

WHAT OTHERS SAY ...

In *Revive Your Life! Rest for Your Anxious Heart*, author Pamela Christian gives us a picture of God's love in a way that will most likely be a game-changer for many. She does so with the skill of an artist and the scholarship of an apologist, yet she writes with the compassionate heart of a pastor. This book illustrates the biblical concept "the truth shall make you free." One translation reads, "you shall know the truth in an experiential way, and the truth shall make you free." That well represents the backbone of this book. It is an invitation to the ongoing experience of truth through a relationship with a perfect heavenly Father. *Revive Your Life!* is a tool that will bring great numbers of people into the freedom they were born for through the discovery of their God-given purpose and significance.

BILL JONSON, Bethel Church, Redding, CA, Author of *When Heaven Invades Earth* and *God is Good*

Pamela Christian's *Revive Your Life!* is informative, inspirational, and challenging. This third volume in her highly readable trilogy (following *Examine Your Faith!* and *Renew Your Hope!*) puts some very important truths in the Christian faith on "the bottom shelf" and will be edifying to those seeking truth and to new converts, as well as to those who have walked for many decades with Jesus. While I am in disagreement with the author on the extant nature of some of the spiritual gifts experienced by the first century Church, I would recommend this book to all who seek to know more about the Christian faith.

DR. RICHARD LAND, President, Southern Evangelical Seminary, Charlotte, North Carolina

A well-known song recorded years ago aptly declares, "What the World Needs Now Is Love." This is truer today than when the song broke upon

the scene a generation ago. In fact, Jesus Himself warned us that in the “Last Days” the love of many would turn cold! But thank God for people like Pamela Christian who is brave enough to say, “Not on my watch!” *Revive Your Life! Rest for Your Anxious Heart* is truly a manual full of directions on how to rekindle your faith, hope, and love and arise to fulfill your distinct call in this generation. If your heart needs to be revived, then read on. This was written with you in mind.”

**DR. JAMES W. GOLL, Founder of God Encounters Ministries,
International Speaker, Best-Selling Author**

Revive Your Life! Rest for Your Anxious Heart is the logical and indispensable conclusion to Pamela Christian’s trilogy, *Faith to Live By*. Having established in volume one the historical and objective truths of Holy Scripture—in contrast to the flawed and unsubstantiated claims of non-Christian religions—she leads readers in volume two to experience the hope, rewards, and “breakthroughs” available to all who accept God’s promises and the life-changing power of biblical Christianity. In this third volume, Pamela sets out to lead her readers step-by-step through and beyond the deceptions, pitfalls, and other obstacles that the enemies of Christ—both demonic and human—put forth to discourage potential and practicing Christians from embracing a truth-based, God-centered life. But Pamela doesn’t stop here. Ultimately, volume three is all about God’s love, and how “to enter a transformed life of freedom, joy, and victory” through a genuine, empowered relationship with Jesus Christ. In *Revive Your Life!* Pamela Christian helps her readers embrace a loving relationship with their Creator. She explains how to grow and mature in this relationship, both experientially as well as practically. As a natural result of this, she explains how God’s love can play out in each of our lives to impact our sinful, suffering world for Christ. Whether you are a spiritual seeker, a new

believer, or a mature Christian facing spiritual struggles and doubts, this book is for you.

DAN STORY, MA Christian Apologetics, Author and Teacher

Pamela Christian has produced another book in her *Faith to Live By* series that will be an encouragement to many. She paints an exciting biblical picture of what it means to be a follower of Christ—and bases it on the very best mix of fact and feeling.

CRAIG J. HAZEN, Ph.D., Professor of Apologetics, Biola University
Author of *Five Sacred Crossings*

As a Christian apologist, I so appreciate Pamela's ability to blend heart and head by equipping believers to experience the love and presence of God in a way consistent with God's Word which avoids spiritual deceptions. *Revive Your Life! Rest for Your Anxious Heart* is a must-read for anyone struggling to understand the true nature of God's love through the lens of logical and biblical truth.

BOB DUTKO, Christian Apologist and Nationally Syndicated Christian Talk Show Host

I found *Revive Your Life! Rest for Your Anxious Heart* to be a fresh voice of reason, especially significant for those searching for meaning and purpose in life. Pamela's attention to theological and personal detail is refreshing, engaging, and revitalizing. Whether you are among the four million who are in search of hope, the twenty-one million struggling with depression, or thirty-nine thousand considering suicide, this book will provide answers to your life questions—you will find Jesus is the answer to your desperation and remedy for your despair. Don't just buy one copy of this book. Buy

two copies and give one to someone more desperate than you. You won't have to look too far to find someone who needs it.

DR. SHERYL D. GIESBRECHT, Speaker, Radio/TV Personality, Global Influencer, Author of *Experiencing God Through His Names*, www.FromAshesToBeauty.com

In today's culture of confusion and trouble, the subject of "faith" and how to apply it, is greatly needed. Once again, Pamela Christian gives us fresh insights into God's Word, which have been tried and proven in her own life. Pam's heart to help others experience the victorious life available through faith in Christ is one constant theme in all she does. After reading her first two books, I offered to endorse the next book in the series. Through her authentic, practical, and applicable writings you'll learn that the most difficult spots in life can also become the places of new revelation or a new beginning. I am pleased to endorse and recommend this book to both new converts and the seasoned followers of Christ.

DR. ANDREW BILLS, Bishop & Founder of The Holy Spirit Broadcasting TV Network, www.hsbntv.com

I wish I'd had this book back when I was a drifting agnostic. The main thing that drew me to consider the truth claims of Christianity was the realization if there was no God, there was no hope. Any hope I thought I had, would be merely an illusion, and secular humanism was nothing more than wishful thinking—not based on reality. In *Revive Your Life! Rest for Your Anxious Heart*, Pamela Christian's third installment of her *Faith to Live By* series, she very effectively demonstrates how secularism's increase in the West since the period known as the Enlightenment, has not only failed to fulfill our deepest longings, but also utterly fails to explain why we have those longings in the first place! Not only does Pamela present a solid and

compelling case that the Christian worldview is the only way the world makes sense, but that the Judeo-Christian God of the Bible is a God of perfect love, justice, mercy, and grace who longs to have an intimate relationship with each one of us. If there is one thing I've learned as someone who works in the field of Christian Apologetics, it's that apologetics is not just about presenting arguments and offering a defense of Christianity; it's about inviting and introducing others to the fulfilled promise of God in the person of Jesus Christ. Pamela Christian gets it right on all counts!

GREG WEST, Founder and editor of The Poached Egg Christian Worldview Apologetics Network, www.ThePoachedEgg.org, and National Leadership team member at Ratio Christi Campus Apologetics Alliance, www.RatioChristi.org.

When you know the truth, it does set you free! (John 8:32). Pamela's latest book in her series *Faith to Live By* skillfully confronts the distortion of truth birthed through deception. The author brilliantly uses her words like a sharp sword to cut away the false to see the unvarnished truth behind the lies of our culture and our hearts. *Revive Your Life!* is a pilgrimage to discover the authentic beauty of the Christian life when truth is the foundation. If life has hit you hard and you find yourself examining all you believe, this book will help you find rest for your anxious heart and strengthen your path.

CYNTHIA CAVANAUGH, Speaker, Life Coach, and author of *Unlocked: 5 Myths Holding Your Influence Captive, and Live Unveiled: Freedom to Worship God, Love Other and Tell Your Story*.

Pamela writes for people in need—reaching out not just to the unsaved but also to Christians who need a little push in the right direction. Everyone is

in need of prayer, encouragement, and a plan of action. In plain English, we're just all in need! Pam reminds us that our needs are met in one Creator Lord. Only in the God whose Son Jesus came to save us, redeem us, sanctify us, and give us eternal life are we going to find the kind of help that truly meets our needs for now and forever! And only in the Holy Spirit are we empowered to accomplish our goals. Her latest book in her *Faith to Live By* series entitled *Revive Your Life! Rest for Your Anxious Heart* will give you a big head start in the right direction.

JIMMIE HANCOCK, Chaplain, Colonel, USAF, Retired

REVIVE YOUR LIFE!

REST FOR YOUR ANXIOUS HEART

Pamela Christian



Revive Your Life!

Rest for Your Anxious Heart

Book Three in the *Faith to Live By* book series

Copyright © 2017 Pamela Christian

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced by any means, graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping or by any information storage retrieval system without the written permission of the publisher except in the case of brief quotations embodied in the critical articles and reviews.

Pamela Christian's books may be ordered through all fine booksellers or direct through Pamela Christian Ministries:

18032 Lemon Drive #C206

Yorba Linda, CA 92886

www.pamelachristianministries.com

Published by Protocol, Ltd.

A Division of Christian Development Company, LLC

info@protocolpublishing.com

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used according to permission. All rights reserved.

Because of the dynamic source of the internet, any web addresses or links contained in this book may have changed since publication and may no longer be valid. The views expressed in this work are solely the views of the author.

ISBN-13: 978-0-9909421-8-4 (sc)

ISBN-10: 0-9909421-8-X (sc)

ISBN-978-06156040-2-2 (hc)

ISBN-13: 978-0-9909421-9-1(e)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2017937202

Printed in the United States of America.

“The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”

Lamentations 3:22

This book, this book series, and my life's work are dedicated to the One who demonstrated His love for me even when I was the most unlovable; dedicated to the One whose love is constant and extended to all who will choose to respond to, and be transformed by, His love. May this book be among the many ways God works to reveal to you He *is* love.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments

Introduction

PART ONE—Discovering Love

| | |
|--|----|
| Chapter One—The Realities of Love | 3 |
| Chapter Two—The Condition of our Culture | 23 |
| Chapter Three—The Distortion of Truth | 39 |
| Chapter Four—The Offer of Hope | 53 |

PART TWO—Embracing Love

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| Chapter Five—God’s Intervening Love | 71 |
| Chapter Six—God’s Purpose for You | 85 |
| Chapter Seven—God’s Provision for You | 101 |
| Chapter Eight—God’s Invitation to You | 119 |

PART THREE—Experiencing Love

| | |
|---|-----|
| Chapter Nine—Reveling in God’s Love | 137 |
| Chapter Ten—Persevering in God’s Love | 147 |
| Chapter Eleven—Being Transformed by God’s Love | 165 |
| Chapter Twelve—Being an Extension of God’s Love | 181 |

Chapter Endnotes

About the Author

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My *Faith to Live By* book series was, without a doubt for me, inspired by God. I was first moved to write when I read an article that revealed how tremendously deceived people are. Filled with both compassion and outrage, I found myself quickly writing *Examine Your Faith! Finding Truth in a World of Lies*. While writing the first book, I sensed deep within me at least two more books would become part of the newly forming series. *Renew Your Hope! Remedy for Personal Breakthroughs* is the second book. And now, *Revive Your Life! Rest for Your Anxious Heart*, completes the series—at least for now.

One person most deserving of public appreciation is Dan Story. I'd read several of his books and never expected to meet him—let alone have him become a most gracious mentor. Dan read my initial manuscript for the first book in this series. In reflection, Dan could have correctly responded by telling me to throw the manuscript away and start over. Instead, Dan gently walked me through the rough spots providing suggestions and encouragement. I'm sure he didn't realize for me that sealed the deal, and he's been involved in each book since. I greatly value his investment in me, and I pray I will continue to produce work that helps others discover and apply the truth to find the victory and abundant life Christ died to provide us.

