

SPIRITUAL INSIGHT FOR YOUR LIFE

# FAITH *for life*

*“The **life** which I now live...I live by the **faith** of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Galatians 2:20*

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by pastor tony scheving

Ex-Beatle John Lennon was gunned down in New York City in December, 1980. Years earlier, he had stated, “Christianity will go. It will vanish and shrink. I needn’t argue about that; I’m right and I’ll be proved right. We’re more popular than Jesus now. Jesus was all right but his disciples were thick and ordinary. I believe that what people call God is something in all of us.”

Ironically, Lennon spoke a lot about world peace and harmony while continually fussing with his own band members. Lennon is also known for the lyrics to a song called, “Imagine” where he stated, “Imagine there’s no Heaven, it’s easy if you try, no hell below us, above us only sky.” In the song, he also mentions “living for today” (ignoring the hereafter) with no countries (one worldism) and no religion. Lennon was simply saying “What if?”

Today we live in a presumptuous world which assumes man evolved from some big bang, or any religion is fine, or God will overlook sin, or the Bible’s ok but not to be

taken seriously, or most people are going to heaven so there’s nothing to worry about. What if they are wrong? People have various opinions about God and the hereafter and basically have invented their own religious viewpoints to suit their lifestyle. Perhaps it would be a good idea to stop and consider a few things that mankind may have overlooked. What if....?

**What if Christ is the Creator?** The ‘Father of Evolution’, Charles Darwin, had a miserable childhood, including a sad relationship with his father. In 1851, Darwin was further devastated when his daughter Annie died. Shortly after, his faith in Christianity dwindled and he stopped

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**FAITH** *for life*



## What If?

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going to church. He went on to suggest that God hadn't created everything, but that it had somehow evolved by chance. As time went on, the Creation account of the Bible was kicked out of the classroom and replaced by evolution. Today, we see the fruit of that with a list of well-known agnostics and atheists including Bill Gates, Hugh Hefner, Warren Buffet, Jodi Foster, Lance Armstrong, Brad Pitt, Billy Joel, Bill Nye, George Clooney, Bill Maher, and a host of others.

If society can explain away God as Creator, then it can live any way it wants. But under divine inspiration, Isaiah, the prophet, said, *"Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!"* (Isaiah 45:9). The Bible clearly states that Jesus Christ created everything in eternity past. John, the apostle, tells us, *"In the beginning was the Word (Jesus Christ), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made"* (John 1:1-3).

Many of Darwin's theories of evolution have been disproved over the past 150 years, but sadly are still being taught as fact in the classroom. God's fingerprints are all over nature. The Bible says, *"The invisible things of Him (God) from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that*

*are made (mankind), even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse"* (Romans 1:20). A thinking person has no grounds to wonder about the existence of God. The Bible says, *"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handywork"* (Psalms 19:1). We live in a universe without walls with endless space that goes on forever and ever. Can anyone explain that? Nehemiah 9:6 says, *"Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein."*

A house testifies of the carpenters who built it. A car speaks of the mechanics that put it together. If we view the layout of a modern city from an airplane, we know that someone designed and built it. Everything around us, from traffic lights to computers, testifies of having design and intelligence behind them. So it is with the human ear. It is too complex to have evolved. The evolution of an eye is a statistical impossibility! Someone super intelligent and powerful needed to design and create them. The study of anatomy alone is jaw-dropping. So is astronomy. Is it an accident that the sun is exactly 93 million miles from the earth? If it was less, we would burn. If it was further away, we would be frozen. Is the incredible complex design of the world and universe just an accident of evolution? Really?

What if Jesus Christ really did create everything like the Bible teaches? Colossians

1:16 says, *"For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible...all things were created by him, and for him."* No wonder He was able to calm the storms, walk on water, and control the fish. If He was powerful enough to create it all, He could certainly control it all. If Jesus Christ really created everything, then evolution is a lie with all its 'missing links' which are still missing after 150 years. God asked the man Job, *"Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding"* (Job 38:4). The evolutionists weren't there either, so they're simply speculating. They're actually operating by faith just like the Christian. It makes more sense to believe that God put us on planet Earth at this time for a special purpose instead of believing some absurd, monkey story. You weren't an accident of evolution. Mankind is God's valuable masterpiece!

**What if the Bible is Believable?** It's nothing new when someone is cynical toward the Bible. Satan was the first one to scorn God's Word. He cast doubt on what God told Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:3-5). He's still misleading people today to distrust the Bible. Yet, the Bible was the only thing that Jesus quoted when He walked the earth, and He did it continually. What a huge endorsement! He also promised that we would always have the preserved Word of God (Matthew 24:35).

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*We're Building Lives!*

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Sunday Worship 10:30am  
Sunday Evening 6:00pm  
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The advertisement features a photograph of a smiling family: a man with a young boy on his shoulders and a woman in the foreground. The church's logo, a stylized cross with three points, is positioned above the church name. The background of the ad shows a church building and a large wooden cross.



## What If?

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Jesus said we are to live by every word that comes from God (Matthew 4:4), and that when this life is over, we will be judged by the Word of God (John 12:48, Revelation 20:12). The Bible says, "it is in truth, the Word of God!" (I Thessalonians 2:13). Furthermore, the Bible tells us, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (II Timothy 3:16). It tells us why we're here and how to live.

Is the Bible really believable? Was it really inspired by our Creator? When the Bible was written, it was one-third prophecy predicting far-off, future events. So far, every one of those predictions has come to pass with pinpoint accuracy. The Bible has always been on the mark on matters dealing with archaeology, science, astronomy and history. But is the Bible still relevant? Psalms 119:160 says, "Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth forever." Psalms 12:6-7 says, "The words of the LORD are pure words... Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation forever." The Bible speaks clearly on subjects such as marriage, parenting, abortion, homosexuality, sex outside of marriage, drunkenness, welfare, your job, and a host of other issues. The big question today is, "Where is the truth?" The Bible is called "The Word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15). While praying to His Heavenly Father, Jesus said, "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17). What if the Bible is actually believable?

**What if Sin is Actually Serious?** Our society today treats sin as if it's 'no biggy'. The conscience of our nation is seared, and we resemble a time in Israel's history where the Bible says, "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25). Our culture is now in a free fall with its free-for-all. Adultery, extramarital affairs and fornication are considered 'no big deal' on prime time television. Anything goes in our sex-saturated society, and we are becoming numb to it. The Bible mentions, "The way of an adulterous woman; she...saith, I have done no wickedness" (Proverbs 30:20). We think that God is 'cool' with how we're living and will overlook it. We have invented a god of our own imagination who suits our lifestyle

(a violation of the 2nd commandment). Our society believes in the 'Teddy Bear God', who has no convictions or standards. The consequences of having this false idea of God are fatal. Jesus said on Judgment Day, many will hear the words, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:23).

Sin is serious, and the Bible pulls the mask off sin and sinners, revealing the glare of God upon the MTV, Playboy society we have. God says, "Repent", but man doesn't want to. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, the Bible says, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." Furthermore, the Bible says, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:18). God is silently keeping record. Maybe it's time for thinking people to ask, "Is God serious about this sin thing?" Where are the people who have the backbone to come out of the system, stand for Christ, and do right? Yes, God loves us; but He is a just God who must punish sin. We find many examples in the Bible of God not allowing sin to go unpunished. What if sin is serious?

**What if Repentance is Required?** The Bible says, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). The word 'repentance' in the Bible comes from the Greek word 'metaneo', which simply means to change your mind (about sin). We live in a day and age of the 'feel-good gospel', which tickles the ears and bypasses the mention of sin. People are told to just make Jesus your friend and brother instead of Lord and Savior. The mention of repenting is taboo in most religious circles. Churchgoers are being entertained like it's 'cool' to be a Christian. Supposedly, you can be a Christian and still be like the world, in spite of what God says (James 4:4). People by the droves are walking around with a mechanical faith and a cultural Christianity that doesn't match the Bible. It's all become superficial and plastic. It is the blight of 21st

century Christianity in America. Leave it to human nature to cut corners spiritually.

