *Napoleon, at his defeat at Waterloo*

“The day will come when the mystical generation of Jesus by the Supreme Being in the womb of a virgin, will be classed with the fable of the generation of Minerva in the brain of Jupiter.” *Thomas Jefferson, in a letter to John Adams, April 11, 1823*



“As the centuries pass, the evidence is accumulating that, measured by His effect on history, Jesus is the most influential life ever lived on this planet.”

Kenneth Scott Latourette, historian

WHICH OF THESE THOUGHTS CAPTURES YOUR PERCEPTIONS OF JESUS?

What do we label a person who is so bound to strict religiosity they can't see past their rules? Someone so enamored with their own picture of how things are supposed to be they can't entertain different options? A close-minded person? A legalist? We call such people Pharisees.

The Pharisees began as the elite, the respected leaders of their day. Today the term Pharisee is instantly understood as a parody of righteousness. A caricature of uppity religion. For two millennia the designation has served as a byword for spiritual blindness. But in the beginning they were the insiders. If God were to show up, surely they would be the first to recognize Him.

But they didn't.

The Pharisees—who had memorized their Bibles—not only missed the truth about Jesus, they rallied their entire political machinery against Him. Here's why: He didn't fit their preconceived notions. Everything they assumed the Messiah would be, Jesus was not.

And that's the danger we face today. Our ideas about Jesus get in the way of our understanding of Him. The challenge is to allow Jesus to speak for Himself. Instead of confirming or refuting our concept of Him, allowing Him to define Himself.

What Do People Think about Jesus' Existence?

- > Yes, just as portrayed in the gospels 17%
- > Yes, but the gospels are full of myths that grew up around
some original figure—who knows what he was really like? 16%
- > Maybe, maybe not. It's possible, but not definite and there's no way to know for sure 37%
- > Definitely not—the gospels are a collection of fictional tales 24%
- > I don't care—it's not that important 4%

2007 survey from About.com

WHICH POINT OF VIEW ABOVE DO YOU MOST DISAGREE WITH? EXPLAIN.

who is Jesus?



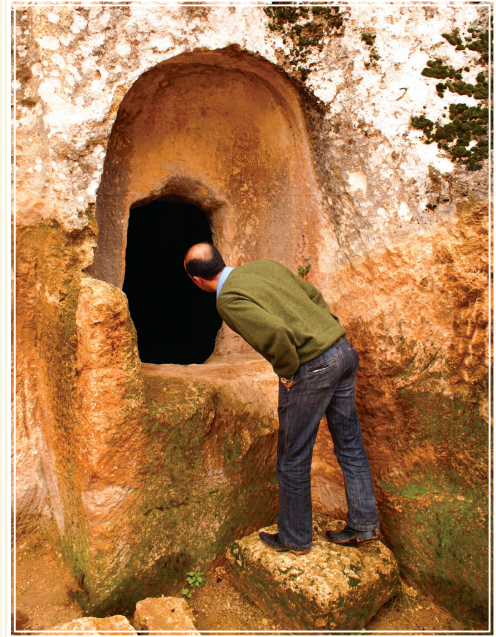
*Our differing ideas about Jesus can distract us
from simply looking at how he defined himself.*

[illegible]

Wikipedia

A number of historians would say that Jesus, who lived for about 30 years, has had the most profound influence on our world, even though He lived a simple life, had no possessions and little influence, never traveled outside his own country or wrote a word.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY ABOUT JESUS?



Jesus claimed to be both fully human and fully God. Let's examine these claims:

Jesus' Humanity

Did Jesus experience normal human feelings? What about boredom or confusion? What about temptation, even lust? Did he grow weary? Get hungry?