Another person who has proven indispensable to me as a writer is my editor and dear friend, Deb Haggerty. I have learned a great deal from her, and expect to continue to learn more as she's one of the best editors I've ever worked with. So much so, Deb is the only editor I want to have work with me on my projects.

The cover designer for all three of my books in this series is Lisa Knight. I thoroughly enjoyed working with her, finding the perfect cover images to visually introduce the individual book content, and generating a collection of images that clearly identify the three books as part of the same series. Beyond her talent as a graphic designer, I also greatly value her keen understanding of branding. The imagery for Pamela Christian Ministries is beautiful and much appreciated.

Together, we have worked on the *Faith to Live By* book series project, for the purpose of producing quality content with excellence for you—the readers of my books. The vast majority of you, I have not met. However, you have a special place in my heart because all the ministry work I do is for you. I was graced to discover God and His love, and His love compels me to share what I’ve found with others. He wants everyone to embrace Him in truth. If you embark on the journey with me, I promise you will discover that God *is* love.

INTRODUCTION

As a retreat and conference speaker, I get to travel to meet many people. Over the past twenty-five years, I have noted that growing numbers of people are utterly dissatisfied with their lives on one or more levels. The failure of government and politics, the demise of marriage and family, the breakdown of job and economic markets, the antagonistic culture and social issues—all are cited as sources of discontent. Seemingly, there isn't an area of our human existence that hasn't been adversely impacted. The result is a profound culture of restlessness and division. Understandably, people are seeking solutions that will reform our society.

People are earnestly seeking remedies out of a desire to be rid of the relentless and contentious anxiety to find rest for their hearts and to find a greater meaning and purpose for their lives.

What about you? As you're reading this book, I can presume you are among those who are in some measure unfulfilled, anxious, and hoping to find meaning and significance for your life. Perhaps you're even hoping to find a compelling foundation upon which to rebuild your life. If so, you are the reason I've written this book.

I came to a point in my life many years ago when I became crushingly aware that everything I'd been building my beliefs on was a progression of lies. My life focus was meaningless, and my life direction would never lead me to my desires for the future. I didn't know where to find the advice and answers I needed. I wasn't even certain a better way existed. But deep within, I had the nagging sense there must be a better way—there must be something greater than what I knew. So, I set out in hopes of finding the meaning and purpose in life that I longed for. *Revive Your Life! Rest for Your*

Anxious Heart puts into words part of the glorious discovery I made then and now seek to share to help others.

My life focus is to help people discover the same life-giving truth I've been blessed to find. The way I most often begin when I'm speaking to a group is to ask all my audiences the same question: "Who in this room wants to live their life on the basis of a lie?" No one ever raises their hand. That fact is exceedingly revealing. Since no one ever raises his or her hand, we can deduce that *universally*, we prefer truth over deception. In other words, we *all* have an innate moral compass, which allows us to distinguish between what is "good" and what is "bad." The next logical question is "If no one *wants* to live their life on the basis of a lie, and since *universally*, we can distinguish between good and bad, why don't *all* people choose what is good and true?" The answer is found in one word: deception.

People are deceived, and they don't know they are because that is the nature of deception—the victim is unaware. Deception is something no one wants, yet I believe the vast majority of people experience. I certainly did. How can people be freed from deception, especially since they are unaware of their condition? By being open to examining what they believe and why they believe what they believe. Unless we intentionally examine our beliefs, we can easily be deceived and not know that we are.

If you are willing to open your mind to consider matters from an unbiased perspective, I believe you will uncover deception has been robbing you of the most fulfilling life of hope, and the promising future that you were meant to have. Consider this: How could we feel *any* sense of insignificance, unless we were created *for* significance?

The very fact you have an undeniable sense there must be more—there must be something better, is evidence that such exists. I believe no one can find true personal fulfillment unless they discover truth and love in the reality of God.

Discovering truth is simple. But, there has been a concerted effort to distort the truth and keep you from the discovery of truth. If you believe you are created, that implies a Creator, which is contrary to the popular concept of *evolution*. If you are a product of the American educational system, you likely believe all that exists came from a great cosmic explosion, followed by the process of *evolution* and survival of the fittest. Evolution does not require a Creator—making humanity the highest evolved of all beings. We will explore evolution further in chapters two and three. If you are open-minded and apply basic logic and reason, you will be led to conclude the truth that God exists and, He created you in His image to live a life of supreme significance. You will learn all that is good and loving comes from the one true God because He *is* love.

Just as there has been a strategic effort to distort our understanding of truth, so there has been an intentional effort to prevent us from knowing God and His *multifaceted love*.

A popular rock group of the sixties and seventies, The Beatles, wrote and sang songs challenging us to imagine a better world—with one song claiming *all we need is love*. Considering all the perversities of wars, evil, and wickedness increasing in the world, that claim remains deeply compelling to the human soul. But, even thinking about what the Beatles sang, what “love” would resolve all the world’s problems? The resolution is God because *God is love—pure and holy love*.

The existence of God—His character, will, and intentions toward humanity—has been under attack for decades. The result? Many are deceived about God and don’t know Him or His truth.

With this book, and the others in this *Faith to Live By* series, I ask you to reconsider all you believe and the reasons for your beliefs. If you don’t, you could easily be deceived and not be aware of the deception. I realize reexamination takes courage and is quite uncomfortable. But, are you willing to suffer the *eternal* consequences for not examining what you believe?

I will provide you with reasonable arguments to prove truth is not relative, but absolute. I will also provide evidence proving the *Bible*, also

referred to as *God's Word*, is unique in contrast to all other documents of religious authority. With just these two matters of truth and the Bible settled, we can then glean from the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, the truth about God. His love for you, your tremendous personal worth, your unique purpose, and how you can find meaning and true personal fulfillment in life will be unfolded.

This book is written to help you open your mind and to reconsider much of what you've been taught is true. I've written to lead you to better discover the overwhelming and *transformational* love of God—an iron-clad, secure love that allows you to realize your tremendous value and to step into your unique God-given, significant, life's purpose. Imagine the impact on the world if more people lived feeling and demonstrating God's transforming love!

There are many things that deeply grieve me. But the one thing that burdens my heart the most is the tremendous deception that prevents people from embracing all that is good—from embracing all that God wants them to enjoy—beginning and ending with His love.

I expect some will question what I mean by *God*. After all, overwhelmingly popular today is the claim that all roads lead to the same god and heaven. I addressed that deception in the first book in this series, *Examine Your Faith! Finding Truth in a World of Lies*. If you hold to the belief that all religions are equal and all lead to the same God, I ask you to intentionally reconsider. Why do you believe what you believe? What basis, what evidence do you have to support your belief? What if you are wrong? What if you are deceived? I've already proven that universally, we all want to live lives based on truth and what is good. I state again, "Unless we examine our beliefs, we can easily be deceived and not know that we are."

When I refer to *God* in the context of this book, I refer to the God of the Judeo-Christian faith, whose existence, in contrast to all other so-called gods, is distinctly unique.

My *Faith to Live By* book series is written to counter the deception rampant in society today, that all gods are equal so you can discover the same life-giving truth I've been blessed to find—the truth that will set you

free and allow you to settle all the questions—all the anxieties of life—as you continue to grow in truth. Discovering and living in truth is not a one-time effort, but rather a process of discovery we must be intentional about every single day. Simply living in a world with competing claims, philosophies, and ideals can cause us to accept a matter as true when after a proper evaluation is proven to be false.

My first book, *Examine Your Faith! Finding Truth in a World of Lies*, is the foundation for the subsequent books. Book I provides arguments in support of truth, the Bible, the existence of God, and the unique life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The book also explores the five major world religions along with New Age philosophy so you can determine for yourself if all religions are equal and if Jesus was and is who He claimed to be. The first book explores *essential faith*—or saving faith.

In the second book, *Renew Your Hope! Remedy for Personal Breakthroughs*, I seek to help people learn how to apply their faith to *experience* the many benefits God has promised to those who believe—that is those who place their faith in Jesus. Book II also explains how faith in Jesus transforms us and allows access to His power to overcome any obstacle in life. The second book explores *effective faith*—or faith that can move mountains.

This third book, *Revive Your Life! Rest for Your Anxious Heart*, explores the character of God and how His love can transform the world one person at a time. This book is about *excellent faith*, which is faith motivated by holy and perfect love.

Godly love is the motivation that produces the greatest good. My earnest prayer is for you to discover the one true God—to discover His amazing love for *you* because, though His love, you will discover tremendous joy and profound personal significance. You will be wonderfully transformed, positively influenced and take your place among those who will help change the world for the better. Indeed, all we need is love—God’s love.

PART ONE

DISCOVERING LOVE

“So now faith, hope and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

1 Corinthians 13:13

CHAPTER ONE

The Realities of Love

As you learned from the Introduction, every person desires to base their life on truth. When I ask my audiences, “Who in this room wants to live your life on the basis of a lie,” no one ever raises their hand. This suggests that *universally* we prefer truth over deception.

Additionally, one of our greatest needs as human beings is to be loved. By being loved, we gain a sense of importance and significance. When another being chooses to love us, we know we are accepted, which gives us freedom to explore and grow in a loving and secure relationship.

When truth is pure, and love is unconditional, we have the optimal environment in which to become the very best we can be. In this atmosphere, we can mature and flourish and produce good from which we benefit—as do others through us.

In society, we have ample evidence of the many undesirable results that occur when truth or love are compromised or withheld. One example is the innocent children who suffer dreadful consequences in orphanages or foster homes where they are not adequately loved and may even be abused. There are many other examples in society where people suffer insufficient

truth or a distorted love that adversely impacts them and thus impacts society. Inner-city children who grow up in gang- and crime-promoting communities, well-educated adults who find themselves in an abusive relationship, those who feel the impact of addiction—all are examples of situations where truth and love have been compromised. The result is human suffering.

Because you are reading this book, you must be looking for some answers to help you settle matters where you feel unfulfilled. Perhaps as I once felt, you feel anxious and frustrated with your life. Yet, you can't help but believe there must be something more—something better—available. The very fact you can't deny the sense that an answer for your unrest must exist is God at work in your life. He wants you to find the better way. He wants the best for you. In fact, He is continually at work in your life to help you discover the truth and the love you need to flourish.

We all want to live in truth, and we all need to be loved. Truth and love are two sides of the same “coin,” and that coin is God. As we seek to increase our knowledge of the truth, we will increase our knowledge of God, and therefore, of love. God *is* love.

My first book in this series, *Examine Your Faith! Finding Truth in a World of Lies*, explored the five major world religions and New Age philosophy so we could conclude which religion was true. My quest was to determine which religious system was based on truth so my faith and my eternal life would not be established on faulty beliefs.

My clear and confident conclusion from that research is that *Christianity* is the one true religion based on truth and, therefore, the God of the *Christian* faith is the one true God. Christianity is the religious faith that allows people to be rightly related to God, through faith in the historical person *Jesus*, also known as *Christ* or *the Christ*. More information about the Christian faith will be provided throughout this book.