So many preachers today just talk about positive thinking. Their only message week after week is that "God loves you and so do I." This wasn't the preaching of our Savior when He said, "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). If there is no repentance, there is no salvation of the soul. Peter added, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19). Stephen wasn't stoned to death for preaching, "Something good is going to happen to you." John the Baptist wasn't beheaded for preaching, "Possibility thinking will move mountains!" Jeremiah wasn't persecuted for preaching, "I'm ok, and you're ok." Zechariah, the prophet, wasn't stoned to death for preaching "just believe in yourself." Daniel wasn't thrown in the lion's den for preaching, "Smile, God loves you." They all preached the same message of repenting from sin and getting right with God Almighty. Acts 20:21 speaks of, "Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ", which is God's plan for being saved from our sin. What if God really does require repentance?

**What if Salvation is Sparse?** Many people think that nearly everyone is going to heaven. Many think that just a few, like Adolf Hitler and murderers, will miss out. Yet Jesus said, "For many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able" (Luke 13:24). Jesus added in Matthew 7:13-14, "Broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction (hell) and many there be which go in thereat... And narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life (heaven), and few there be that find it." According to Jesus, there are many people who are thinking they're on the road to heaven when they're not. In Matthew 7:22-23, Jesus spoke of Judgment Day when He said, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." How could it be that so many people will miss heaven? They made the mistake of taking sin lightly, not believing the Bible, and refusing to repent.

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"Thou art good, and doest good" Psalms 119:68

# What is God Like? He is Good!

by pastor tony scheving



George Matheson wrote the hymn "O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go" after his fiancée rejected him because he was going blind. Joseph Scriven wrote "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" after his fiancée drowned. Horatio Spafford was a prosperous lawyer, real estate investor, and devout Christian. In 1873, Spafford's family decided to vacation in Europe. Last minute business detained Horatio, so his wife Anna and their four girls set sail for Europe. En route, a British vessel rammed their ship, and it sank within minutes. Rescuers picked up an unconscious Anna on a floating beam, but all four daughters drowned. When Anna arrived in England, she sent a telegram to Horatio with the words, "Saved alone." Horatio immediately left Chicago to bring his wife home. On the Atlantic crossing, the captain called Horatio to his cabin to tell him that they had nearly reached the spot where his four daughters had perished. As he passed over their watery grave, Spafford wrote a hymn of profound depth that has touched millions: "It Is Well with My Soul."

How can a person continue to believe in God's goodness when life is turbulent? Jeremiah 33:11 says, "Praise the LORD of hosts: for the LORD is good; for his mercy endureth forever." In A.W. Tozer's book "Knowledge of the Holy" he wrote, "The

whole outlook of mankind might be changed if we could all believe we dwell under a friendly sky, and that the God of heaven, although exalted in power and majesty, is eager to be friends with us." When asked to describe God, many of us would say that God is love or He's holy; but how many would say that God is good? It's a far more common expression in the Bible. There are at least 13 direct declarations in Scripture that read, "God is good" and many more Bible verses that allude to the fact.

All of God's other qualities are wrapped up in His goodness. His love is good, His holiness is good, His justice is good, His mercy and faithfulness are good. When Solomon dedicated the Temple the people and priests sang, "God is good and his love endures forever." When the psalmist often wrote of his difficulties, he reminded himself that God is good. Even the weeping prophet Jeremiah declared this truth in his moments of agony. As we consider the goodness of God, let's look at four different things.

**The Reality of the Creator** Back when God and Moses were just starting to get to know each other, Moses said to God, "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory. And He said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee" (Exodus 33:18-19). Most of mankind doesn't understand

who God really is. They believe He's all-knowing, all-present, all-powerful, and He hears us when we pray, but they really don't comprehend His goodness to us. The air we breathe, food we eat, and water we drink are a gift from God. It is the goodness of God that made the variety of seasons. The Bible mentions, "The living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Timothy 6:17). Because of God's goodness, we enjoy sleep and wake up to beautiful sunrises. We owe our very existence to six inches of God's topsoil. We are so surrounded by that goodness that we end up taking it for granted. The Bible says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father" (James 1:17).

There was a time when every person by the age of 8-10 years knew somewhat about the person of God and His nature – but since the Bible has been removed from the classroom, the knowledge of God among children has been dumbed down. Back in the days of old, the Bible says whole families "Sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because he is good" (Ezra 3:11). We normally give God credit for goodness because He meets a certain need or He gives us something we are praying for. When the cupboards are full, the gas tank is full, the children are well-behaved and everyone is healthy, we say, "Ain't God good!" Well, God is still good if none of that stuff is going our way. God is all good, all the time. The Bible says, "For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations" (Psalm 110:5).

Society likes to trump up man's goodness while putting God on trial. Reality is the opposite. God is infinitely more merciful and good than mankind. In the book of Jonah we find the heathen people of ancient

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## What If?

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What if this is all true? The consequences are enormous. So, what is the answer? It is a realization of our lost and hell-bound condition. It is repentance and a surrendering to our Creator. It is a realization of why the Son of God Himself had to die a cruel death on a cross to pay for our sins. It is an accepting of that sacrifice

as the only thing that can take us to heaven. Romans 5:8 says, "But God commendeth (proved) His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Blaise Pascal, one of the acknowledged masters of calculus in the 16th century, was asked why he believed in eternal salvation or eternal life. After explaining God's plan for salvation, he added, "Let's assume that I am wrong and there is no life hereafter—

then I have lost nothing. On the other hand, let's assume that I am right and there is life hereafter, then I have gained everything." What if? What if? What if Christ really is the Creator, the Bible is believable, sin is actually serious, repentance is required by God, and salvation is sparse? ■

*To learn more about making Jesus your personal Savior, please read pages 6-7, or go online to [7StepsToGod.org](http://7StepsToGod.org)*



## What is God Like? He is Good!

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Nineveh about to be judged for their sin. God showed them grace by sending a reluctant prophet by the name of Jonah to preach 'repent or perish'. When the Ninevites repented, God spared them. Jonah got upset because these heathen people wouldn't be destroyed. Who was more merciful, God or man?

Who else would give their only child for the payment of someone else's folly (sin)? I can't think of anyone. God could do this because His goodness is unconditional. That's why the Bible says God "*Maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust*" (Matt 5:45). He provides food for the rapist, murderer, drug lord and atheist as well as for the saintly single mom raising four children on her own. "*O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good; for his mercy endureth forever*" (I Chron 16:34).

**The Record of the Credentials** One of God's faithful missionaries, Allen Gardiner, experienced many physical difficulties and hardships throughout his service to the Savior. Despite his troubles, he said, "While God gives me strength, failure will not daunt me." In 1851, at the age of 57, he died of disease and starvation while serving on Picton Island at the southern tip of South America. When his body was found, his diary lay nearby. It bore the record of hunger, thirst, wounds, and loneliness. The last entry in his little book showed the struggle of his shaking hand as he tried to write legibly. It read, "I am overwhelmed with a sense of the goodness of God."

How do I know God is so good? I look at Jesus, since He said, "*I and my Father are one*" (John 10:30). Do you remember the Christmas song we sung as children, "Jesus Our Brother Kind and Good"? Jesus was continually kind to the peasants, crooked tax collectors, and those who lived ungodly lives, like the immoral woman he met by a well (John 4). Furthermore, He was kind and good to his own apostles who had abandoned Him at his most needful hour before He went to the cross. After Jesus resurrected, He made a point of seeking them out and comforting them. If it had been you or me, we would have fired them for letting us

down, and would have picked a new set of apostles. But Jesus continued to mentor this group of failures and entrusted them to carry on the work of His church. He restored them and continued to love them. It's exactly that way with us! When a Christian fails, Jesus is there to speak peace to our hearts and give us another chance. In addition, our mighty Creator and Shepherd takes the situation, and makes "*All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose*" (Romans 8:28). Even though we may not be able to understand it, we can count on it.