The Bible describes Jesus in physical and emotional terms:

“And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” *Luke 2:52*

“Early in the morning, as He was on His way back to the city, He was hungry.” *Matthew 21:18*

“Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour.” *John 4:6*

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.” *Hebrews 4:15*

“Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil.” *Hebrews 2:14*

“For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.” *Hebrews 2:17,18*

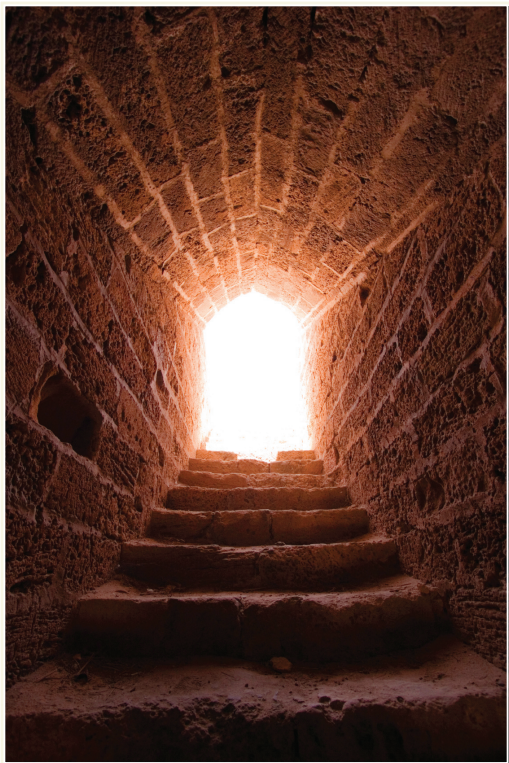
“Jesus wept.” *John 11:35*

WHAT DO THESE VERSES SAY TO YOU ABOUT HIS HUMANITY?

SO WAS JESUS HUMAN? WHAT DOES THAT MEAN TO THE HUMAN RACE? TO INDIVIDUAL HUMANS?

“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.” *Hebrews 4:14-15*





ACCORDING TO THIS PASSAGE, WHAT DID JESUS SHARE IN COMMON WITH US?

IN WHAT PRIMARY WAY WAS HE DIFFERENT?

Jesus' Deity

"[Jesus] asked his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of Man is?' They replied, 'Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' 'But what about you?' he asked. 'Who do you say I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus replied, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.'" *Matthew 16:13-17*

IN GENERAL, WHAT DID JESUS' DISCIPLES BELIEVE ABOUT HIS IDENTITY?

WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT PETER'S ANSWER?
WHAT MIGHT HAVE PROMPTED HIM TO GIVE THAT RESPONSE?



WHAT DID JESUS CLAIM ABOUT HIMSELF?

Read John 10:30-33: “I and the Father are one.’ Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, ‘I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?’ ‘We are not stoning you for any of these,’ replied the Jews, ‘but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.’”

WERE THE JEWS JUSTIFIED FOR BEING OFFENDED BY JESUS' WORDS? WHY OR WHY NOT?

“Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd... During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. ‘It’s a ghost,’ they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: ‘Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid. Lord, if it’s you,’ Peter replied, ‘tell me to come to you on the water.’ ‘Come,’ he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, ‘Lord, save me!’ Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. ‘You of little faith,’ he said, ‘why did you doubt?’

“And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, ‘Truly you are the Son of God.’”

Matthew 14:22, 25-33

WHAT EVIDENCE OF JESUS’ DEITY IS PRESENT IN THIS STORY?

Additional Resources

- > *The Case for Christ*, Lee Strobel
- > *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis

[OPTIONAL APPLICATION]

THINK: IF JESUS CLAIMED TO BE GOD, WHY DIDN'T HE DEFEND HIMSELF AGAINST MEN?

LISTEN: LISTEN TO THE AUDIO FOR LIFE QUESTIONS, CHAPTER 4, OR VISIT WWW.OPERATIONTIMOTHY.COM AND LISTEN TO SELECTIONS FOR THIS CHAPTER.

OBSERVE: WATCH *THE JESUS FILM* ON WWW.JESUSFILM.ORG. WATCH THE FIRST HALF OF THE VIDEO FOR THIS SESSION. (WWW.4TRUTH.NET. CLICK ON THE LINK TO JESUS.)