I realize you may not have read that book and you may not be ready to come to that same conclusion. With that in mind, I have provided abbreviated content from Book I in these first few chapters to help you see how I arrived at various conclusions. All the assertions I make about God are based on what we can know about the God of Christianity.

Whatever you have thought about God up to this point must be set aside. Your task, in order to find what you are searching for, is to reexamine all that you believe about religion, about God, about yourself, about your origin, and about your future. You need to be willing to reconsider all you've believed about truth and love, about good and evil, and about faith and religion. I won't try to persuade you to believe what I have come to believe. Rather, I will ask you to consider the facts as I present them to see if my conclusions are something you want to embrace or not. The choice is yours.

I hope to convince you of three things in this first chapter: 1.) God exists, 2.) All truth comes from God, and 3.) God is love.

God's Love Is Unlike Human Love

I have already taken the journey of examination upon which you are embarking. I confidently believe not only does God exist, but He is a good and loving God who is consistently at work to draw you unto Himself. God wants you to know you are made in His image by and for Him, and you have great significance and value to Him. He wants you to personally know Him and to experientially live in His love.

The kind of love that emanates from God is very different than human love. God's love is constant, unchanging, eternal, and selfless. God's love is *gift* love, whereas human love is *need* love. We need to be loved, and God is the source of the very love we need. God's love satisfies the human soul in

ways that human love simply cannot. Human love has every potential of disappointing us. God's love never will.

Every person must decide if God exists or not. We will start by considering the logic and reason behind the arguments for the existence of God. Then we'll explore the character, will and intentions of God, which you will see are entirely influenced by His extravagant love for you. The hope for your life, and the discovery of your abundant worth and the disclosure of your eternal purpose, begins with considering the existence of God.

Considering the Existence and Character of God

Many believe all that exists comes from a cosmic explosion followed by the process of evolution (which I explore further in chapter three). Others believe the intricate order of creation strongly suggests intelligent design and, therefore an Intelligent Designer.

Neither evolution nor God can be scientifically proven. To prove a matter scientifically requires direct observation and measurement. The scientific method of proof requires theories be verifiable by *physical* experiment. On that basis, the existence of God, for which evidence cannot be tested, is incompatible with science. However, science is not the only method available to determine a matter. *Philosophical* proofs often provide accurate conclusions.

In the first part of his *Summa Theologica*, written in 1265–1274 AD, Thomas Aquinas, an immensely influential philosopher and theologian, provided five ways to help prove the existence of God. The *Summa* is one of the classics of the history of philosophy and one of the most influential works of Western literature. The five arguments Aquinas presented are

Motion, Efficient Causes, Possibility and Necessity, Graduation of Being, and Design.

Additionally, the argument for the existence of God is found based on the reality of Moral Law. Perhaps no one has better expressed his exploration concerning the existence and character of God through consideration of Moral Law than author, essayist, former atheist, and Christian apologist, C. S. Lewis:

My argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust? If the whole show was bad and senseless from A to Z, so to speak, why did I, who was supposed to be part of the show, find myself in such a violent reaction against it?

... Of course, I could have given up my idea of justice by saying it was nothing but a private idea of my own. But if I did that, then my argument against God collapsed too—for the argument depended on saying the world was really unjust, not simply that it did not happen to please my fancies. Thus, in the very act of trying to prove that God did not exist—in other words, that the whole of reality was senseless—I found I was forced to assume that one part of reality—namely my idea of justice—was full of sense. If the whole universe has no meaning, we should never have found out that it has no meaning: just as, if there were no light in the universe and therefore no creatures with eyes, we should never have known it was dark. Dark would be without meaning.¹

Many scholars have made excellent arguments to demonstrate that all of creation is the result of intelligent design, which then requires an Intelligent Designer. Intelligent design is supported by a vast body of evidence ranging from physics and cosmology to biochemistry to animal biology to systems biology to epigenetics and paleontology.

GotQuestions.org, an online ministry of dedicated volunteers, helps people in their understanding of God, Scripture, *salvation*, and other spiritual topics. Salvation is the gift God gives to those who place their faith in Jesus. Salvation will be explained more thoroughly in other areas of this book. GotQuestions.org published an article in response to the question: “What is the best evidence/argument for intelligent design?” The article stated:

Modern scientific insight has revealed startling evidence for intelligent design from various disciplines, from biology to astronomy, from physics to cosmology.²

Then they provide supporting evidence for each of the four disciplines listed. Rather than summarize their supporting data here, I encourage you to visit their website for the article: <https://gotquestions.org/evidence-intelligent-design.html>

Bob Dutko, Christian apologist and a nationally syndicated radio talk show host, has engaged in numerous debates with atheists concerning the existence of God. I appreciate his thoroughly honest approach to the subject. When I asked Bob how he sets up the dialog, he shared:

Technically, I cannot prove the existence of God any more than an atheist can prove that universes can create themselves. But what I can provide is the scientific law and the laws of physics that force me to conclude a belief in God is the only scientifically plausible conclusion. In the

same way, I cannot prove that George Washington was President of the United States, but I can present enough historical evidence to render illogical rejecting the belief that he was, in fact, President.

Specific to the existence of God, Bob explores the following proofs in depth. I list them here and recommend you visit his site to learn about these proofs.

1. First Law of Thermodynamics
2. Second Law of Thermodynamics
3. The Scientific Impossibility of Abiogenesis
4. The Complete Lack of Scientifically Plausible Alternatives
5. Basic Logic, Common Sense, Intellectual Reasoning
6. Mathematical Impossibilities for the Complexity of Life
7. Confirmations of Scientific Evidence within the Bible
8. Non-physical Human Characteristics
9. Existence of the Supernatural
10. Jesus, Life, Miracles, Death and Resurrection
11. Why So Many Scientists Reject Belief in God

Bob has a collection of teachings under his brand “Top Ten Proofs.” I especially appreciate how he explains the topics in laymen’s terms, wanting people to grasp the truths so that they can live a confident faith life. Visit Bob’s website at <http://www.toptenproofs.com>.

Not only can we discover a wealth of logically compelling reasons to know that God exists, but we learn from this evidence He is a personal God. He is a God who desires to engage with us and to have us engage with Him. Beyond mere head knowledge of His existence, God desires we enter into a personal relationship with Him, spirit to Spirit.

One God—Many Roads?

As we've considered the existence of God, let's turn our consideration to the claim all roads lead to the same God and heaven. I addressed this considerably in *Examine Your Faith! Finding Truth in a World of Lies*. Following is a summary:

The effort to blend all religions into one, known as *syncretism*, is akin to attempting to force people to agree on fundamental matters where there can be no agreement. People who attempt to combine the tenets of different religious faiths are choosing a belief system of their own making, which is utterly unstable.

When you consider the distinctions of each of the five major world religions and New Age philosophy, you quickly realize there can be no harmonizing or blending of the different faiths without some serious compromise. Allah, the god worshiped in Islam, is believed by Muslims to be distinct from all other identified gods. The thousands of "gods" worshiped in Hinduism are diverse. The "god" of New Age philosophy is the self. In Buddhism, there is no "god" that is worshiped. The God of Judaism and Christianity is commonly believed to be the one true God among Jews and Christians. However, these differing beliefs still do not prove to us which deity is worthy of our faith.

If the distinctions made by the five major world religions are all accurate, then we must conclude the many roads lead to a god who is schizophrenic. A schizophrenic god offers no hope to anyone.

We need to test each religion to determine which makes the most logical sense to believe. Faith in something is not, as many think, blind faith devoid of any proof. Only a person who is not thinking would place his or her faith in something or someone without sufficient evidence of its worth.

The best way to discover the truth about God, in my opinion, is to compare the documents of religious authority to their oldest known manuscripts. If there are conflicts discovered by comparing the oldest known manuscript to the contemporary documents, we must scrutinize the discrepancies. If fault can be found within the “sacred writings,” then perhaps there is fault within the religious belief itself.

In chapter three, I provide evidence that supports the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, as the only document of religious authority that passes the test. With the Bible uniquely verified, the religious beliefs and the God identified therein become matters worthy of our consideration.

For now, just look around you. Consider the beauty of nature—the colors of a sunset, the magnificence and power of the ocean, the order and intricacy of the universe, and the utterly fascinating complexity of the human body. Could all that exists really have simply come together over billions of years through the process of evolution?

We should consider what the apostle Paul wrote concerning man’s ability to know God. “For his [God’s] invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they [all humanity] are without excuse [to know the one true God.] (Romans 1:20).

With at least some acknowledgment that God exists, now let’s consider His character.

God is a Trinity

God is defined in the *Bible* (substantiated later in this chapter and in chapter three) as *Triune* in nature. That is, He is three Persons in one. He is God the *Father*, God the *Son*, and God the *Holy Spirit*. Each is co-equal, yet a distinct Person, with a separate role in God’s interaction with all creation.

That God is a *Trinity* is exceedingly difficult if not impossible for the human mind to understand. While we are limited by our physical existence, God is not. God is spirit and infinitely more complex than we are. While the Bible clearly reveals the three Persons of God, Scripture also maintains there is only one God. The terms *tri* meaning three and *unity* meaning one, combined together form the word trinity. God is three Persons who are the same Deity but have differing roles.

The illustration of three forms of water can help us attempt to understand the Trinity. Water can be in a liquid form, a steam form or a frozen form but is still the same chemical substance. No illustration is perfect, but as you seek to grow in your knowledge of God, you'll come to embrace the Trinity and how God interacts with us as Father, as Son or Savior, and as Holy Spirit.

God is Love

The phrase *God is love* explicitly appears in the Bible only twice. Both times the three-word phrase appears as penned by the apostle John in 1 John 4:8 and 4:16. To truly comprehend what the statement means is not only key to understanding God but is essential to becoming willing to place your faith in God. Those who misunderstand the character of God will not be attracted to Him. Being rightly convinced that God is love allows us to willingly enter into a *holy*, loving relationship with Him with access to all the blessings and benefits He offers in this life and in eternal life. A holy relationship with God is *sacred* and is characterized by deeply reverent dedication and unadulterated devotion.

If your view of God is that He is harsh, judgmental, and unloving, keeping your distance would make sense. Unfortunately, that's how many people see God, and this incorrect understanding prevents many people

from experiencing all the tremendous benefits of being rightly related to God.

The love God offers is unlike the love we humans offer. God's love is pure, holy, and constantly reliable. The love God offers is unconditional, which means there is nothing you can do to earn more of God's love, and there's nothing you can do to diminish God's love. God's love is bestowed upon you beyond time itself. God's love reaches into the deep recesses of eternity past and is stretched all the way forward into eternity future. The Bible states in Ephesians 1:4-6 "even as he chose us *in him* before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love, he predestined us for adoption as sons through *Jesus Christ*, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the *Beloved*" (emphasis added).

The term *in him* means the Father knows those who will believe in and receive Jesus as their personal Savior. Those who choose to believe in God are predestined to be adopted into God's family through faith in Jesus (the Beloved in this verse). We are united to God, who is love, when we have repented of our sins and have accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. His Holy Spirit is then given to us as the guarantor of our adoption. God's love for you existed before you were ever conceived and will continue for all eternity.