Some people doubt God's goodness because He forbids us from doing certain things. He says, "*Thou shalt not.*" Is God trying to spoil our fun? Is God a cosmic killjoy? No. The Bible says, "*No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly*" (Psalms 84:11). Sin is fun, at least for a while. And the Bible even acknowledges the "*pleasure of sin*" but only "*for a season*" (Hebrews 11:25). Sin always has consequences and is self-destructive. It erodes our character and sears our conscience. The Bible says, "*The wages of sin is death*" (Romans 6:23). Sin causes a lot of heartache in this world. God knows that and He says, "*O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea*" (Isaiah 48:18). God is not trying to throw His weight around when He warns us about sin. He has a much higher and holier plan for our lives as well as for our society. It is His goodness that warns us to stay away from certain things, like when we warn our children not to poke a bobby pin in the electrical outlet.

A simple look at Adam and Eve will reveal this truth. When God created everything He said it was good. When God saw that it wasn't good for the man to be alone, He created Eve. When God withheld the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it was because man would have been better off to remain in a state of innocence. He wasn't holding out on them. But that's exactly what Satan accused God of doing. Doubting the goodness of God is what gave birth to sin. The devil is still whispering the same lie in the ears of people today. He slanders God in an effort to get people to doubt the goodness of our Creator and Heavenly Father. After the fall of mankind,

God removed Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden so they wouldn't eat of the Tree of Life and live forever in their depraved and fallen condition. Even God's judgment is part of His goodness.

Many a person has 'found God' in the midst of trials and suffering. Romans 2:4 says, "*That the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.*" It's often through pain that people come to salvation in Christ. The Bible says, "*O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him*" (Psalms 34:8). Many years ago there was a leprous woman living in a colony in India who was a born-again Christian. One day, while at a church service, she hobbled forward to the platform. Pointing her fingerless hand toward heaven she stated, "I'd like to thank God that I am a leper because it was through my leprosy that I came to know Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I'd rather be a leper who knows Christ than a healthy person without Christ."

**The Riddle of the Centuries** "*The Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works*" (Psalms 145:9). We struggle to see the goodness of God in the midst of worldwide tragedies and heartaches. If God is good, then why the tragedy of 9/11? If God is good, then why did He allow the "Killing Fields of Cambodia", where Pol Pot murdered one-third of the country's people? If God is good, then why did He allow Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini, Hirohito and Mao Tse-tung to destroy hundreds of millions of people? Why is there still great cruelty going on in Arab and African countries? In fact, if God is so good, why have millions of unborn babies been murdered? It is the riddle of the centuries. It is a dilemma to the world. Why is there so much evil and suffering in the world if God is supposed to be good? The very thought can crush us to the ground. It has caused a crisis of faith in many human hearts.

First of all, the Bible reveals Satan as the destroyer, not God. Jesus said, "*The thief (Satan) cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy*" (John 10:10). Secondly, it is the sinful heart of man that clamors for power and dominance that brings about war and misery. Suffering is the natural consequences of sin and rebellion toward our Creator. As people rant and point fingers

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# HOW TO FIND GOD AND REALLY KNOW HIM

## GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

There are three things that you can know for sure...

**1) That you are going to Heaven.** *"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life" (I John 5:13).*

**2) That your life will be changed when you get saved.** *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Corinthians 5:17).*

**3) You will never lose your salvation.** *"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." (John 10:28).*

It all revolves around Jesus Christ!

Who is Jesus Christ? John 1:1 says, *"In the beginning was the Word (Jesus), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."* John 1:3 continues, *"All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."* Jesus was God in flesh or God the son who created everything.

He came to earth to save us. *"For the son of man is come to*

*seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).* The first step in going to heaven is to realize we need to be saved from our sin.

How do we get to heaven?... *"Jesus answered and said unto him, verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).*

There is a difference between a physical birth and a spiritual birth. *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit is spirit" (John 3:6).*

Why do we need a spiritual birth? Man was originally created a three part being in God's image—a trinity. *"And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness: so God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Genesis 1:26).* Man is made up of body, soul, and spirit.

God placed Adam and Eve in the garden. *"And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:16-17).* Man ate of the fruit and though he didn't die that day physically, he died spiritually!

When Adam and Eve had children they were now born spiritually dead as well (no longer in God's 3-part image). Genesis 5:3 says *"And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth."* That is why we must be re-born spiritually.

That is also why we have a sin nature. You don't have to teach a toddler to be selfish, lie, steal things, sass back, fight

with siblings, etc...it is also our nature as we grow up.

Most people fail to see themselves as serious sinners. They feel they are a "good person." They are comparing themselves to others, instead of God's standard; the 10 Commandments. Let's see how you rate compared to the 10 Commandments.

#1 Thou shalt have no other gods before me (Exodus 20:3) No one can claim they have never put anything ahead of God (money, career, own self centered goals, pleasure, sports, entertainment, sin, vice, a relationship with another, etc).

#2 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image (of God) (Exodus 20:4) Many have been guilty of inventing a God of their own imagination and liking... a God who 'suits them.' People want a "God that overlooks sin and takes everyone to heaven." They have improvised and dreamed up a God of their own image.

#3 Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain (Exodus 20:7) Re-read that carefully. God is keeping record of every time you've used His name as a curse word and you will answer for it one day.

#4 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy (Exodus 20:8) Have you always honored the Lord's Day or been faithful in church attendance? (Heb 10:25)

#5 Honour thy father and thy mother (Exodus 20:12). Have you ever disrespected or disobeyed your parents. Have you ever argued with them or dishonored them?

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## How to Find God

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#6 Thou shalt not kill (Exodus 20:13) Although most people have never committed murder, they are guilty of "murder of the heart." Jesus clarifies this commandment in Matthew 5:21-2; Whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother... shall be in danger of hell fire. Have you ever been mad or bitter at someone?

#7 Thou shalt not commit adultery (Exodus 20:14) While many have never committed adultery, Jesus said; Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart (Matt 5:27-8). Have you ever lusted after the opposite sex? This is adultery of the heart according to Jesus.

#8 Thou shalt not steal (Exodus 20:15) Who could claim they've never taken anything that doesn't belong to them? ... something small or even the boss's time?

#9 Thou shalt not bear false witness (Exodus 20:16) No one could honestly claim they have never told a lie!

#10 Thou shalt not covet (Exodus 20:17) Have you ever desired anything you didn't have or didn't need? Have you ever been discontented, jealous or ungrateful? This is covetousness.

Most people are guilty of breaking all 10 commandments! Many places in the Bible reveal that liars, adulterers, thieves, the covetous, etc will spend eternity in hell! (Rev 21:8, I Cor 6:9-10, Gal 5:19-21). How could you ever expect to get to heaven by "living a good life?"

Romans 3:10 *As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:*

Romans 3:23 *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*

Sin has a penalty... Romans 6:23 *"For the wages of sin is death"* (hell).

We cannot possibly get to heaven by keeping the law (10 Commandments).

The 10 Commandments were given by God to show us how impossible it is to

be saved by doing good works. *"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith"* (Galatians 3:24). The law (10 commandments) shows us that we are condemned and need a Savior.

You will never get to heaven by doing good works. Titus 3:5 says, *"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us."* *"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Romans 5:1).

Yet getting to heaven is not automatic just because Jesus died for your sins! Salvation is a gift that must be received. *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God"* (Ephesians 2:8). That means that baptism has nothing to do with being saved. Romans 6:23 explains, *"The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

How does a person know when they are ready to be born again? They know they are ready when they mean business with God, and are willing to repent of sin. Acts 3:19 says, *"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."* II Peter 3:9 says the Lord is *"not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."* Jesus said, *"except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish"* (Luke 13:5). That means being willing to also turn from false religion or false teaching—anything contrary to the word of God, the Bible.

To repent means to change your mind about your sin, and make Christ the Lord

of your life. Are you willing to turn from your sin and turn to God? Do you believe that Jesus paid the full price on the cross for your sins?

Though God hates sin, he loves you and sent Jesus to die for your sins. *"But God commendeth (proved) his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8).

*"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"* (John 3:16).