CONSIDER:

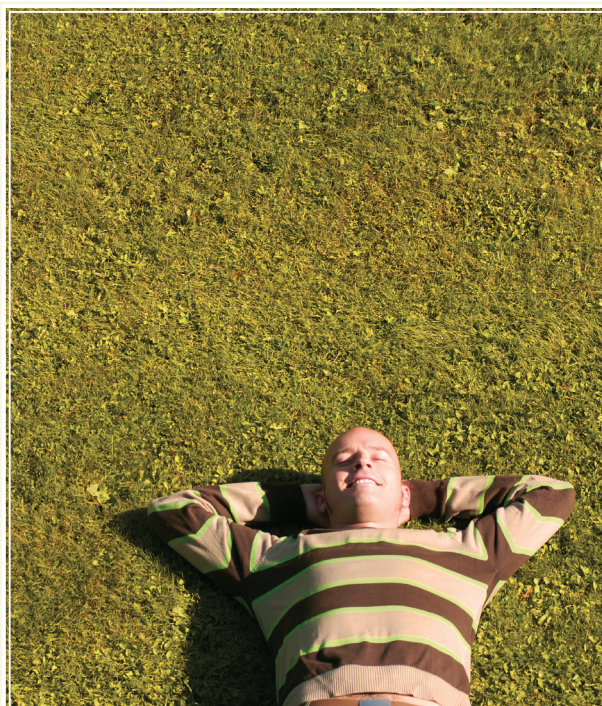
“Jesus of Nazareth, without money and arms, conquered more millions than Alexander the Great, Caesar, Mohammed, and Napoleon; without science and learning, he shed more light on things human and divine than all philosophers and scholars combined; without the eloquence obtained by education, he spoke such words of life as were never spoken before or since, and produced effects which lie beyond the reach of orator or poet; without writing a single line, he set more pens in motion, and furnished themes for more sermons, orations, discussions, learned volumes, works of art, and songs of praise than the whole army of great men of ancient and modern times.”

Philip Schaff, German-American theologian and church historian

CONSIDER “GIVE ME JESUS” BY FERNANDO ORTEGA. HOW DO THE FACTS ABOUT JESUS CHRIST INTERSECT WITH THE LONGING OF SINGER’S HEART IN THIS SONG?



NOTES



WHY DID *chapter 5* JESUS COME?

You're interrupted by a phone call in the middle of a busy day. You and the caller exchange pleasantries and while you lament answering your phone in the first place, the caller continues to shoot the breeze. Sooner or later, you insert this question as politely as you can into the conversation: Why did you call? In other words, get to the point; otherwise you're wasting my time! Even if the call was simply a social connection and nothing more, it puts you at ease to know the caller's purpose.

We're skeptical about salesmen and fundraisers, more so when we suspect their undisclosed reason for calling. We're like that: reluctant to engage others without knowing the purpose of the connection. We're wired to ask why. Which makes Jesus' statements about His purpose significant. He didn't leave the why question unanswered.

Consider the following thoughts about Jesus....



What Do People Say?

"The Son of God became a man to enable men to become sons of God." *C.S. Lewis, author*

"The dying Jesus is the evidence of God's anger toward sin; but the living Jesus is the proof of God's love and forgiveness." *Lorenz Eifert, pastor*

"To die in agony upon a cross does not create a martyr; he must first will his own execution." *Henrik Ibsen, Norwegian playwright*

"Jesus does not give recipes that show the way to God as other teachers of religion do. He is himself the way." *Karl Barth, philosopher*

WHAT TYPE OF PURPOSE DOES IT TAKE FOR A PERSON TO DIE WILLINGLY?



“A man who was completely innocent, offered himself as a sacrifice for the good of others, including his enemies, and became the ransom of the world. It was a perfect act.”

*Mahatma Gandhi,
Indian religious and political leader*

No Coffin on Display

In the villages of Northern India, a missionary was preaching in a bazaar. As he closed his message, a Muslim gentleman approached him and said, “You must admit we have one thing you have not, and it is better than anything you have.” The missionary smiled and said, “I should be pleased to hear what it is.” The Muslim said, “You know when we go to Mecca we at least find a coffin. But when you Christians go to Jerusalem, which is your Mecca, you find nothing but an empty grave.” The missionary smiled and said, “That is just the difference. Mohammed is dead; Mohammed is in the coffin...Jesus Christ, whose kingdom is to include all nations and kindreds and tribes, is not here; He is risen. And all power in heaven and on earth is given unto Him. That is our hope.” (an illustration by Pastor Evie Megginson)

WHAT DIFFERENCES DO YOU NOTICE BETWEEN JESUS CHRIST AND OTHER RELIGIOUS LEADERS?