God the Son is known primarily as Jesus, Christ, Jesus Christ, or Jesus the Christ.

The word *Christ* comes from the Greek word *Christianos*, meaning "follower of Christ," and also comes from *Christos*, meaning "anointed one" with an adjectival ending borrowed from Latin to denote adhering to, or even belonging to. So, a *Christian* is one who follows Christ. The term *believer* is also often used when referring to a Christian. Jesus is also referred to as the Son of God and the Son of Man. Much more about the historical

person, Jesus, will be discussed in chapter four. As you continue reading, you will come to clearly see how God personally demonstrated His love for you through Jesus.

While the fact God's love precedes our existence is absolutely true, if we want to enter into His love *fully*, we need to respond to the *terms* of the offer. While God's love is unconditional, most of His promises aren't. If we want to enjoy the benefits of His stated promises, we need to position our self as He instructs, then we can enjoy the full benefit of the particular promise.

Please don't confuse God's terms for receiving a promise with His unconditional love. Most often, human love is conditional, meaning we love others so long as certain conditions are satisfied. What conditions we each want to be satisfied to continue to extend our love vary from person to person. People claim to "fall out of love" on the basis of some condition that no longer is satisfied. Not so with God. His love is unconditional.

However, many of His promises require specific action on our part to position ourselves to receive the promise. As an example, if we want to fully enjoy God's love we need to *place our faith in Jesus*. Faith in Jesus positions us in a right standing or *relationship* with God. From that point, we are in a position to satisfy specific terms to receive specific promises—not a difficult or exasperating journey. God is very clear—if you do this, I will do that. God wants His people to work in partnership with Him to receive His good and perfect gifts or promises. Knowing God is not about religion, but is entirely about the relationship.

The wisdom and beauty in God's manner of fulfilling promises bring us along in the process of receiving a greater revelation of truth, love, and holiness. And God is actively at work within us to help us do His good will because He wants us to have an overflowing abundance of His gifts and promises.

Discovering Truth

Just as God's existence and character have been woefully misunderstood for centuries, so has truth itself been misunderstood. Truth is the foundation each of us wants for our life, so let's examine truth next.

In the first book of this *Faith to Live By* series, I explored the topic of truth vs. *relativism* in reasonable detail. Here is a short consideration.

Relativism is the view that truth is personal—that what is true for me is my truth and what is true for you is your truth, even if the two are at odds.

Cultural relativism is the view that all beliefs, customs, and ethics are relative to the individual within their own social and cultural context. What is considered “right” and “wrong” are culture-specific. No universal standard of morality exists, and no one has the right to judge another society's customs. Since truth is not objective, there can be no objective standard which applies to all cultures. *Ethical relativism*, closely related to cultural relativism, views truth as variable and not absolute. What constitutes right and wrong is determined solely by the individual or society.

Relativism is the reason for the increasing acceptance of differing cultural expressions even when the expression results in harm.

In January 2002, when President Bush referred to terrorist nations as an “axis of evil,” the cultural relativists were mortified. That any society would call another society “evil” is anathema to the relativist. The current movement to “understand” radical Islam “rather than to fight it” is a sign that relativism is making gains. The cultural relativist believes Westerners should not impose their ideas on the Islamic world, including the idea that the suicide bombing of civilians is evil. Islamic belief in the necessity of jihad is

just as valid as any belief in Western civilization, the relativists assert, and America is as much to blame for the attacks of 9/11 as are the terrorists.³

Unfortunately, many people have accepted the concept of celebrating diversity to the extreme. Even though relativism claims there is no universal standard for truth or morals, in reality, there is. For most of the world, lying, cheating, stealing, slavery, rape, and murder, for example, are wrong and are not to be tolerated to protect both the common good of society and of individuals. The effects of relativism are chaos and destruction, whereas the effects of absolute truth are order and protection.

Those who believe truth is relative might say, “There is no such thing as absolute truth.” Well, that statement in itself *is* an absolute statement.

Any matter can be tested to determine if it is true by using all three of the following proof tests:

1. Truth always lines up with reality.
2. Only one thing can be true; all opposing matters are false.
3. The truth is universal.

Simply claiming a matter to be true, does not make it so. The person making a claim has the responsibility to prove the claim. Countless numbers of people today are deceived, and, true to the nature of deception, they don’t know it. While universally we all want to live our lives on the basis of truth, unless we intentionally make an effort to examine what we believe, we could easily base our life on a lie. When lies and deception are the foundations of our beliefs, we are certain to suffer. When truth is our life’s foundation, we are in a position to enjoy the best life offers.

As instructed in the Bible, the Christian religion is to value people from all cultures recognizing and even celebrating the beauty in cultural

distinctions. However, harmful practices of any people group are not to be tolerated. All the standards and morals in the Bible are established for our individual good and the good of societies.

With that in mind, let's next consider the authority of the Bible, which is not accepted by *liberal theology*, (liberal theology will be explored in chapter two).

The Test of Scriptures

There are generations of people who think the Bible (also referred to as *The Scriptures or Scripture*) is no different from any other so-called document of religious authority. They believe the Bible is to be equally respected along with the Koran, the Tripitaka, the writings of Buddha, and so on. And there are those who believe the Bible is nothing more than a product of various religious cultures and peoples who recorded their experiences with God *as they imagined Him to be*. Many conclude the Bible is not at all relevant for today. For this reason, in *Examine Your Faith! Finding Truth in a World of Lies*, I provided verifiable information with historical, archeological, and extra-biblical evidence, sufficiently proving the Bible to be *divinely inspired* and, therefore, unique in contrast to all other so-called documents of religious authority. Next, I offer just a cursory overview from *Examine Your Faith! Finding Truth in a World of Lies*.

One of the most sensational archeological discoveries of our age is the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. These scrolls and fragments of scrolls, also called manuscripts, written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, provide the oldest manuscript of the Old Testament, predating the previously oldest known manuscripts by over *1000 years*. This discovery pushes the date of the oldest known manuscripts of the Bible to the second century BC.

The Dead Sea Scrolls provide objective, verifiable evidence that proves the Bible we have today is substantively unchanged as compared to the scrolls. If the Bible has remained unchanged for more than two-thousand years, then we can easily believe the Scriptures have remained unchanged since originally penned.

Consider too, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments that comprise the Protestant Bible were penned by forty different authors over a span of approximately fifteen hundred years, in three different languages and covering hundreds of subjects. Yet, amazingly, with such a vast compilation and without any personal collaboration, there is no conflict of information. From the Old Testament through the New Testament there is one constant theme—God’s redemption of mankind.

A genuine, open-minded approach to learning about the Bible reveals the Scriptures could not be written by men without being divinely inspired. How else can you justify the veracity? The Bible is the divine revelation of God, penned by men as a means for God to communicate and connect with humanity. This divinely inspired document reveals the truth about God and His transforming love. The Bible also reveals His grand plan to redeem the entire world—ridding the world of sickness, death, destruction, and evil.

If we accept the huge amount of historical, archeological, scientific, and other evidence that demonstrates the reliability of the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, then we can confidently study these Scriptures to learn about God, His character, will, and intentions toward humanity.

God’s gift of His written Word is another demonstration of His love for us. We have documentation of His intervention in humanity that reveals His faithful, loving character, as well as His retribution when we disobey His will. God’s will for us is always with our best interest in mind. Just as earthly parents punish their children for their own good, God does the

same with us. We have His promises recorded, to pore over, to reassure us, and to stand on to experience His goodness. We can grow in our knowledge of God and His love by studying His Word, the Holy Bible.

God's Love is Our Joy

Richard L. Strauss, in his article *God is Love*, published in the “Joy of Knowing God” series, wrote:

To know Him [God] is to find release from the crippling effects of feeling unloved. Love is one of the warmest words in the English language, and that God is love is one of the most sublime, uplifting and reassuring truths known to mankind. Love is His nature. It is not merely a friendly attitude He projects. It is the essence of His being. He is always going to act toward us in love because He cannot do otherwise. Love is His way. No one attribute of God is any more important than any other, and all His attributes are expressed in conjunction with each other. Yet some believe that love may be the most powerful motivating force in all of God's being. It deeply affects everything else God is and all that He does. Knowing God's love could well be the believer's key to a well-balanced, satisfying life of peace, productivity, and power.⁴

To ever exhaust the subject of God's love would be impossible for us. Yet, our best interest is served by ever learning more and more. Seven characteristics of God's love are:

1. God's Love is Self-Giving—The opposite of love is not hate; it's selfishness. Genuine love involves action that provides

expression in giving oneself for the benefit of another. Love, therefore, always demands at least one object. If love demands at least one object, then how did He express love before He created angels or humanity? This question takes us back to the reality that God is a Trinity. Love was demonstrated between the Persons of the Trinity from eternity past and on into eternity future. God is complete and sufficient in Himself. He does not need anything beyond Himself to express His nature. However, God chose to create angels and humanity to have even more opportunity to express Himself. From His love, God communes with us, gives of Himself to us, and bestows His very best on us for our benefit and blessing.

2. God's Love is Sacrificial—God's love motivates Him to give, even when what He gives costs Him dearly. There is no greater example of this than in the sacrifice of God the Son in the person of Jesus. John 3:16 makes this abundantly clear: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." God personally took on human form, willingly gave up His rightful place in heaven, for a time to suffer and die in our place, to pay the awful debt of sin that we owe but could not pay, and then rose again conquering sin and death forever. God proved His love conclusively and irrefutably through the sacrifice and resurrection of God the Son.
3. God's Love is Unconditional—While we were yet sinners, and at complete enmity with God, He loved us. God always loves us even when we don't respond to His love. "God so loved the world ..." does not mean the world as a group. Rather, His love is extended individual by individual. God's love for us

is what establishes our worth. The fact God Himself has chosen to love us is evidence enough that we are highly significant just as we are. But, oh, how much more world-impacting are we when we cooperate with God's plan for our life.

4. God's Love is Eternal—God Himself is infinite and, therefore, so is His love. The apostle Paul, attempting to explain this truth, wrote that God's love is a love that surpasses knowledge (Ephesians 3:19) meaning it's far greater than our limited minds can comprehend. Paul referred to the breadth, length, depth, and height of God's love to demonstrate His love is immeasurable.
5. God's Love is Holy—Since God Himself is holy, so is anything that emanates from Him. We must note that God's love being holy encourages holiness in the objects of His love. When we fall outside the parameters of His will, His love motivates Him to bring us back. Therefore, even His discipline of those He loves is a demonstration of His love.
6. God's Love is Comforting—In God's love, we are secure, safe, and nurtured. Through faith in Jesus, we belong to God. And if we belong to Him, we are His responsibility. That's not to imply we have no part in tending to our own needs. Rather, we need not fear anything in life when we are submitted to God's love and His ways.
7. God's Love is Life-Changing—I've heard the saying, "Hurting people hurt people," and I know from experience this is true. But those who discover God's love for them are transformed from the pain of this world, and they experience

the transforming power of God's love, allowing them to find healing, wholeness, and purpose that is otherwise non-existent.

In the next chapter, we'll explore how humanity has become deceived about a proper understanding of God and His love.