If God is dealing with you about your need of forgiveness, and you would like to be saved (born again), the final step is to ask God for the gift through a simple prayer. *"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"* (Romans 10:13). Notice the promise of this verse from a God who cannot lie. Titus 1:2 says, *"God...cannot lie"*. Do you believe that God will save you simply because He said He would? Christ will save you if you are willing to make him the Lord of your life.

If you know that you are ready, you can pray and ask God to save you in your own words such as: "Dear Heavenly Father, I know that I am a condemned sinner unable to save myself, but I am willing to turn from my sins and make Jesus my Lord and master. I now trust in His sacrifice on the cross to pay for my sins. Please forgive me and save me. Amen." ■

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## What is God Like? He is Good!

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at God, they need to take a good look in the mirror. Man is the source of selfishness that destroys marriages. Man is the source of covetousness that would lead to agonizing financial problems. Man is the source of a self-love that would destroy an unborn baby for convenience sake under the guise of 'choice'. Man is the source of drunkenness that would claim innocent victims in automobile accidents. Man is the one who has created the immoral issues we're struggling with in our sex-saturated society.

Several decades ago, we kicked God out of our classrooms and courthouses. Today we have some real issues involving school shootings. According to Dr. Horn of the U.S. Health & Human Services, on an average day in America, 135,000 guns are brought to school, 7700 teens become pregnant, 1100 teen abortions take place, hundreds of teens contract sexual diseases, and a sad number of teens commit suicide. A random survey of teens in Baltimore found that 72% of them personally know someone who has been shot.

The problem with this world is a sin problem. We are all guilty of pride, lies, lust, anger, stubbornness, and a host of other things. There is war in the world because there is war in our hearts. We expect nations to get along with each other when husbands and wives cannot even get along. We talk about world peace while neighbors, siblings, co-workers, and relatives fight like cats and dogs.

There is evil in the world because there is evil in the heart. If God were to rid the world of 'bad', He would have to begin with each of us. We need to consider that fact before we get too indignant toward God. Mankind is the one who has created the war problem, the alcohol problem, the AIDS problem, the immorality problem, the divorce problem, and every other problem. We live in a society of rebellion and lawlessness because we have rejected God's instruction for life given to us in the Word of God (Bible). We have the nerve to blame God, instead of repenting of our sins.

We have bought the lie that it is OK for elected officials to be ungodly and immoral as long as they do their job and the economy is good. We have allowed endless hours of rape, drugs, murders, and

other ungodliness to be flushed into our living rooms, like raw sewage, through the television. We have told our children they evolved from animals and then we wonder why they act like them. Maybe if we thought about it long and hard enough, we might realize we are reaping what we've sown. In so many words, we've told God to leave us alone. Should we be surprised if He has complied? We now have the society we wanted, but we don't like the consequences.

Unfortunately, many are contributing to the moral demise of our nation by redefining 'right' and 'wrong', and moving the boundary until nothing is sacred anymore. We have been brainwashed into thinking such a culture is normal. The problems in this world aren't a reflection on God's goodness, but mankind's sinfulness. False teaching today is trying to turn that truth around in the minds of young people. There is even religious psychobabble being taught today about 'forgiving God', as if God has done something wrong. This is foolishness. Society blames conditions, circumstances, even God, but never the heart of man. G. K. Chesterton wrote perhaps the shortest essay in history. The London Times asked various writers for essays on the topic "What's Wrong with the World?" Chesterton replied, "Dear Sirs: I am. Sincerely yours, G. K. Chesterton." God has no obligation to rescue us from the mess we're making. We need to take an honest look within, and think twice before we demand justice with God.

It's time to take God off trial. It's time to ask for His forgiveness instead of pointing fingers at Him. He owes us no apology... it's the other way around. All men and woman are born in rebellion toward God. That's why we need a Savior. God has given us a free will, and there is evil in this world because of our choices. If you're ever tempted to doubt God's goodness, just take a look at the cross of Calvary. It reveals the lengths God will go to in order to salvage mankind.

### **The Responsibility of the Christians.**

In 1988, an Armenian earthquake killed 45,000 people. In the chaos, one man made his way to his son's school, only to find nothing but rubble. Other parents stumbled around dazed and weeping, calling out their children's names. But this father ran to the back corner of the building where his son's

classroom once was, and began digging. To everyone else, it seemed hopeless. How could his son have survived? But this father had promised he would always be there for his boy, so he heaved rocks and dug, calling for his son by name: "Armand!" Well-meaning parents and bystanders tried to pull him out of the rubble. "It's too late!... They're dead! "There's nothing you can do!" The fire chief tried to pull him away saying, "Fires and explosions are happening everywhere. You're in shock. You're endangering others. Go home. We'll handle it!" But the man continued to dig, hour after hour—eight hours, then twelve, twenty-four, thirty-six hours. Finally, in the thirty-eighth hour of digging—a day and a half after everyone told him to give up hope—he called his son's name again, pulled back a big rock, and heard his son's voice. "Armand!" the father screamed. From under the rocks came the words, "Dad? I told them! I told the other kids that if you were still alive, you'd save me!" The father helped his son and thirteen other children climb out of the rubble. When the building had collapsed, the children survived in a tent-like pocket. The father lovingly carried his son home to his mother. When the townspeople praised Armand's father for saving the children, he simply explained, "I promised my son, 'No matter what, I'll be there for you!'" That's the kind of Heavenly Father we have as Christians. In light of that, what is a Christian's responsibility?

The Bible is clear that we are not saved by good work but by 100% faith in Jesus' sacrifice on the cross (Titus 3:5, Eph 2:8-9). But the evidence of true salvation is the good works that naturally follow. The Bible says, "*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them*" (Ephesians 2:10). Instead of complaining about what we're going through, we should be serving out of gratitude. The Bible says, "*That they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works*" (Titus 3:8). Our faith in the goodness of God should also help us to trust Him more.

George Muller was a great man of faith who lived in the 1800s. When his wife of thirty-nine years died, he preached her funeral sermon based on this text from

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**Faith for Life**



# One Key to an Irresistible Marriage

by Cary Schmidt



A young couple once emailed me and asked an insightful question about their relationship. Several years into their marriage, they began to discover how “opposite” they really were in many areas. And that realization scared them. They asked if this discovery should worry them, or if all couples experience this.

It occurred to me that most couples face this sort of realization, so perhaps sharing a perspective might encourage others. Here’s what I wrote in response to the question:

“The key thing is: ‘are you good friends?’ Do you enjoy spending time together? Do you like to go out to eat, talk, walk, and just hang out together? As for specific interests, My wife Dana and I share a few but not many really—but WE LOVE to hang out together, and we LOVE to do what the other person LOVES to do. We have learned to enjoy making the other person happy.” Honestly, that’s a critical

component to a wonderful marriage—loving to please the other person.

Whether you realize it or not, God gave you the keys to your spouse’s heart. He gave you the ability to truly please your spouse. Staying in love is all about discovering the joy of preferring your spouse—finding joy in your wife’s or your husband’s joy. It’s not about having your own way. It’s about enjoying the delight that you create in giving your spouse his or her way.

*“Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another” (Romans 12:10).*

*“Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another” (Galatians 5:13).*

How often do we miss the joy of giving in, because we can’t stand the idea of giving in—we would call it “losing.” We fall for the bait that “not getting our way” means we lost something. Wrong! That self-centered thought process kills a lot of marriages. While we are focused on fighting for our own way, we are missing the great delight of making the other person happy. In my experience, when our marriage is strained, it’s usually because I lost perspective on this and grew selfish.

Other than Jesus, my greatest teacher in this area is Dana. She is exceptional at this. She humbles me—and convicts me. She’s one of the happiest people I know, but her joy is derived from making her family happy—both me, and our kids. The joy she radiates is a product of her desire to serve and please others.

Bottom line, every marriage goes through ups and downs—seasons of strength and

struggle. In the midst of the daily chaos of raising kids, managing life, and serving God; it is critical that you nurture your relationship with time together. And during that time, pursue understanding. Seek to discover “what delights this person?” Ask your spouse, “What are some things that I could do that would REALLY please you?”