Questions to Consider

Why Did Jesus Christ Come?

What Did He Do?

Why and How Did Jesus die?

Did He Really Rise Again?

What Else is Left for Jesus to Do?

Why Did Jesus Christ Come?

REVIEW THE VERSES IN THE SIDEBAR: WHAT REASONS FOR JESUS' COMING ARE FOUND IN THESE PASSAGES?

“AN ANGEL CAME TO JOSEPH AND GAVE HIM INSIGHT AS TO HIS FUTURE WITH MARY: ‘SHE WILL GIVE BIRTH TO A SON, AND YOU ARE TO GIVE HIM THE NAME JESUS, BECAUSE HE WILL SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS.’”

Matthew 1:21

“THEREFORE JESUS SAID AGAIN, ‘I TELL YOU THE TRUTH, I AM THE GATE FOR THE SHEEP. ALL WHO EVER CAME BEFORE ME WERE THIEVES AND ROBBERS, BUT THE SHEEP DID NOT LISTEN TO THEM. I AM THE GATE; WHOEVER ENTERS THROUGH ME WILL BE SAVED. HE WILL COME IN AND GO OUT, AND FIND PASTURE. THE THIEF COMES ONLY TO STEAL AND KILL AND DESTROY; I HAVE COME THAT THEY MAY HAVE LIFE, AND HAVE IT TO THE FULL. I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD. THE GOOD SHEPHERD LAYS DOWN HIS LIFE FOR THE SHEEP.’”

John 10:7-11

“FOR THE SON OF MAN CAME TO SEEK AND TO SAVE WHAT WAS LOST.”

Luke 19:10



What Did Jesus Do?

He began His ministry by being hungry,
yet He is the Bread of Life.

Jesus ended His earthly ministry by being
thirsty, yet He is the Living Water.

Jesus was weary, yet He is our rest.

Jesus paid tribute, yet He is the King.

Jesus was accused of having a demon,
yet He cast out demons.

Jesus wept, yet He wipes away our tears.

Jesus was sold for thirty pieces of silver,
yet He redeemed the world.

Jesus was brought as a lamb to the slaughter,
yet He is the Good Shepherd.

Jesus died, yet by His death He destroyed
the power of death.



Gregory of Nazianzus, A.D. 381

Even the greatest skeptic would agree that Jesus altered history dramatically. Consider these accomplishments:

- > Led an exemplary life that millions have imitated.
- > Provided the most influential teachings of all time.
- > Offered hope to the most unfortunate outcasts.
- > Demonstrated power over disease, nature, even death.

EXAMINE THE MIRACLES THAT JESUS DID ON EARTH. CHECK THOSE YOU ARE FAMILIAR WITH.

HEALING:

- ☐ A leper
- ☐ A paralytic
- ☐ Nobleman's son
- ☐ Withered hand

NATURE:

- ☐ Water to wine
- ☐ Quieted storm
- ☐ Huge fishing catch
- ☐ Walked on water

POWER OVER LIFE:

- ☐ The widow's son
- ☐ Jarius' daughter
- ☐ Lazarus, a friend
- ☐ Resurrection

“DO NOT BELIEVE ME UNLESS I DO WHAT MY FATHER DOES. BUT IF I DO IT, EVEN THOUGH YOU DO NOT BELIEVE ME, BELIEVE THE MIRACLES, THAT YOU MAY KNOW AND UNDERSTAND THAT THE FATHER IS IN ME, AND I IN THE FATHER.”

John 10:37,38

“FOR I HAVE COME DOWN FROM HEAVEN, NOT TO DO MY OWN WILL, BUT THE WILL OF HIM WHO SENT ME. THIS IS THE WILL OF HIM WHO SENT ME, THAT OF ALL THAT HE HAS GIVEN ME I LOSE NOTHING, BUT RAISE IT UP ON THE LAST DAY. FOR THIS IS THE WILL OF MY FATHER, THAT EVERYONE WHO BEHOLDS THE SON AND BELIEVES IN HIM WILL HAVE ETERNAL LIFE, AND I MYSELF WILL RAISE HIM UP ON THE LAST DAY.”

John 6:38-40

WHY DO YOU THINK JESUS PERFORMED SUCH A WIDE VARIETY OF MIRACLES?