CHAPTER TWO

The Condition of our Culture

An inordinate number of people are deceived. How are people deceived? By simply accepting a matter to be true without verifying the facts. Could you be deceived? I believe anyone who does not regularly examine what they believe and why they believe it, could easily be deceived.

The first book in this *Faith to Live By* series was inspired when I read an article by *ABC News* about Americans being flexible about religious beliefs. The article revealed how a growing number of Americans are choosing different tenets of various religious faiths to make a “religion” of their own preference.¹ This makes the individual “god” and the supreme authority over his or her life, while utterly disregarding *irrefutable truth*—a concept explained later in this chapter. Our culture has become so confounded, no wonder people are restless.

When many people look to leadership, government, financial experts, and the like to solve the ills of society, the deception is fueled. The solution is not available in any world system. In fact, a sound argument can be made the increasing corruption of world-systems has brought us to the condition we’re in. In my lifetime, I have never seen a greater divide between people.

The ability to have rational conversations to quell differences is rare. More often, people resort to personal attacks, both verbal and physical. We are divided on nearly every level and “create camps” to fortify the divisions in our philosophies. I firmly believe the only solution is to increase the proper knowledge of God.

Philosopher Dr. Alice von Hildebrand advised the following:

Now let us abolish the terms “conservative” or “liberal,” the terms “left” and “right” which are secularistic. I suggest that we say from now on “those who have kept the sense of the supernatural and those who have lost it.” That is the great divide, that is the essence.²

Dr. von Hildebrand’s suggestion, in the context of her essay, refers to recognizing the supernatural reality of God and the personal and transforming relationship anyone who desires, can have with Him. She recognizes people not on the basis of their choice in politics, which is a world system. Rather, she suggests we recognize people based on their embrace or rejection of God.

Division of Two Worlds

Today in our world, we have a vast number of people who adhere to the *secular* point of view. That is, most people operate their lives on the basis there is no need for religion. Secularists claim there is no spiritual basis for life—no deity. This is a natural conclusion from the belief all that exists was created by an explosion (the *Big Bang Theory of Evolution*) and everything in creation today evolved from that great cosmic event. If this is true, then it makes complete sense people would conclude there is no significant purpose to life. Their philosophy is “We come from nothing, and our end

is nothing, so how we live our life in between is entirely up to us.” At the heart of this mindset is the desire to live as they please without being subject to any greater authority than themselves. The *theory* of evolution that has been *taught as fact* is but one major reason people feel hopeless and lacking in purpose.

I firmly believe, however, that people who hold to *secular humanism*, (belief that humanity is capable of morality and self-fulfillment without belief in God) experience a relentless, nagging sense something is missing.

The Search for More

Perhaps there has been no generation of people who have been so adversely impacted by liberalism and social engineering than the *millennial generation* (those born 1981-1996). The Pew Research Center published a report entitled “How Millennials Today Compare with their Grandparents 50 Years Ago.” In summary of the Millennials the report states:

The past five decades—spanning from the time when the *Silent generation* (today, mostly in their 70s and 80s) was entering adulthood, to the adulthood of today’s Millennials—have seen large shifts in U.S. society and culture. It has been a period during which Americans, especially Millennials, have become more detached from major institutions like political parties, religion, the military, and marriage. At the same time, the racial and ethnic makeup of the country has changed, college attainment has spiked, and women have greatly increased their participation in the nation’s workforce and their representation on college campuses.³

Millennials came of adult age during very tough times. In 2014, the millennial generation age range was 18-33. Millennials entered the workforce during the nation's Great Recession. Other generations certainly faced tough employment markets as they entered adulthood, such as the *boomers* (those born 1946-1964) did during the 1981-1982 recession. However, the economic and labor markets have been very slow in recovery following the deepest recession in decades. Many millennials are greatly discouraged with some suffering depression and hopelessness.

I personally understand the toll that under- and unemployment takes as my husband and I suffered for four years when our children were less than five years old. During those years, we lost virtually everything material, our health suffered as did our marriage, and we racked up a considerable debt. Even though the cause of our situation was beyond our control, the sense of failure we experienced was immense. But for millennials, there is an underlying pressure driving them to out-perform their parents, which adds to the angst they endure.

Melanie Curtin, a contributing writer for *Inc. Magazine*, polled over three-hundred millennials regarding the pressure to succeed and wrote her article "Why Millennials Should Stop Trying to Be Successful ... Immediately." She reports:

I got responses like: "I spent the past weekend in San Francisco, [the] epicenter of the Millennial overachiever. I was supposed to be on vacation. Instead, I developed an inordinate amount of stress over the fact that I have yet to start and go public with my own company."

It turns out Millennials do feel more pressure. 67 percent of them said they felt "extreme" pressure to succeed, compared to 40 percent of *Gen Xers* [those born 1965-1980] and 23 percent of Boomers. There was a

marked difference in the open-ended responses of Millennials, too—an overall mood of anxiety and self-reproach. The majority felt ... they hadn't done enough yet, and time was running out.

According to recent research from the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, the more time young adults spend on social media, the more likely they are to be depressed. In fact, study participants who checked social media the most frequently throughout the week were 2.7x more likely to experience depression.

Millennials came of age during the era of social media, and a large number of survey respondents pointed out the fact that social media was a trigger—seeing how well everyone else seemed to be doing often had them feel worse, and like they had to do more to catch up.⁴

Melanie explained for the millennials, it's not a matter of seeking recognition. Instead, it's a sense of shame—feeling that they haven't done enough with their life by age twenty-five.

In my observations, with the reality that millennials are a product of public education in the era when America largely reflected the secular humanistic worldview and the belief that all that exists came from a cosmic explosion, they have no awareness of anything greater than themselves. This naturally creates additional pressure for them to be the world's much-needed change agents.

The problems millennials suffer are not limited to America. Just over a year ago, I interviewed Louis and Janey DeMeo for a television program. Louis had been pastoring for over forty years at that time. He and Janey were missionaries, church planters, and Bible teachers in France for twenty-

two years. They taught at the Theological Institute they founded in Nîmes, France. They stated the millennials in France have an even more difficult time finding employment than those in America and that the depression and suicide rate among them is the one of the highest in the world. France ranks #47 of 170 countries in suicides, with an overall suicide rate of 12.3 per 100,000 people in 2012—higher than Germany or the United Kingdom.⁵

I admire the deep-seated desire to make a positive difference in this world for the good of society. Millennials often talk about wanting to be part of a revolution. However, it's my hope that my life-work will help them find the truth and the freedom truth brings. The weight of the world is not on their shoulders. God is continually offering a way for each of us to make a difference in this world for the better—the very God the millennials know precious little about.

Brene Brown speaks beautifully about the basic human desire of connecting to someone greater than ourselves. Brene is an American scholar, author, and public speaker, who is currently a research professor at the University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work. In a 2010 Ted Talk, she shared:

I believe that we long to be connected to each other, to know and be known. There is something more for me, however. I also believe that we are hard-wired to seek connection to the Divine and that deep within every one of us is the desire to be in relationship with something or someone greater than our human potential, something or someone bigger than ourselves.

Certainly, this would explain why people go to church or to synagogue or practice meditation in Sangha gatherings; but I think our desire is demonstrated in other ways as

well. I think this is also the reason we make art, write poetry, and seek beauty in creation. We want to be in relationship with other humans, with animals, with nature; but I also think we are in search of that relationship with the Divine.⁶

Stop for a moment and ponder what Lynne Hinton wrote—very specifically as her words apply to you. Are you satisfied with life? Do you have deep satisfaction and comfort in your relationships with other people? Do you have faith in something bigger than yourself? If not, or if you are not fully convinced there is anything greater than yourself, *would you like*, in your heart of hearts, there to be a loving Deity who is deeply concerned with every aspect of your life?

Of the many different religious faiths, only the God of the Judeo-Christian faith can be described as a loving Deity, who is deeply concerned with every aspect of your life. There is far more we can explore regarding getting to know God, all of which is exceedingly appealing to the *unbiased* human soul. If more people rightly knew *about* God, they would embrace Him without hesitation. Unfortunately, the enemy of God—the *devil* or *Satan*—has prevented many from knowing the truth about God by twisting the truth and causing great numbers of people to base their life on lies.

I lived the first nearly thirty years of my life deceived and unaware of the deception. Not until I encountered a crisis that challenged everything I'd ever believed did I realize my life was based on lies. My religious faith and worldview were not based on reliable truth. As a result, the crisis I suffered obliterated my beliefs leaving me with no clear direction to navigate myself out of the devastation. This blindsiding crisis, however, caused me to finally realize the faulty foundation of my life. With that much knowledge, I was then able to start to rebuild my life's foundation. You don't have to suffer a

devastating crisis to ensure your life is based on truth. Instead, it's my hope you will find the confident hope and absolute certainty you need within the pages of this book.

Humanism's Impact on Culture

In my lifetime in America, I have seen a major cultural shift from most people believing in the existence of God, and having respect for and acceptance of the Bible with its instructions for life to the nearly complete rejection of all these truths and values.

How has our world become so radically changed? The changes started with deception and continue with deception. There has certainly been a mass ebb and flow of societal norms and cultures since the beginning of time. But I trace our current cultural condition to the extended period known as *the Enlightenment*. Beginning with the period known as the *French Enlightenment* (in the eighteenth century) with the emphasis on the primacy of human reason, the truth about God, about humanity, and about *truth itself* became corrupted. By emphasizing reason and logic from the human perspective, devoid of any “God” perspective, we have skewed a right understanding of truth, and as a result, vast numbers of people are living with deceptions. While the period of Enlightenment impacted many aspects of our culture, perhaps none has been more severely impacted than religious faith.

The French period of Enlightenment gave birth to the German period, which directly impacted religious faith—specifically what became known as *Protestant Liberalism*. Protestant Liberalism is defined as follows:

Theological liberalism, sometimes known as *Protestant Liberalism*, is a theological movement rooted in the early 19th century German Enlightenment, notably in the

philosophy of Immanuel Kant and the religious views of Friedrich Schleiermacher. It is an attempt to incorporate modern thinking and developments, especially in the sciences, into the Christian faith. Liberalism tends to emphasize ethics over doctrine and experience over Scriptural authority. While essentially a 19th-century movement, theological liberalism came to dominate the American mainline churches in the early 20th century. Liberal Christian scholars embraced and encouraged the higher biblical criticism of modern biblical scholarship [encouraged people to reject the authority of the Bible].

Protestant liberal thought in its most traditional incarnations emphasized the universal Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, the infinite value of the human soul, the example of Jesus, and the establishment of the moral-ethical Kingdom of God on Earth. It has often been relativistic, pluralistic, and non-doctrinal.