You’ll probably be surprised at how very simple and accessible your spouse’s list will be. (It will most likely be made up of simple things that you could easily do from a heart of love, with little or no real cost. But the benefits will be overwhelming to your home!) Deep love is usually made up of simple delights done from a selfless heart. Once you discover it... do it.

As you yield, you will find a new level of love in serving one another. You will discover a spouse who will quickly find your love irresistible. And you will probably find a spouse who responds in kind. Selfless love always compels a similar response.

The one key to a great marriage?...Decide to enjoy serving and pleasing your spouse. Get a kick out of putting a smile on his or her face.

Now, think of one thing you could do today that would really please your spouse, and plan to do it. (And if you need help thinking of ideas, just ask your spouse...)

Remember, you hold the key to your spouse’s heart—so use the key! By God’s grace, you have the power to make your spouse fall in love with you over and over and over again. Go build an irresistible marriage by love, serving one another (Galatians 5:13). ■

## What is God Like? He is Good!

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Psalms 119:68, “*Thou art good, and doest good.*” Muller recounts how hard he prayed when he discovered his wife had rheumatic fever. His diary read, “Yes, my Father, the times of my darling wife are in Thy hands. Thou wilt do the very best thing for her, and for me, whether life or death. If it may be, then raise up yet again my precious wife—Thou art able to do it, though she is so ill; but howsoever Thou dealest with me, only

help me to continue to be perfectly satisfied with Thy holy will.” When she died, Muller said, “I bow, I am satisfied with the will of my Heavenly Father, I seek by perfect submission to his holy will to glorify him, I kiss continually the hand that has afflicted me... my inmost soul habitually rejoices in my departed loved one. My dear daughter and I would not have her back, were it possible to produce it by the turn of a hand. God himself has done it; we are satisfied with Him.”

God is too wise to make a mistake, and too good to do evil. He says to us, “*I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end*” (Jeremiah 29:11). God orchestrates everything in our lives for His glory and our own good. When we learn to trust Him we experience a wonderful sense of peace, fulfillment and joy. He’s allowed us to live on Earth at this time in history for a reason. And He’s all good, all the time. I cannot imagine a better God and Father. ■





# RETHINKING JESUS

*"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened (raised to life) by the Spirit" (1 Peter 3:18)*

by pastor tony scheving

What do you know about the greatest person and the greatest event of all time? Of course, I'm speaking about the Son of God who is also God the Son. The Encyclopedia Britannica uses 20,000 words to tell about Jesus, and never hints that He did not exist. These are more words than the Britannica allows for Aristotle, Alexander the Great, Cicero, Julius Caesar, or Napoleon Bonaparte. The author and historian H. G. Wells often blasphemed Jesus, yet never questioned that a man named Jesus once existed and even felt compelled to discuss Jesus on ten pages in his Outline of History.

Josephus, the famed Jewish historian, was born around the time of Christ, living from A.D. 37 to 95. He was not a Christian, yet he recorded the death and resurrection of Jesus as a fact. In his book entitled Jewish Antiquities, he wrote, "Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call Him a man: for He was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher to such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to Him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was Christ. And when Pilate had condemned Him to the cross, those that loved Him at the first did not forsake Him; for He appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning Him. And the tribe of Christians so named from Him, are not extinct at this day."

Just who was Jesus? He claimed to be divine and deity as God the Son. No other

recognized religious leader such as Moses, Buddha, Confucius or Mohammed ever made such a claim. This claim must either be true or false. If false, then Jesus was a lunatic. If Jesus knowingly lied, he was the world's greatest hypocrite and a charlatan of the worst kind. He would also be the greatest fool, for what person would die for a lie? Yet, His critics and enemies had nothing but the highest accolades on His character. There is no middle ground. Either Jesus is a liar, a lunatic, or He is Lord of all!

Remember Peter, the rash and impulsive apostle? When he aged into his sixties, he wrote a tremendous epistle with a tremendous verse still preserved for us in God's Holy Word, the Bible. The aged Peter said, *"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit"* (1 Peter 3:18). The thirty-two words in this verse give us one of the greatest truths in the Bible, split naturally into four parts. Let's look at them as we rethink Jesus.

**The Ruthless Cross.** Notice the words of the verse which say, *"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins."* Christ suffered on that ruthless cross. It was repugnant and repulsive to die on a Roman cross. The verse above says he *"suffered"*, which is an understatement because there are no English words to describe His suffering. There was first of all the emotional suffering. The night before going to the cross, Jesus said, *"My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death"* (Matt

26:38). Later He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane and the Bible says He sweat drops of blood in agony (Luke 22:44) (a condition known as hematidrosis). Then there was the physical suffering of Christ. Before enduring Calvary, Jesus suffered a scourging. The Roman soldiers were experienced pros at this and would stretch the skin out tight before applying the 'cat of nine tails', which was designed to flay the victim while ripping the flesh. Most men didn't walk away from a scourging. Afterwards, Jesus was pummeled repeatedly with the fists of His enemies. No wonder Jesus stumbled and fell under the cross later on.

The crucifixion itself was a horrifying nightmare beyond imagination. We get our English word 'excruciating' from the word 'crucifixion'. It was meant to be terrifying to strike fear into Roman subjects in order to deter crime. The Bible prophesied 700 years earlier about Jesus' scourging, *"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities"* (Isaiah 53:4-5). When a victim was spiked to the timber of a cross, the crude nail was purposely driven through the median nerves of the palms and feet to multiply the pain throughout the body. Death was slow and agonizing.

Then there was the spiritual suffering. Jesus Christ had to die for our sin. When Jesus took our sin upon Himself, He became an object of the Heavenly Father's judgment as God hates sin and possesses holier eyes than to even behold sin (Habakkuk 1:13). God had to turn His back on His Son when Jesus took our sin upon Himself. That's why Jesus cried out on the cross, *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"* (Mark 15:34). For the first time in eternity, The Son was separated from the Father. God must punish sin. The Bible says, *"For he (God) hath made him (Jesus) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him"* (II Corinthians 5:21).

Jesus took our punishment. Secondly, notice in our theme verse (1 Peter 3:18), *"Christ also hath once suffered for sins"*. The Bible says Jesus *"Was delivered for*

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**Faith for Life**



## Rethinking Jesus

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our offences" (Romans 4:25). We have offended God with our sins. If you even look at just the 10 commandments, we find that we have violated most, if not all, of them. Have you ever put anything ahead of God like a job, money or a relationship (1st commandment)? Have you ever taken God lightly or imagined Him to be accommodating of your lifestyle and sin (2nd commandment)? Have you ever taken God's name in vain like, "Oh my God", or worse (3rd commandment)? Have you ever blown off the Lord's Day by skipping church services (4th commandment)? Have you ever dishonored or disobeyed your parents (5th commandment)? Have you ever hated someone or been bitter toward someone (6th commandment)? Have you ever lusted after the opposite sex (7th commandment)? Have you ever taken anything that wasn't yours, or even stolen the boss's time at work (8th commandment)? Have you ever told a lie (9th commandment)? Have you ever coveted after something you didn't have (10th commandment)? If we are honest, we would have to admit we are guilty of sin. Besides violating those 10 basic commandments, we'd have to also admit that we've been selfish, angry, impatient, harsh, wasteful, prideful, gossipy, stingy, biased, insensitive, insincere, inappropriate, unforgiving, and not loving others the way we love ourselves.

Who said that man is basically good? We did not get this notion from the Greeks. Aristotle said, "There are no good in mankind." We did not get it from Judaism. Jeremiah said, "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked?*" (Jeremiah 17:9). We did not get it from Christian teachings. The apostle Paul said, "*All have sinned and come short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23). We got the illusion of the goodness of man from the philosophers and psychologists of the nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries, who taught the false doctrine that man is a helpless victim of the environment. However, the Bible says that man is not naturally good. And all human experience confirms that fact. We hear a lot of psychobabble today about people needing to forgive themselves, and there is

even talk about 'forgiving God' as though God did something wrong. This is absurd, considering man is the sinner in need of forgiveness. Job 15:16 says, "*How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?*" Sin is rebellion against God Almighty. The reason "*Christ also hath once suffered for sins*" (1 Peter 3:18), is because we are serious sinners. Until we realize that, we are not ready to be saved from our sins (Luke 19:10).