WHICH ONES ARE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT TO YOU?

ACCORDING TO THE ADJACENT PASSAGES, WHAT WAS JESUS' PURPOSE FOR PERFORMING MIRACLES?





why did Jesus come?

*"..even though you do not believe me,
believe the miracles..."*

Why and How Did Jesus Die?

“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” *Isaiah 53:5,6*

“...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.” *Romans 3:23-24*

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” *Romans 5:8*

WHAT IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN GOD’S LOVE AND JESUS’ DEATH?

Death by Crucifixion

Crucifixion was a Roman method of execution reserved for slaves, foreigners, and criminals. Roman citizens (such as the Apostle Paul) by law could not be subjected to this brutal, sadistic tool of intimidation. Crucifixion often meant days of excruciating pain before death finally came. Like other popular means of execution and torture throughout history, a crucifixion usually drew a crowd of bystanders.

“Two robbers were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left.” *Matthew 27:38*



WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE METHOD OF JESUS' DEATH, CRUCIFIXION?

Did Jesus Christ Rise Again?

It's one thing to believe that Jesus actually lived. It's another to believe He performed miracles and was killed by Roman authorities in Jerusalem. But to believe that He actually rose from the dead is the most significant step of all. And yet, if Jesus was not resurrected, then all of Christianity is a hoax and all of His followers

throughout the history of the church till now have been deceived. The resurrection is the linchpin of Christianity. For this reason, the Bible carefully demonstrates that many witnesses saw Jesus after death and burial. Paul makes the case in I Corinthians 15:3-8.

"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born." *I Corinthians 15:3-8*

ACCORDING TO THIS PASSAGE, HOW STRONG WAS THE CASE TO PROVE JESUS' RESURRECTION? CONSIDERING THE TECHNOLOGY OF THE TIME, WHAT WAS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HAVING EYE WITNESSES?

"TAKING ALL THE EVIDENCE TOGETHER, IT IS NOT TOO MUCH TO SAY THAT THERE IS NO HISTORIC INCIDENT BETTER OR MORE VARIOUSLY SUPPORTED THAN THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST."

Brooke Foss Westcott, English scholar

Read:

“You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this.”
Acts 3:15

“Jesus answered them, ‘Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.’ The Jews replied, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?’ But the temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.” *John 2:19-22*

“And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.” *I Corinthians 15:17*

ACCORDING TO THE VERSES ABOVE,
 WHY IS CHRIST’S RESURRECTION SO
 IMPORTANT?



When Jesus was taken away to die, his small handful of followers scattered and hid. Within a few years, the Christian faith had overtaken no less than the Roman empire, and those original followers had become willing to face execution themselves. How can we account for these actions without a well-attested resurrection?

What Else Is Left for Jesus to Do?

“After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ‘Men of Galilee,’ they said, ‘why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.’” *Acts 1:9-11*

WHAT ENCOURAGEMENT DID THE ANGELS OFFER THE DISCIPLES?



“According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.”
I Thessalonians 4:15-18

“Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.” *Revelation 22:12*

Additional Resources

> *Is Jesus the Only Savior?*, by James R. Edwards

> *The Jesus I Never Knew*, by Phillip Yancey

“THERE EXISTS NO DOCUMENT FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD WITNESSED BY SO EXCELLENT A SET OF TEXTUAL AND HISTORICAL TESTIMONIES, AND OFFERING SO SUPERB AN ARRAY OF HISTORICAL DATA ON WHICH THE INTELLIGENT DECISION MAY BE MADE. SKEPTICISM REGARDING THE HISTORICAL CREDENTIALS OF CHRISTIANITY IS BASED UPON AN IRRATIONAL BASIS.”

Clark Pinnock, Professor, McMaster University, Toronto

[OPTIONAL APPLICATION]

THINK: DO YOU FEEL IT WAS NECESSARY FOR JESUS TO DIE? WHY OR WHY NOT?

WHAT ALTERNATIVES CAN YOU THINK OF?

LISTEN: LISTEN TO THE AUDIO FOR LIFE QUESTIONS, CHAPTER 5, OR VISIT WWW.OPERATIONTIMOTHY.COM AND LISTEN TO SELECTIONS FOR THIS CHAPTER.