Liberalism birthed other movements with varying emphases. Among these movements have been the Social Gospel, Liberation Theology, Process Theology, Theological Feminism, and the Jesus Seminar. One product of these movements is the heretical Myth of Christian Origins which denies the divinity of Christ and the authority of Scripture.⁷

How the Church Became Irrelevant

Liberal Christian teaching is considered by most to be not Christian at all. Rather, human reasoning is emphasized and regarded as the final

authority. Science is considered as all-knowing and the Bible as an ancient, fable-laden document that is no longer relevant. “Liberalism’s disregard for the church’s long-standing claim that Scripture is divinely inspired and authoritative has left its adherents with authority residing only in their own minds, and with understandings of what is acceptable that are mere echoes of secular values.”⁸

Protestant Liberalism has significant influence. Its underlying theological position is held by most of the leadership and professors in the theological seminaries of several mainline denominations in the United States (the Episcopal Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the United Methodist Church, the American Baptist Convention, the Presbyterian Church-USA, and the United Church of Christ), though all these denominations still have some conservative evangelical congregations, teachers and people within them as well. In addition, Protestant Liberalism is the most common viewpoint in campus ministry offices in secular universities, and also among the professors who teach the Bible in religion departments of those universities. (Campus para-church ministries, however, tend to be more in line with evangelical Protestantism.)⁹

When human reason replaces divine revelation, when cultural relativism replaces absolute truth, and when human optimism replaces divine salvation, what we have is humanity seeking to determine what is right and what is wrong, and seeking to claim what is truth and what is error. These ideas are nothing new, although far more rampant in our postmodern culture than any other time in history. And this reality is preventing

countless numbers of people from discovering the truth about God—who personifies the very love we need to discover our true value and life’s purpose.

Man’s Innate Desire for God

There is an often used quote ascribed to Blaise Pascal: “There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every person, and it can never be filled by any created thing. It can only be filled by God, made known through Jesus Christ.” (The person *Jesus Christ* is explained in chapters one and four.) This quote is a condensed version of Pascal’s actual statement:

What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but that there was once in man a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace?

This he tries in vain to fill with everything around him, seeking in things that are not there the help he cannot find in those that are, though none can help, since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words by God Himself.¹⁰

Blaise Pascal, born 1623, was a French mathematician, physicist, and religious philosopher, who along with Pierre de Fermat, laid the foundation for the modern theory of probabilities. In the 1650s, *Les Provinciales* was published in a theological work that turned out to be a groundbreaking series of letters emphasizing *original sin*, *human depravity*, the necessity of *divine grace*, and *predestination*. Pascal is also widely known for his body of notes posthumously released as the *Pensées*, which defended his Christian faith. Pascal died in Paris on August 19, 1662.

The concept that humanity was created by God with a desire to personally know Him is supported throughout the entire Bible.

The Innate Desire to Belong

Wanting to be part of something—the need to belong—is born out in *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*, a theory in *psychology* proposed by Abraham Maslow in his 1943 paper, “A Theory of Human Motivation” in *Psychological Review*. Maslow's theory is comprised of a five-tier model of human needs, often depicted as hierarchical levels in the shape of a pyramid. Maslow's study was that of learning what motivates people. His theories parallel many other theories of human-development psychology. Moving from the base of the pyramid to the top, the terms for the discoveries Maslow observed are, “physiological,” “safety,” “belongingness and love,” “esteem,” and “self-actualization.”¹¹

The top three tiers are of special significance for this book—belongingness love, esteem, and self-actualization. If Maslow's theory is correct, then we all desire to belong and be loved, to be esteemed, and to enjoy the realization or fulfillment of our talents and potentialities (self-actualization). I don't see these desires being satisfied in even the slightest degree with the belief that all creation has come from a cosmic event followed by evolution and the survival of the fittest. If all of creation, including humanity, is the result of a random explosion, then there is no basis for virtues such as heroism, selflessness, human kindness, or morality of any kind—there is no origin for any expression of love.

Contributors to Wikipedia provide additional insight:

Belongingness is the human emotional need to be an accepted member of a group. Whether it is family, friends, co-workers, a religion, or something else, people tend to

have an ‘inherent’ desire to belong and be an important part of something greater than themselves. This implies a relationship that is greater than simple acquaintance or familiarity. The need to belong is the need to give, and receive attention to, and from, others.

Belonging is a strong and inevitable feeling that exists in human nature. To belong or not to belong can occur due to choices of one's self, or the choices of others. Not everyone has the same life and interests, hence not everyone belongs to the same thing or person. Without belonging, one cannot identify themselves as clearly, thus having difficulties communicating with and relating to their surroundings.

Roy Baumeister and Mark Leary argue that belongingness is such a fundamental human motivation that we feel severe consequences of not belonging. If it wasn't so fundamental, then lack of belonging wouldn't have such dire consequences on us. This desire is so universal that the need to belong is found across all cultures and different types of people.¹²

Interpreting Our Longings

Why would we desire to belong, unless we were created to function in community? Why would any of us feel unloved, unless we were created to experience love? How can anyone of us feel a sense of insignificance, unless we were created with a desire to be significant? The fact we can be unsettled and anxious with a desire for meaning and purpose in life is

evidence our existence is not the result of a random beginning, but rather an intentional beginning.

The desire to find God and to belong and be loved are, in my considered opinion, two more attestations to the fact that humanity was intentionally created, and is not a result of some cosmic explosion.

I think of the strong allure of gang membership for many inner-city kids. They are simply seeking to have some basic needs met that are otherwise not being satisfied. I spoke before the City Council once on behalf of my church. We had applied for a permit to build a new sanctuary and were being met with opposition. Having come from a law enforcement family, I sought to get input from a former Chief of Police, who is like an uncle to me. I was looking for statistics and such to substantiate my argument. But, by quoting this former Police Chief to the City Council, I made my point. He said, “As a retired law enforcement officer who has seen a lot of senseless violence, I would personally encourage not only the expansion of this church but of all churches. Because if the church doesn’t get stray people first, the police surely will.”

Could it be that these desires—to belong, to be loved and to be significant—are driving forces that cause people to do many things that result in harm? For example, sexual deviancy, drug addictions, pornography, prostitution, et al. How many people have fallen into these horrendous realities out of a deep sense of needing their innate desires to be loved and to belong fulfilled?

If you are one who has dabbled in lifestyles or behaviors that have left you still feeling unfulfilled or have made your life worse, you still have another choice. You still have hope. My belief is the desires to belong, to be loved and to be significant are evidence that we are created by God in His image for His created purpose. And unless we are functioning according to our created purpose, we have no hope of finding true, personal fulfillment.

Social Movements and Culture Shifts

I've seen many social and political movements in my lifetime. I've also seen many religious movements that seem to be a response to the social and cultural unrest. When I was young during the early 1960s and 1970s, there was the counter-culture Hippie movement; the anti-discrimination movement led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; and the Jesus movement. Clearly, for all these to arise around the same time, there had to have been a considerable amount of pent-up unrest and dissatisfaction with life on many levels. I think that's like what we see now in America.

With the Presidential election of November 2016, we saw a tremendous shift from what the media, at least, expected. While the shift has political implications, we are also seeing trending religious implications. There is a great divide in America and heightened levels of anxiety and unrest for a variety of reasons.

However, within all this anxiety and unrest, I sense tremendous positive excitement. When people are satisfied or complacent, there is no desire for change. Only when things become sufficiently uncomfortable are people willing to act to bring change. Behind the response of the people today, we have an increasing awareness of God initiating His intervention in the lives of His people. What we are seeing is not a movement initiated by humanity, but an utterly planned strategic intervention of God to bring about the much-needed reform.

I believe the release of this book will coordinate with God's plans. This excites me for you, dear reader. Because I believe God is orchestrating situations and circumstances in every area of society—business, government, media, arts/entertainment, education, the family, and religion.

Not only in America, but in many other countries and cultures, there is a shifting taking place. I believe God is calling forth people from every

nation, to find their rightful place in relationship with Him. As I wrote in the Introduction, “Imagine the impact on the world if more people lived in God’s transforming love!”

I believe we are in one of the greatest seasons the world has ever known and we should be excited to be alive now. If greater numbers of people discover the truth about God, we will see droves of people running into God’s arms of love. However, we must be wise. There is an enemy of God who works overtime to try to prevent you and me from entering into God’s plan and promises. Just as any intelligence agency does, we must know our enemy. The next chapter is intended to better equip you to know our enemy and to be able to take hold of the victory that is already ours through Christ.

CHAPTER THREE

The Distortion of Truth

In our culture, God has been made to be whatever a person wants it to be in an effort to purge anything deemed uncomfortable or undesirable. This is entirely consistent with what I wrote in *Examine Your Faith! Finding Truth in a World of Lies* concerning people creating “religious beliefs” based on their own personal preferences.

As stated in the previous chapter, whole groups of people have rejected the church and the Bible either in its entirety or selectively, which is to reject the Word or “Life Manual” from the very God who created us and has repeatedly demonstrated His love for us.

Our culture’s claim to be enlightened and governed by rational thought is inspired by deception. In reality, the culture is governed by subjective personal feelings. Even our language has been altered. Rarely do you hear a person state, “I think.” More often we hear, “I feel.”

The reason for this is simple. Our desire is to be “god” of our own life, deciding what is true and false—what is right and wrong. When a person claims, “I feel,” there is no ability for anyone else to challenge them. We cannot challenge what a person *feels*. However, when a person claims, “I

think,” we can challenge them with the question, “On what basis or authority do you think as you do?” Then, the onus is on the person to substantiate their claim under the scrutiny of objective logic and reason.

Two of my highly esteemed mentors, C. S. Lewis and J. I. Packard, both bestselling authors and theologians, expressed how difficult the human effort of comprehending the claim that *God is love* actually is. Packard wrote, “St. John’s twice-repeated statement, “God is love” is one of the most tremendous utterances in the Bible—and also one of the most misunderstood. False ideas have grown up round it like a hedge of thorns, hiding its real meaning from view, and it is no small task cutting through this *tangle of mental undergrowth*” [emphasis added].¹

When our objective is to understand the truth, we need to approach the subject from the Truth-giver’s perspective. In our flawed, natural human condition (explained later in this chapter), we want to be the one who defines truth—the one who determines what truth or good is, and what is false or bad. This reality is a large reason for the tangle of mental undergrowth we need to cut through.

Misunderstanding the Love of God

D. A. Carson, research professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and author of *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God*, explains there are at least five reasons why the doctrine of God’s love is difficult. Those reasons are condensed here:

- 1) If people believe in God at all today, the overwhelming majority hold that this God—however he, she, or it may be understood—is a loving being...[T]his widely disseminated belief in the love of God is set with increasing frequency in some matrix other than biblical theology.

2) [W]e live in a culture in which many other and complementary truths about God are widely *dis*believed. I do not think that what the Bible says about the love of God can long survive at the forefront of our thinking if it is abstracted from the sovereignty of God, the holiness of God, the wrath of God, the providence of God, or the personhood of God—to mention only a few nonnegotiable elements of basic Christianity. The result, of course, is that the love of God in our culture has been purged of anything the culture finds uncomfortable. The love of God has been sanitized, democratized, and above all, sentimentalized. Today most people seem to have little difficulty believing in the love of God; they have far more difficulty believing in the justice of God, the wrath of God, and the non-contradictory truthfulness of an omniscient [all-knowing] God.

3) Because of remarkable shifts in the West's *epistemology* [the theory of knowledge/investigating justified belief from opinion], more and more people believe that the only heresy left is the view that there is no such thing as heresy. They hold that all religions are fundamentally the same and that therefore, it is not only rude but profoundly ignorant and old-fashioned to try to win someone to your beliefs since implicitly that is announcing that theirs is inferior.