Notice also that our theme verse says, "*Christ also hath once suffered for sins*". There are some who mistakenly teach that Jesus is somehow crucified over and over again every time they take communion. But the Bible is clear that the suffering of Christ was once and for all (Hebrews 7:27, 9:26, 28, 10:10, 12). When Jesus said, "*It is finished*" before dying on the cross, He meant it. The full and complete work of Calvary was done. That's also why the Bible teaches eternal security (once saved, you remain saved). If you could lose your salvation after the fact, Jesus would have to die all over again for you to pay for another salvation. May this help us appreciate what Jesus did on that ruthless cross for us. A person could never fully appreciate being healed from cancer unless they've gone through a cancer battle. A sinner could never appreciate being saved from sin unless they realize why they need to be saved from their sin. Someone once said, "No man is ready to accept Christ as his Savior from hell and damnation, until he has felt the hot breath of hell blow over his quivering conscience. If Christ is to be our Savior, we must know what we should be saved from."

**Radical Contrast.** Next, notice these five words in our theme verse, "The just for the unjust". That's a radical contrast! God spanned a mighty canyon when He built a bridge with the cross from the Just (God) to the unjust (mankind). The Bible says, "*God commendeth (proved) his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*" (Romans 5:8). That's the reason for the cross! Someone said, "Life is short, death is sure, sin is the curse, Christ is the cure." ... the just for the unjust.

We've already established who the 'unjust' are; it is us. But let's take a look at Jesus 'the just'. The Bible speaks of Christ when it says, "*Behold, thy King cometh unto*

*thee: he is just, and having salvation*" (Zech 9:9). When Pontius Pilate examined Jesus, he found no fault in Him. He exclaimed, "*I am innocent of the blood of this just person*" (Matthew 27:24). Jesus even asked His worst enemies, "*Which of you convinceth me of sin?*" (John 8:46). Jesus was the sinless, spotless and stainless Son of God. He was the 'just who died for the unjust'. We call this 'the doctrine of substitution'. Barabbas, the murderer, went free, and Jesus became his scapegoat and substitute. Barabbas was a picture of us. In order to be our substitute, Jesus had to be sinless, the Just for the unjust.

In the Old Testament, the sacrificial Passover lamb had to be spotless, and a male in the prime of life. It had to shed its blood as the innocent dying for the guilty. That Passover lamb was a picture of Jesus, who was also cut down in the prime of life. He, too, shed His blood as the innocent dying for the guilty. Most of all, He was spotless without sin. The apostle Peter said, "*Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things... received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*" (1 Peter 1:18-19). The Bible says, "*(Jesus) was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin*" (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus was 'the just dying for the unjust'. It doesn't seem fair. II Corinthians 5:21 says God, "*Hath made him (Jesus) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*" What a radical contrast.

**The Required Connection.** Mankind requires a connection back to God. Notice the words in our theme verse, "*For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God*". Many years ago, Adam and Eve disobeyed God and died spiritually (Gen 2:17). Their descendants (us) were born 'unplugged' from God. The Bible says, "*Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you*" (Isaiah 59:2). Sin puts a vast gap between us and a Holy God. The man, Job, once lamented and said, "*Neither is there any daysman (intercessor) betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both*" (Job 9:33). 1 Samuel 2:25 says, "*If a man sin against the LORD, who shall entreat for him?*" Jesus is

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## Rethinking Jesus

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the 'God-man', and is the only one who can bridge that gap. He is the mediator and go-between we need. He is the 'required connection'. A qualified mediator must be acceptable to both parties seeking reconciliation. He must be a common friend to both. He must have received delegated authority from both parties. He must be qualified to consider and understand both parties. He must be one who has a compelling interest in resolution. Only Jesus Christ meets that criteria in our relationship with God.

Here's the problem: man is a sinner. *"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23). God cannot behold iniquity. *"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and can not look on iniquity"* (Habakkuk 1:13). But here is the good news: the Bible says, *"If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world"* (1 John 2:1-2).

Many people spend years trying to find God or trying to get religious. Sin separates us from a Holy God, but the Bible says, *"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life"* (Romans 5:10). As the 'required connection', Jesus can lay one hand on man, and one hand on God, and present us before the King of the universe. The Bible says, *"God ... doth devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him"* (2 Samuel 14:14). The mediator is not Mary, Mohammed, Buddha, Peter, a priest, a rabbi, a pastor or anyone else. The Bible says, *"There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus"* (1 Timothy 2:5). Jesus is the 'required connection'.

**The Resurrected Christ.** Notice the last part of our theme verse, *"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened (raised to life) by the Spirit"*. The fact that Jesus raised from the dead signifies that there is a life after this one. Yes Virginia, there is a resurrection from the dead!

In 1982, United States Vice President George H. Bush represented the U.S. at the funeral of former Soviet Union leader Leonid Brezhnev. Bush was deeply moved by a silent protest carried out by Brezhnev's widow. She stood motionless by the coffin until seconds before it was closed. Then, just as the soldiers touched the lid, Brezhnev's wife performed an act of great courage and hope, a gesture that must surely rank as one of the most profound acts of civil disobedience ever committed. She reached down and made the sign of the cross on her husband's chest. There, in the USSR, the citadel of secular, atheistic power, the wife of its leader believed that her husband was wrong. She hoped that there was a resurrection and another life. She believed that that life was best represented by Jesus who died on the cross.

Billions of people today worship Buddha, Mohammed, Mary or Confucius. But the resurrection of Jesus Christ sets Him light years apart from all of them. They are all dead, but Jesus is alive today and the Bible says He is, *"declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead"* (Romans 1:4). If Jesus did not rise from the dead, the Christian faith is a foolish fantasy. However, if the resurrection of Christ did occur, it confirms His life, message, and atoning work. It is the basis of our hope of life beyond the grave.

Christ is alive, and the evidence is overwhelming. Here are some of the reasons we can be so sure: Jesus predicted His resurrection, the Old Testament prophesied it, the tomb was empty and the grave clothes vacant. If the enemies of Christ wished to silence His disciples, all they had to do was produce a body, but they could not. Many people saw the resurrected Christ. They looked on His face, touched Him, heard His voice, and saw Him eat. The lives of the disciples were revolutionized. Though they fled and even denied Christ at the time of His arrest, they later feared no one in their proclamation of the risen Christ, even unto death! The resurrection was the central message of the early church. The church grew with an unwavering conviction that Christ had risen and was the Lord of the church. Men and women today testify

that the power of the risen Christ has transformed their lives. We know that Jesus is alive not only because of the historical and biblical evidence, but also because He has miraculously touched the lives of born-again Christians. Jesus is alive!

In early 1991, at the height of U.S. military Operation Desert Storm, Ruth Dillow received a very sad message from the U.S. Pentagon. The message stated that her son, Clayton, had stepped on a land mine in Kuwait and was killed. Ruth later wrote, "I can't begin to describe my grief and shock. It was almost more than I could bear. For three days I just wept. I expressed anger and loss. For three days people tried to comfort me but nothing worked ... the loss was simply too great." But three days after she received that message, the phone rang. The voice on the other end said, "Mom, it's me. It's Clayton. I'm alive." Ruth said, "I couldn't believe it at first. But then I recognized his voice and realized he really was alive!" The bad news was all a mistake. She said, "I laughed, I cried, I felt like turning cartwheels because my son who I thought was dead was actually alive."

Today, we have a similar message. Jesus said in Revelation 1:18, *"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."* That makes a difference. The incredible resurrection of Jesus changed the apostles from cowering, incompetent deserters into a group of fearless and faithful witnesses. Acts 4:33 says, *"With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all."* New Testament Christianity is real and supernatural because our Savior lives. The big question is, "Does He live in you?" Jesus is still alive and transforming lives. Has He transformed your life? (2 Cor 5:17). Jesus said, *"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly"* (John 10:10). Are you truly living? Do you possess the abundant life Jesus spoke of? How do you get this life? ■

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# OVERCOMING SHAME



by pastor tony scheving

*"My confusion is continually before me, and the shame of my face hath covered me" Psalms 44:15*

The story was told of a 12 year old boy who was still wetting the bed every night. His mother unwisely decided to start washing and hanging his bed sheets on the clothesline outside every day to embarrass him in front of the neighbor kids. She assumed this would shame her son into overcoming bed-wetting.