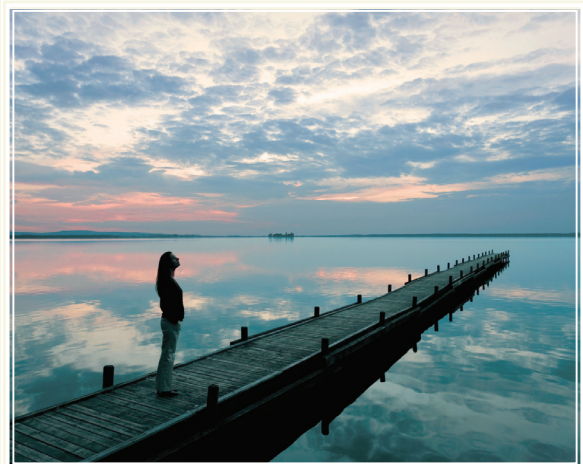
OBSERVE: WATCH THE SECOND HALF OF *THE JESUS FILM*. COMPARE THE “END” OF JESUS’ LIFE ON EARTH WITH OTHER MAJOR RELIGIOUS FIGURES: GANDHI, MOHAMMED, BUDDHA, THE MANY HINDU GODS, CONFUCIOUS, BRIGHAM YOUNG, MARY BAKER EDDY, ETC.

CONSIDER: WHEN WE THINK ABOUT DEATH, WE TEND TO THINK OF AN END. HOW DID JESUS’ LIFE MAKE IT A BEGINNING INSTEAD?



DOES DEATH SEEM LIKE A BEGINNING TO YOU? DESCRIBE.

NOTES



Journal

CAN I BE *chapter 6* ACCEPTED AND FORGIVEN?

What Do People Say?

"Karl Menninger, the famed psychiatrist, once said that if he could convince the patients in psychiatric hospitals that their sins were forgiven, 75 percent of them could walk out the next day!" *Today in the Word, March 1989, p. 8.*

"There is no love without forgiveness, and there is no forgiveness without love." *Bryant H. McGill, American poet and author*

"To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover the prisoner was you." *Unknown*

"Anger makes you smaller, while forgiveness forces you to grow beyond what you were." *Cherie Carter-Scott, author, life coach and motivational speaker*

"Resentment is like a glass of poison that a man drinks; then he sits down and waits for his enemy to die." *Unknown*

WHY IS FORGIVENESS SO IMPORTANT TO THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE?

Consider the power of forgiveness in the following two stories....



Jody and Chip Ferlaak

After church on July 29, 2001, Jody and Chip Ferlaak took their three young children to a Sunday brunch at a popular restaurant. Within minutes of sitting down with their food, a woman named Cindy, 38, attempted suicide by crashing her car into the restaurant's front door. All the family were injured along with 6 other adults and children. Teagan Ferlaak, 4, died on impact.

When the incident went to court, Chip and Jody pushed through their emotional turmoil to speak to everyone in the courtroom. They forgave Cindy. Jody said, "I felt so cheated out of Teagan's life, there was a part of me that wanted to see this woman get what she deserved. But it was almost like God said, 'I can't and won't let you do it.'"

In court, they described how much damage their family had suffered, but that they wished Cindy to become a better person in the end. She should go on living. Chip said, "When you truly forgive someone, you can go on living your life."



“When you release the wrongdoer from the wrong, you cut a malignant tumor out of your inner life. You set a prisoner free, but you discover that the real prisoner was yourself.”

*Lewis Smedes, author of
Forgive and Forget*

“What We Need Is Forgiveness”

Consider this account from Ernest Gordon’s *Miracle on the River Kwai*:

The behavior of the Scottish soldiers, forced by their Japanese captors to labor on a jungle railroad, had degenerated into vicious barbarism. But one afternoon something happened. The officer in charge became enraged because a shovel was missing. He demanded that the missing shovel be produced, or else. When nobody in the squadron budged, the officer got his gun and threatened to kill them all on the spot. It was obvious the officer meant business. Finally, one of the Scottish captives stepped forward. The officer put away his gun, picked up a shovel, and beat the man to death. When it was over, the survivors picked up the bloody corpse and carried it with them to the second tool check. This time, no shovel was missing. Indeed, there had been a miscount at the first check point. Word of the miscount and the subsequent beating spread like wildfire through the whole camp. An innocent man had been willing to die to save the others! The incident had a profound effect on the prisoners. The men began to treat each other like brothers. When the Allies swept in to rescue them, the survivors, physically not much more than human skeletons, lined up in front of their captors and insisted: “No more hatred. No more killing. Now what we need is forgiveness.” Sacrificial love had that much transforming power.