4) In the cultural rush toward a sentimentalized, sometimes even non-theistic vision of the love of God, we *Christians* have ...been swept along [forgetting] that within *Christian confessionalism* [belief in the importance of full and unambiguous assent to the whole of Christian teaching],

the doctrine of the love of God poses its difficulties. Precisely how does one integrate what the Bible says about the love of God with what the Bible says about God's sovereignty, extending as it does even over the domain of evil? What does love mean in a Being whom at least some texts treat as impassible? How is God's love tied to justice?

5) [T]he doctrine of the love of God is sometimes portrayed within Christian circles as much easier and more obvious than it really is, and this is achieved by overlooking some of the distinctions the Bible itself introduces when it depicts the love of God.²

Let me comment on the five points D. A. Carson has made point by point.

- 1) Many desire God to be loving so *they* may benefit. They think God's love motivates Him to indulge their every desire, provide for them in abundance, and be available at their beck and call. This is a perversion of what Scriptures say about God and His love. This point of view makes the individual the object of God's worship, instead of the other way around.
- 2) We must understand God is love, but that is not all He is. His love motivates everything He does. What is at stake here is having our own idea of what love is. How many times have you heard a person say, "A loving God would never _____"? Such a statement is saying that "I have my own idea of what love is and anything outside that idea is not acceptable." This is a subtle form of idolatry that many people, even professing Christians, fall prey to.
- 3) There's a rapidly growing trend in America to consider those who believe in God of the Bible as utter buffoons. In this culture of

tolerance, everything is tolerated except the tenets of the Christian faith. The sad truth is this cultural influence has adversely impacted the Christian's willingness to witness effectively, leaving even more people deceived.

- 4) The doctrine of God's love is difficult. Proverbs 25:2 states: "It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out." Searching to learn more about God is certain to lead you to discover the answers to all your life questions and find the personal fulfillment you desire. Unfortunately, most people think they are enlightened and already have the truth, so they don't bother to consider they might be wrong.
- 5) The love of God must never be reduced to and understood from the human perspective. Rather, we need to understand the love of God from the Divine perspective. Scriptures challenge us to love our neighbor and even our enemies with Godly love. The only way we can do that is if we have entered God's love and allow His love to flow from us. Then we will see a better world emerge.

In short, the most energetic and destructive cultural tide is *postmodernism*. The definition is "a late-20th-century style and concept in the arts, architecture, and criticism that represents a departure from modernism and has at its heart a general distrust of grand theories and ideologies."

In other words, the criticism and distrust of grand theories and ideologies that began with the French Enlightenment of the 18th century have, by this current point in time, completely obscured the truth leaving many in the position of living their lives—*their eternal lives*—on the basis of lies.

Postmodernism has resulted in highly sentimental, *syncretistic* (the attempt to blend various religious beliefs), and often *pluralistic* (multiple, even

conflicting views about the love of God) viewpoints with no other authority base than postmodern *epistemology*, (the philosophical theory of knowledge) itself.

Is there any wonder growing numbers of people are dissatisfied, unfulfilled, confused, and more? Let's look at the source of the deception.

The Origin of Deception

The Bible reveals the one true God is self-existent. Further, although singular, God is revealed in three distinct and co-equal Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For this reason, God is often referred to as the *Trinity*. While the use of the word Trinity is not specifically used in the Bible, the concept is evident from the beginning of the Old Testament through the end of the New Testament.

Everything that exists is created by God. Before God created humanity, He created angels. God and angels are spirit beings without any bodily form. Humankind is soul, spirit, and physical being. Our spirit is the eternal part of us that allows us to communicate with God. Our soul is the eternal, unique essence of who we are, comprised of our will, our mind, our emotions, and our distinct personality. Our bodies are temporal and simply house our spirit and soul while we dwell on earth.

God in His wisdom gave both angels and humankind free will. That is, God gave His created beings the choice to love and obey Him or not. If God had created either angels or humanity pre-programmed to love Him, that love would not be genuine, but an automated, involuntary response devoid of any real meaning.

Free will is necessary for a genuinely loving relationship. God knew by giving humanity freewill the possibility of them rejecting Him was real.

However, with foreknowledge, God determined what His response would be concerning the rejection by both angels and humans.

At some point in time, a high-ranking angel known as Lucifer (later referred to as Satan) rallied a rebellion with some of the heavenly angels. We're not told in Scripture exactly what happened, but we do know Lucifer and his followers, about one-third of the angelic hosts, were banished from heaven.³ Satan's only desire is to dethrone God and destroy all that is important to God. When God created the first man, Adam, and the first woman, Eve, Satan saw his new opportunity.

Genesis, chapters one through three, reveals the creation of all the natural world. The creation of mankind, fashioned in God's image to live in God's loving care, was the last of God's creation efforts. Adam and Eve were the first human beings ever created. Adam was created from the dust of the ground, and Eve was fashioned from Adam's side.

Satan and his evil minions observed all God did. And knowing God's desire to enjoy a holy, loving relationship with mankind, Satan devised a wicked scheme to bring about harm to God and humanity. He appeared to Eve as a beguiling serpent. By engaging her in conversation and raising questions that appealed to Eve's natural desire, he ultimately brought her to doubt God and His intentions for humanity. Enticed by Satan, Eve willfully chose to reject God and His ways in preference for her own ways. Adam observed his wife's willful action, and he too chose to reject God and His ways.

Both Adam and Eve knew God had forewarned them if they ate the forbidden fruit, they would die. And so, they did. The moment they disobeyed God, their bodies were put on a course of physical deterioration into eventual death. With that single choice, the eternal spirits God had placed in Adam and Eve were corrupted and forever severed from enjoying the kind of pure, loving relationship they had previously known with God.

Satan's scheme of destruction was successful, and every manner of wickedness, sickness, death and destruction entered creation. This scenario is often referred to as *the curse* that resulted in a *fallen world*.

As a result, every human being born since Adam and Eve has inherited this fallen nature with the same corrupt spirit, soul, and body. This means every human being is born at enmity with God. We are doomed to eternal destruction—separated from God and all that is good.

Rejecting God is sin. Sin is both a condition every human being has inherited from Adam and Eve and behavior we continue to employ in our natural-born state.

But God ...

God's love and faithfulness—His essential nature—is independent of mankind. His love and faithfulness are continually expressed without reservation and without condition. Even when the first couple willfully rejected Him, He faithfully continued to express nothing but love and faithfulness. God *is* love. Love is His very nature—His uncompromising essence. There is nothing we can do to earn more of God's love. There is nothing we can do to earn less of God's love. God's love is constant.

Even though we are born at enmity with God—even though we are born with spirits that are dead to God and His love for us—His love is not withheld or altered by any measure—an amazing reality.

God's love is perfect. The love God lavishes upon us is distinctly different from any type of love we humans can experience on our own. God's love is holy and pure. God's love is unconditional and willful, unlike the love we humans naturally express.

God inquired of Adam and Eve what they had done, not because He didn't know. Rather, because they needed to own their action. Because of

Adam and Eve's freewill choice and to be true to Himself, God had to pronounce judgment and assure justice. He had made clear beforehand the result of eating the forbidden fruit. God's forewarning was an effort to test them, which they rejected, and in so doing, they rejected God.

Judgment came in the form of Satan being cursed more than any other being. Judgment came in the form of proclamations of suffering for Adam and Eve and all future humans to be born. Because God fashioned Adam from the dust of the earth, the ground was cursed. Eve would be the mother of all human beings, so pain in childbearing was proclaimed over her. However, at the same time God pronounced judgment and consequences, He also promised He would provide a way of redemption. God promised He would provide a *Redeemer* or *Deliverer* to offer humanity a way of escape from the ravages of sin and death. God offered a way to be *saved* from the consequences of sin. God also proclaimed the future destruction of Satan (Genesis chapter three).

God's love for us is undaunted by our rejection of Him. God's love for us is not conditioned upon our response to Him. This is proven to the uttermost in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. In Scripture, we read: "For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still *sinners* Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6-8). I emphasized the word *sinners* as that is our natural condition. Sin is the act of rejecting God and His ways. A sinner is one who is not in a right relationship with God. Because we are all born of Adam and Eve, we have all inherited the same natural-born, spiritually dead condition. Therefore, we are all born sinners.

Willful Rejection

Doubting God, rejecting His love and authority and preferring instead our own way are all natural responses of humanity. As stated above, we are born enemies of God. We've inherited the condition. That the vast numbers of people living in this postmodern culture reject God, the truth of the Bible, the reality of heaven and hell, a literal devil, and the instructions for living the best possible life is no surprise then.

Gratefully, God revealed a way of escape—a way to be restored into a right relationship with Him. Not only has God revealed the way of escape from hell, which is eternal separation from God and all that is good, but He has also personally delivered on the promise of a Redeemer in the person of *Jesus*.

God created humanity to be loved by Him—to enjoy His extravagant love. He desires for all humanity to willfully love Him—not from some perverse egotistical basis, but rather for the beautiful experience of pure and holy, mutually given love.

I don't want you to be deceived, and you don't want to be deceived. So, please reconsider what you have rejected to make certain rejection is still your true and proper response. I hope that my books in this series will help you discover and live in life-giving, absolute truth.

The last three subjects in this chapter are explored in detail in my book, *Examine Your Faith! Finding Truth in a World of Lies*.

The Witness of the Bible

The Bible, discussed in chapter one, is itself a witness to God's existence, character, will, and intentions for humanity. The Bible is the unrefuted expressed written Word of God written by men inspired by God.

Both the Old and New Testaments highlight the origin and history of creation and humanity and God's loving intervention in humanity through approximately 68AD. They also contain tremendous numbers of prophecies predicting the end times and the final apprehension of evil, which is yet to occur. Replete in all the pages of Scripture runs the constant theme of God's love for humanity and His continual intervention to redeem us, to allow us to experience His unceasing love.

No original manuscripts exist for the Bible, nor do ancient manuscripts exist for the four other major world religions—Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. What we have are copies of copies. Many people have therefore understandably wondered if the Bible we have today is reliable.

Concerning the Old Testament, as mentioned in chapter one, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 provided the world with one of the most sensational discoveries of our age. More than one-third of the manuscripts and fragments of manuscripts are books of the Old Testament. These copies are older by at least *one thousand years* than the documents previously known as the oldest. This means the Bible has stronger manuscript support than any other work of classical history—including Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Caesar, and Tacitus. Scholars who have compared the earliest existing manuscripts with manuscripts written centuries later attest the Old Testament has remained virtually unaltered since the original writing.

In the case of the New Testament, we have exceptional evidence that what we have is effectively identical with the original documents. One test for accuracy is the gap in time from actual events to when the events were recorded. Compared to the documents of antiquity, the gap for the New Testament is relatively short. In the case of the writings of Euripides, the

gap is around 1,600 years. For Plato, the gap is about 1,300 years. And Demosthenes' writings have a gap as low as 1,200 years.