Shame has been described by Webster as dishonor, disgrace, and a painful feeling of losing the respect of others due to improper behavior. Shame is so frightful that it causes many to live a lie, and cover up to save face and reputation. No doubt we've all been ensnared in the jagged edge of shame's powerful jaws.

Our Creator wired shame into our makeup as a deterrent from sin. Shame is a part of our design to help us maintain a tender conscience to keep us from self-destruction. For some, it's a lie they've told, an affair they've had, a crime they've committed, or foolish words they've said. Sadly, our society is forgetting to blush at what should be shameful. It's a sign of the times when few things are sacred anymore. God rebuked His people for this very thing when He stated, *"Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore...they shall be cast down, saith the LORD"* (Jeremiah 6:15). The Bible says, *"But the unjust knoweth no shame"* (Zephaniah 3:5).

**The Sources of Shame.** A trick played by magnetic storms can cause a conversation on a telephone line to jump to a radio line nearby and be broadcast without the knowledge of the two persons talking. This occurred in New York a short time ago when such a connection caused an intimate phone call to be heard on a coast-to-coast program and caused great shame to the two

people involved. Shame puts everything on display for others to see and can be very humiliating. It is raw, naked disgrace and can be so devastating when it is so public. When Adam and Eve committed the first sin they hid themselves from God due to their shame.

There are many reasons for shame, starting with pride. The Bible says, *"When pride cometh, then cometh shame"* (Proverbs 11:2). Pride brought great shame to Germany when it was defeated in World War II. Adolf Hitler and others boasted of the Germans being the 'Master Race'. Later on, the newly formed democratic government of East Germany would express sorrow and shame for the Jewish holocaust, and beg forgiveness from Israel and all Jews of the world. This historic apology ended 40 years of denial of responsibility. Pride and shame go hand in hand. During the early days of the church, a husband and wife pretended to give more than they had and were caught in a lie due to their pride (Acts of Apostles 6).

Another source of shame would be dishonesty. Internal Revenue Service officials were somewhat suspicious about a deduction claim on a clergyman's IRS form: \$450 for a 'clerical collar'. Despite the leapfrogging cost of living, that seemed a little out of line.

Called to account for his costly collar, the minister said he had made an innocent mistake: \$450 should have been \$4.50. Understanding IRS men let the clergyman pay the extra tax—plus 6 percent interest. But one shrewd auditor had a second thought. Sure enough, a scrutiny of past income-tax returns revealed that the minister consistently had trouble with decimals. For three years in a row, things like \$4.50 came out \$450 in the deduction column. For this,

the red-faced cleric paid added taxes, 6 percent interest—and a 50 percent penalty for fraud. Dishonesty brings about shame.

Another source of shame is immorality. Bill Clinton's sexual antics while in the White House would be an example of this. Other sources of shame would include anger. Many celebrities such as Lionel Richie and Warren Moon have been arrested for spousal abuse spawned by anger. Another thing that causes shame is covetousness and envy. Sometimes people wind up in bankruptcy court by trying to 'keep up with the Joneses'. Isaiah 26:11 says, *"They shall see, and be ashamed for their envy."* Children can often bring shame to parents. Proverbs 29:15 says, *"The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame."* Sometimes the behavior of parents brings shame to their children. Any foolish behavior brings about shame. Proverbs 3:35 says, *"Shame shall be the promotion of fools."* Shame is the reaping for our sin.

**The Struggles of Shame.** On March 24, 1989, the infamous Exxon Valdez oil spill took place off the coast of Alaska, spilling 11 million gallons of crude oil into the water and coastline, devastating the environment. It cost Exxon over 4 billion dollars in cleanup costs and fines. The ship's captain Joseph Hazelwood was drunk in his cabin at the time and faced great shame for the accident. He became the butt of many late night talk show monologue jokes.

It's been said that guilt is a private thing within us, but shame is the public voice of the accuser saying, "It was you!" Peter had to struggle with the shame of denying the Lord three times. The Bible says in Matthew 26:75, *"And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly."* Judas had to deal with the bitterness of shame after selling out the Lord. When he couldn't handle it, he committed suicide. Shame has been called the worst form of hatred of self. In self, it causes regret, reproach and disgust. It brings pangs of remorse due to scandal. It is so painful because it is so humbling. King David committed adultery with another man's wife and brought great embarrassment upon himself and the kingdom. Ezra, the prophet, lamented

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## Overcoming Shame

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the disgrace brought upon Israel due to its ungodly behavior when he said, *"O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens"* (Ezra 9:6).

**The Subsequence of Shame.** Richard Berendzen served for 10 years as president of American University, successfully raising funds and boosting the school's once mediocre reputation. Under him, the university's annual endowment jumped from \$5 million to \$20 million. But the president's charm may have masked wayward impulses. Police traced obscene, sexual calls to his private line. He resigned with the statement, "I cannot begin to convey my embarrassment, or my torment." Many politicians, or 'shakers and movers', have gone down in disgrace with shame. The skeletons in the closet can haunt someone indefinitely. If they are not dealt with, the results can be discouraging. Jeremiah 23:40 speaks of, *"An everlasting reproach...and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten."* Of course, the ultimate shame will be when we stand before God one day to give an account for our words, thoughts and actions. For many, it will be a sobering experience. The Bible says, *"And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt"* (Daniel 12:2). Jeremiah, the prophet, adds, *"O LORD... all that forsake thee shall be ashamed"* (Jeremiah 17:13).

**The Solution for Shame.** The scars of shame don't have to be permanent. The solution is Jesus Christ! The Bible says, *"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new"* (2 Corinthians 5:17). Jesus was our shame bearer (Isaiah 53:3)! Crucifixion was perhaps the most shameful way to die because the victim was stripped and publicly humiliated. The Bible says that Jesus *"Endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God"* (Hebrews 12:2). Jesus Christ redeems our worth!

A classic example of this truth would be the woman caught in the very act of adultery, written about in the gospel of

John, chapter 8. Can you picture this woman being dragged in barefooted, perhaps wearing only a blanket, before Jesus and the crowd? Can you picture her with her hair messed, makeup smeared, face red, eyes wet with tears, and her voice hoarse from screaming? How humiliating! She was dying a thousand deaths standing before the mob. The Pharisees were using her with one goal in mind: to make Jesus look bad. If He released her, He would be trampling on the law (the Torah and the Talmud). If He commanded her to be stoned, He would be labeled unmerciful. So Jesus stooped down and began to write on the ground. Perhaps He was writing the names of the accusers along with their own personal sins like lust, drunkenness, affairs, lying, pride, cheating, embezzling, selfishness, hypocrisy, greed and the very plot to murder Jesus Himself. The silence was deafening. Finally, Jesus gets up from writing and says, *"He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her"* (John 8:7). The only sound at that point was the thud of stones hitting the ground as the accusers dropped them and walked away speechless. Jesus then looked on the woman with the gaze of deity and forgave the woman, telling her to *"go and sin no more."* Jesus was the only one qualified to condemn her and yet the last one to do so.

It doesn't matter what shameful thing you have done, there is no psychology in the world, no therapy, no pills and no magic formula available that can remove the shame. Only Jesus can. 1 John 1:7 says, *"The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."* Salvation through the suffering of Christ on the cross can heal our shame (Isaiah 53:5).

Graham Kerr, known to millions as TV's Galloping Gourmet, speaks openly about accepting

Christ as his Savior later in life. With his marriage falling apart and his search for happiness ending in disaster, things were black. But his wife Treena was converted through the witness of her domestic worker. His secretary, a self-confessed, backslidden Christian, was also led back to faith by a temporary assistant he had hired. Kerr was converted soon after. But now he is ashamed by the reruns of his early TV programs that have their emphasis on indulgence and questionable humor.