WHY DOES FORGIVENESS TRIGGER SUCH A POWERFUL RESPONSE IN PEOPLE?

Making Forgiveness Personal

HAVE YOU EVER HAD AN EXPERIENCE OF FORGIVING SOMEONE WHO HAS NEVER ASKED FOR IT? DESCRIBE.

WHAT EMOTIONS ARE INVOLVED WHEN SOMEONE FORGIVES YOU?

WHAT EMOTIONS ARE INVOLVED WHEN YOU ARE THE ONE GRANTING FORGIVENESS?

BASED ON YOUR THOUGHTS, GIVE A SIMPLE DEFINITION OF FORGIVENESS.





can I be accepted and forgiven?

*When you truly forgive someone,
you can go on living your life.*

“All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”
Matthew 11:27-29

Do We Need Forgiveness?

It’s human nature to evaluate using a relative scale. Instead of measuring our overall standing, we compare ourselves to others near us. When it comes to human performance, success is more a matter of comparison than achieving actual perfection. Perhaps that’s because absolute perfection is so unattainable. Is that the standard of the Bible: just do a little bit better than the next guy?

Read the verses at the right.

WHAT DO THESE VERSES SUGGEST ABOUT PERFECTION?

Our sin is also described by the prophet, Isaiah “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” *Isaiah 53:6*

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO TURN TO YOUR OWN WAY? GIVE EXAMPLES.

“AS IT IS WRITTEN: “THERE IS NO ONE
 RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; THERE
 IS... NO ONE WHO SEEKS GOD.”

Romans 3:10, 11

“...FOR ALL HAVE SINNED AND FALL
 SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD.

Romans 3:23

“THEREFORE, JUST AS SIN ENTERED
 THE WORLD THROUGH ONE MAN,
 AND DEATH THROUGH SIN, AND IN
 THIS WAY DEATH CAME TO ALL MEN,
 BECAUSE ALL SINNED.”

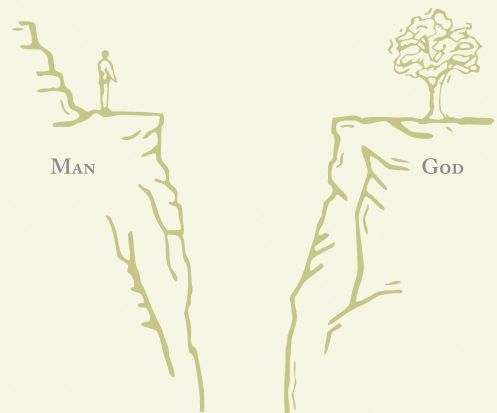
Romans 5:12

Read Romans 2:1: “You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.”

EXPLAIN THE PARADOX DESCRIBED IN THIS PASSAGE:

What Is the Basis for Forgiveness?

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS WE TRY TO “MAKE UP” FOR OUR OFFENSES?



HOW IS THIS DIFFERENT FROM ASKING FORGIVENESS?



In this world, we are rewarded based on our effort. It's a principle instilled in us from earliest childhood. We earn approval, allowance, school grades, respect, salary, and so on. It's no wonder we think we can earn God's acceptance. Surely church membership, adherence to the Ten Commandments, giving to charities, or simply being a good family person will win God's approval, right?

HAVE YOU EVER TRIED TO EARN GOD’S ACCEPTANCE? EXPLAIN.

The following verses tell a story of how we come into a relationship with God.

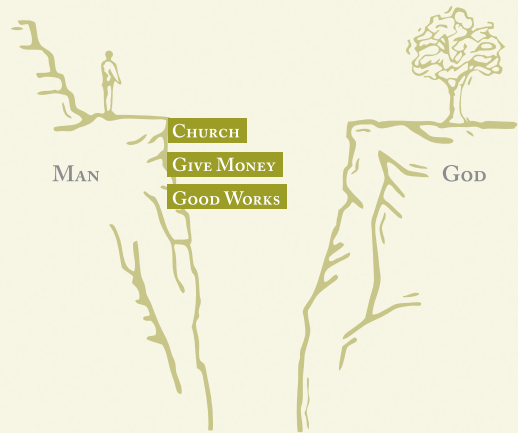
“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.” *Ephesians 2:8,9*

“...he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.” *Titus 3:5*

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” *John 3:16*

“For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” *1 Timothy 2:5*

“For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.” *1 Peter 3:18*

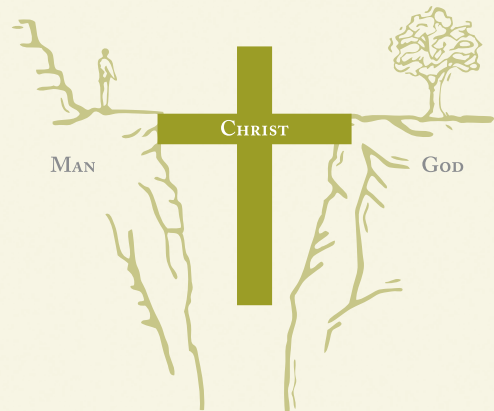


IN YOUR OWN WORDS, EXPLAIN THE PROCESS DESCRIBED BY THESE VERSES:

ACCORDING TO THE VERSES ABOVE, WHAT IS THE BASIS OF GOD’S FORGIVENESS?



WHAT IS THE CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THESE VERSES?



Scripture gives us a consistent picture: Our disobedience earned the penalty of death, but God refused to lose us. Instead, He allowed His Son, obedient and perfect, to take the punishment reserved for us. Jesus received our just due, and we received His: a wonderful place in God's family—a once and for all reunion with our Divine Father. We need never be lost again.

“He [Christ] himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.” *1 Peter 2:24*

REDEMPTION MEANS: “TO BUY BACK.”

“...in whom [Christ] we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” *Colossians 1:14*

“When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.” *Colossians 2:13-14*

Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father except through me.” *John 14:6*

HOW CAN ONE RECEIVE THIS FORGIVENESS?

Read the passage below and underline the key word or words:

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” *1 John 1:7-9*

WHAT CENTRAL IDEAS ARE CONVEYED BY THE KEY WORDS?

WHAT DO THESE IDEAS SUGGEST ABOUT HOW WE RECEIVE GOD’S FORGIVENESS?

WHAT IS THE RESULT OF FORGIVENESS?

“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.” *John 5:24*



WHAT IS MEANT BY CROSSING OVER FROM DEATH TO LIFE? IS THIS LITERAL OR METAPHORICAL? EXPLAIN.

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” *Romans 5:1*

WHY IS PEACE NAMED AS THE ULTIMATE RESULT OF BEING FORGIVEN BY GOD? EXPLAIN.

HOW ARE THESE CONCEPTS DIFFERENT FROM YOUR PREVIOUS UNDERSTANDING OF GOD’S FORGIVENESS? DESCRIBE.

Additional Resources

> *How Good is Good Enough?* by Andy Stanley

> Surf www.storyspot.com where you’ll find real stories of God’s forgiveness in real people’s lives.

[OPTIONAL APPLICATION]

THINK: DOES BEING “GOOD” ENHANCE OUR ABILITY TO RECEIVE GOD’S FORGIVENESS? WHY OR WHY NOT?

LISTEN: LISTEN TO THE AUDIO FOR LIFE QUESTIONS, CHAPTER 6, OR VISIT WWW.OPERATIONTIMOTHY.COM AND LISTEN TO SELECTIONS FOR THIS CHAPTER.

OBSERVE: WATCH THE FILM *LUTHER*. WHEN MARTIN LUTHER FIRST UNDERSTOOD GRACE, HOW DID HIS LIFE CHANGE? HOW WAS THE WORLD IMPACTED BY HIS PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF FORGIVENESS?

CONSIDER: WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WITH JESUS CHRIST? HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO HIM TODAY?

Consider “Change the World (Lost Ones)” on *Blueprints for the Black Market*, by Anberlin.



NOTES



What's Just i.