Even after salvation in Christ, shame can be a relentless voice popping up again telling us we are disgraced and worthless. How do we handle lingering, recurring shame? We need to remind ourselves that, *"He that believeth on Him (Jesus) is not condemned"*, and *"If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things"* (1 John 3:18, 20). God is greater than our shame because there is no limit to His grace. Isaiah, the prophet, said, *"Behold, the Lord GOD will help me; who is he that shall condemn me?"* (Isaiah 50:9). Some of us need to hear those words. Paul, the Apostle, added, *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus"* (Romans 8:1). We don't need to keep living a façade, covering up reality with fig leaves. Thank God for His redemption from shame. ■

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# a critical attitude

*"Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile" - Psalms 34:13*

Do you know anyone who has a critical attitude? People who 'talk -down' others in a fault-finding manner when that person is not around? How about you? Do you often find yourself scrutinizing, or bad-mouthing, others?

In the Old Testament, we find Aaron and Miriam, the brother and sister of Moses, picking him apart in a critical manner. We also find Michal, the wife of David, having a negative attitude toward her husband. In the New Testament, we find the church at Corinth ragging on the Apostle Paul behind his back. While we might think this is normal human behavior, there is a serious warning from God about picking people apart. The Bible says, *"Speak not evil one of another, brethren"* (James 4:11).

**The Behavior:** What are the reasons why some people bad-mouth others? The first one is insecurity. They're actually jealous. People who lack confidence or are emotionally unstable often feel threatened by others, so they speak negatively of them. Insecure people struggle to feel good about themselves. They think that somehow their candle will burn brighter if they blow someone else's candle out! Their low self-esteem could be the result of an unstable upbringing. They may have struggled to win the approval of a harsh parent.

The second reason people are hypercritical is they are self-righteous. In the gospels, we find the Pharisees who were always bad-mouthing Jesus. They were criticizing the Lord for healing people on the Sabbath, or not washing his hands before he ate. They were blinded by their

holier-than-thou pride. The Bible speaks of those who are, *"Proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings"* (1 Timothy 6:4). Judas also had a self-righteous problem when he pretended to care about the poor (Mark 14:4).

Thirdly, people have a critical spirit because they have a double standard and don't realize it. It is funny how many people condemn others for doing the very same things they do. Have you ever gotten mad and honked your horn at another driver for making a mistake in traffic? Well, do you ever make a blunder while you are driving? The Bible says, *"Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things"* (Romans 2:1). Often we sit and rag on someone when we have bigger issues than they do.

**The Blindness:** Jesus rebuked the hypercritical in his Sermon on the Mount for being blind to their own issues. He said, *"Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye"* (Matthew 7:5). A critical spirit really impairs people from seeing matters clearly. Jesus said in John 7:24, *"Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."* The Bible adds, in 1 Corinthians 11:31, *"For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged"* (by God).

How much time do we spend criticizing the boss, co-workers, neighbors, friends, or relatives? If we would spend more time working on our own character, it may squelch our cynicism. It would also help us

to overcome our bitterness toward others. The Bible tells us that bitterness not only eats away at us, but also poisons others when it says, *"Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled"* (Hebrews 12:15).

Perhaps you feel that someone has done you wrong. But there are almost always two sides to every story. Maybe you're judging someone in an area that you don't fully understand. Maybe you are 'out of your league' because you have never walked in their shoes. We call this being an 'armchair quarterback'. King David gave us some great advice when he said, *"LORD, my heart is not haughty...neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me"* (Psalms 131:1).

**The Balance:** There's a time to speak out against a wrongdoing, and even Jesus did so. But we must be careful not to foster a critical attitude in the process. It's important to stand for truth without turning into a negative, faultfinding critic of everything and everyone. The Bible says, *"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you"* (Ephesians 4:29-32). ■

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# you are more than a body



by cary schmidt

Friend, you are more than a body! Contrary to the message of pop culture, deep in your heart you know there is more to you than just flesh, blood, and randomly evolved, biological substances. You must understand that there is much more to you than what you shave, shower, and dress every morning!

Jesus said this, *"The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment"* (Luke 12:23). Again, God said in His Word, *"I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Thessalonians 5:23b). In James 2:26, God says, *"...the body without the spirit is dead..."* In 2 Corinthians 4:16, God distinguishes between the *"outer man"*—our body—and the *"inward man"*—our soul and spirit, *"...though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day."*

You are more than a body—why is this so important? Well, first of all, this means you have more than just death to anticipate! Think about it. If you're nothing but a body, then all you really have to look forward to is death. How could anyone really be happy if that is all the future holds? If that is to be the ultimate final destination of your life, why would anything else matter?

Secondly, it means you have value. If you are more than a freak biological accident, then you are created. If you are created, then you are valuable to your Creator. He made you for a reason—a purpose. You have significance and meaning—and life is more than random events strung together by fate.

Thirdly, it means you have hope. There's more than just physical life and death. There's hope that you can get past your present difficulties and someday enter into something far better.

Have you ever heard that little phrase, "Life's hard, then you die"? Well, that's a pretty hopeless outlook on life, and it's

definitely not what the Bible clearly teaches. Yes, life is sometimes very hard and very unpredictable. Yes, everyone eventually dies. But in God's message to you, there's more to it! There's more to life than what you can see, and more to your story than just time itself.

You want proof? Okay...conscience. You have a conscience. Here's what I mean. How can biological matter spontaneously develop conscience? That's like saying I can hurt my refrigerator's feelings! Conscience is a soul thing—a spiritual thing—and meat doesn't generate spiritual events. Meat is just meat—it doesn't feel good or bad—it just sits there and rots once life has departed. I'm not trying to be crude, just clear. Friend, your conscience proves your soul's existence. Conscience is your internal knowledge of right and wrong. Conscience is your God-given knowledge of your Creator and His moral standard in all of creation.

The fact that human beings all over planet Earth intuitively worship something is proof that God has written this in our hearts. It's a part of our spiritual genetics. No matter where you go you will find every man worshipping someone or something. Even the atheist, who denies God's existence, chooses to worship self—and self becomes god.

In Romans, chapter one, God brings an indictment against men who deny what He has clearly written on their hearts and revealed in them. He says in Romans 1:20, *"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse."* In verse nineteen of that same chapter, God says that He has revealed Himself inside of every human being. In verse twenty-one, He explains that when we willfully choose to deny this inner knowledge, our hearts become darkened. Once again, in Romans 2:15, He says that

His law is written in our hearts: *"Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness..."*

So, what does all this mean? God says it quite simply in Romans 1:20. We are *"without excuse."* To deny the existence of a Creator or His interest in our lives is to literally ignore our conscience and the truth that God has written in our hearts.

All of these reasons point to one primary conclusion. Our relationship to God must be intentionally designed to function by faith rather than sight. God says it this way, *"Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear"* (Hebrews 11:3). Things which were made (that's you and me) were not made of things which do appear (that's the world around us). In other words, who you are, where you came from, and where you are going has more to do with what you cannot see than with what you can see.

You cannot see the wind, but you know it exists. You cannot see air, but you depend upon it for life. You cannot see hope, joy, or peace—but you desperately long for these in your heart. You cannot see God, but you know He exists and your heart longs to be loved and accepted fully by Him.

Are you more than a body? You bet! Your body is just a temporary dwelling place for the real you! God even calls it a *"tabernacle"* or a tent (II Corinthians 5:1)! Just as you take off one set of clothes each night and put on another set the next morning, one day you will vacate your body. We call this "death", which literally means "separation." Your soul will vacate its tent. In that moment, your body will cease to breathe and move and function, but the real you—the inner man—will very much continue to live!

Yes, you are much more than a body! Take care of your body while you have it, but don't focus so much on the physical that you miss "what you cannot see with your eyes"! You are a soul. You have a conscience. You are created and you matter. You have value. You have an eternal purpose. You have a Creator who longs for you to read the clues—to see with your heart what you cannot see with your eyes. He has given you plenty of information to put two and two together, and He is waiting for you to come to Him personally. ■