More impressive is the timing of the writings of the entirety of the New Testament. Most of the twenty-seven books were written within twenty-five to thirty years of Christ's resurrection. This means the men who wrote the accounts and letters that make up the New Testament were alive when the documents circulated, thereby open to dispute and correction from other eyewitnesses of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

As stated *Examine Your Faith! Finding Truth in a World of Lies*, "Numerous papyrus manuscripts have been found in Egypt in recent years, which confirm that the New Testament documents were already in existence in the first century."

Sir Frederic Kenyon, a former director and principal librarian of the British Museum, wrote:

The interval then between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant [existing] evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantively as they were written had now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established.⁴

The Bible has more objective, verifiable evidence supporting the books have not been substantively altered or amended. No other religion can make that claim regarding their document(s) of religious authority. This truth based on reality is an anchor to my faith. Clearly, as we read from Revelation 22:18-19 God will not tolerate any alteration of His Word. Jeremiah 1:12 reveals that God watches over His Word to perform it. That

the Dead Sea Scrolls were intact after many years is an indication God also protects His Word.

Heaven and Hell

Heaven and hell are two separate, eternal locations where spiritual beings reside. Heaven is distinctly for all God's holy beings, and hell is the domain of all ungodly beings. Human beings are created as body, soul, and spirit. Our soul and spirit are eternal and based on our freewill choice to repent and accept God's offer of redemption or not, we will live in heaven or hell once we depart from our bodies. God's desire is not that anyone should perish [suffer complete ruin or destruction] but that all should have eternal life, (see 2 Peter 3:9). God's method to accomplish that desire was fulfilled by Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity.

Heaven is described in the Bible as a place of beauty beyond human words where no pain or suffering exists. Hell is described as a place of endless torment.

We've already established God is love and, therefore, all He does is motivated by love. In truth, God's love is what requires Him to be just. God is the authority over all. God is both the Lawgiver and the Judge. He alone can judge in truth. God is also the One who executes the sentence. Motivated by His love for us, God has revealed what we must do to be restored into right relationship with Him and to live eternally in heaven. He has also made clear the plight of those who willfully reject Him and His ways.

The fact God has revealed He will ultimately judge all that is wicked and evil is yet another evidence of His goodness because it reveals He is just.

A Literal Devil

Earlier in this chapter under the section *The Origin of Deception*, I provided background about the origin of evil. Lucifer, a high-ranking angel in God's heavenly host, is the originator of all evil. Lucifer rejected God and His authority was banished from heaven and to the very end of time, he and his evil followers seek to destroy God and all that is good. In his fallen state, Lucifer is referred to as Satan.

We need to know Satan is not a power equal to God. If that were the case, all creation would suffer the effects of Satan and God in battle eternally. God has revealed His plan to put an end to all that is evil in the fullness of time when all humans planned by God have been born and given an opportunity for salvation. Make no mistake, the enemy of God is very real, responsible for all that is evil and the influencer of all those who remain in sin. But, thanks to Jesus, Satan is already a defeated foe.

The real and certain hope Jesus made available for anyone who wants hope is the topic of the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Offer of Hope

Although He had been willfully rejected, God not only promised a Redeemer for mankind because of His love, He personally *became* the Redeemer in the person of Jesus, the Son of God. God's desire was not for humanity to suffer or be eternally separated from Him and everything that is good. So, the *Triune Godhead*, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, conferred, and God the Son willingly gave up His rightful place in heaven for a time to take on human form. The plan Jesus fulfilled in His life, death, and resurrection is the promised *offer* of redemption, also referred to as salvation, for anyone who chooses to place their faith in Jesus as their personal Savior and Lord. God has made all humanity an offer of hope through Jesus. But, everyone must choose to receive salvation or not—to respond to God's call and offer of redemption.

Jesus is the clear and certain hope for all creation. The promise God made thousands of years ago was fulfilled in the unique person of Jesus.

God made a promise to all humanity beginning with the first man, Adam, and the first woman, Eve, to provide a way of redemption—a way of escaping our estrangement from God and our eternal destiny in hell. All

who believed in this promise and looked forward to the promise being fulfilled—believing God for His word—received the promise by faith. All who believe the promise looking back to its fulfillment in Christ, receive the promise by faith. To be redeemed and restored is simply a matter of faith, believing God for His word—His promise. His promise to us living in the New Testament time is to believe God for His promise fulfilled in the person of Jesus.

The promise fulfilled in Jesus is the single greatest demonstration of love the world has ever known.

God has completely provided the offer of hope for anyone who desires in the Person of Jesus. But to those who consider themselves enlightened, the truth of God and the hope found in Christ is considered foolishness. From their human understanding they erroneously reject the gospel of Jesus since the gospel does not fit human reason or expectation.

Something we must understand is God doesn't send people to hell. God offers redemption. Those who willfully reject God's offer of redemption—who reject Jesus—choose hell for themselves. Choosing death or choosing life has been a choice for every human being beginning with Adam and Eve.

The Historical Reality of Jesus

Jesus was and is the promised Redeemer, born of a virgin named Mary. According to the Bible, God *overshadowed* Mary and miraculously united the human egg with the Holy Spirit, allowing Jesus to be conceived. This made Him both fully human and fully God. Jesus, therefore, had two distinct natures. Being fully human, He could die for us as our substitute. Being fully God, He could save us.

Although fully God, Jesus, in His human nature, was and is the most unique of all human beings. John 1:14 explains “And the Word [Jesus, the Son of God] became flesh [Son of Man] and dwelt among us.” Jesus’ most often used reference to Himself was *Son of Man*. God is not distant and removed from our mortal existence. He has experienced every joy and every sorrow known to man as a man. He lived in the human condition being tempted by every temptation known to man, yet He did not sin.

The way Jesus refrained from committing sin was by remaining in communication with and obeying God the Father as we read in John 8:28 and elsewhere in Scriptures. Jesus came to this earth as the Redeemer of mankind, motivated by tremendous love. And this love allowed Him to suffer unimaginable torture by the very people He came to save. He was falsely accused, arrested, improperly tried and sentenced to death by way of crucifixion. Before His death, He was mercilessly beaten until His appearance was no longer recognizable as human. His hands and feet were nailed to a cross, and the cross was erected so that He would die a slow and excruciating death. Yet, He never surrendered His mission. He willingly suffered all He did. He bled and died so that you would have a way to be restored to God and His love.

Consider that God, in the form of Jesus, suffered on your behalf. First, He willingly gave up His rightful place in heaven and took upon Himself human existence. God is not distant and removed from our mortal existence. He has experienced every joy and every sorrow known to man as a man. He lived in the human condition, being tempted by every temptation known to man, yet He did not sin. The ultimate expression of God’s love for you was demonstrated by Jesus. Jesus, who knew no sin, became sin for us so we could have a path back to God. God revealed His love for you by the very life blood of Jesus—God in human form.

By faith in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as the Redeemer, anyone who desires can be saved from sin and the eternal death sin brings, according to the Bible. Through faith in Jesus, a person is restored to a spiritually alive condition and enjoys a personal relationship with God.

Faith in Jesus literally transforms a person's natural-born, dead spirit condition to a newly created *born-again* spirit that never before existed. This new spirit condition is pure and holy and able to relate to God in every way possible. Scriptures teach, "For our sake, he [God] made him [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin so that in him [Jesus] we might become the righteousness of God" (1 Corinthians 5:21).

Believing in Jesus, the Son of God, as your personal Savior or Redeemer from sin, not only restores you to a loving relationship with God the Father, but also allows you to receive God's Holy Spirit to indwell you—to enable you to learn how to live your new life in Christ. God does not save us then leave us on our own. No, He personally takes up residence in our being through the Person of the Holy Spirit.

Faith in Jesus allows you to escape the final Judgment Day without personal condemnation. Placing faith in Jesus brings many, many benefits and full access to all the promises of God. The Bible reveals an abundance of benefits including love, peace, joy, freedom, overcoming power, provision, health, long life, a grand and divine purpose for living, and more.

In addition to the Bible, there are many extra-biblical texts that document the birth, life, teachings, miraculous healings, death and bodily resurrection of Jesus. Few deny Jesus was a historical person. However, the view of many people runs contrary not only to the Bible but to much of documented history and the over five hundred *eyewitnesses* of His resurrected state. Many self-professed enlightened people today claim Jesus was a good teacher, perhaps a prophet. Many state Jesus is to be revered in the same way as Buddha or Muhammad. Such statements reveal they have not taken

the time to study the facts, and for that reason, they are sadly deceived. You can find more compelling reasons to believe in Jesus in the first book in this series, *Examine Your Faith! Finding Truth in a World of Lies*.

You are Unique and Precious to God

Scriptures reveal God knew you before you were ever knit together in your mother's womb—before you were formed, (Psalm 139:13-14). You are not simply a natural by-product of conception. You were *intended* by God to be born into this world with your own unique personality, talents, and abilities. You are unique. There never has been, nor will there ever be a duplicate of you. Your unique fingerprints demonstrate God set you apart from all others ever born. God *distinctly* delights over *you*.

We are each unique, yet made in God's image. That we are each distinctly different, and each made in God's image, helps us understand how vastly multifaceted our God is. Your unique being is something to take the time to fully grasp.

Because of the deception of humanity, we are prone to compete, compare, and contrast ourselves with others, which only leads to dissatisfaction and worse. But, with the firm understanding that each person is unique with their own place in God's plan, with their own purpose and destiny, there is no reason to do so. How can one unique being be compared to another unique being? Each is unique. On the contrary, we have every reason to celebrate our God-given distinctions.

Discovering Your Created Purpose

When we find ourselves anxious, restless, and otherwise dissatisfied with the direction our life seems to be going, we should recognize that as

evidence we've veered off course and are not operating according to our created purpose. One's God-given purpose is often referred to as their *call* or *calling*. Discovering your created purpose is not difficult, yet doing so is something too few people accomplish. To help you, I've provided some guidelines for discovering your created purpose and how to best function in your calling.

The first thing you should experience is an excitement in knowing you are called by God for a specific purpose in your life. You are unique, so the contribution you can make on earth for God's kingdom is unique. Collectively, all believers are referred to as the *Body of Christ*. And just as the human body has many members, we need each part of the physical body to do its part for the entire body to properly function. The apostle Paul wrote of how we are to experience unity with diversity as one body in 1 Corinthians chapter 12. He wrote in verse 18 that "God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose." Your created purpose was established by God. When you live accordingly, you not only please Him but enjoy personal fulfillment otherwise not available. Additionally, living according to your call benefits others.

When discovering your call, you need to consider both your *natural talents* and the *spiritual gifts* God has given you. Spiritual gifts will be discussed more particularly in the next chapter. Your natural talents are abilities you have to do things well, and that bring you pleasure. More about recognizing your natural talents is provided in chapter eight.

Transformed and United, We Change the World

All who place their faith in Jesus are to be united in God's love and purpose. As we read the Bible and learn of God's perfect instructions for

living in what is good and true and we willingly cooperate with the Holy Spirit, we are indeed changed. We are transformed from the inside out.

All who believe in Jesus as their personal Savior and Lord are collectively referred to as *the Church* or *Christ's Body*. Believers in Jesus are commissioned by Jesus to be His disciples and to make disciples of people of all nations. This means we have a part to play in God's plan to gather in all who belong to Him.

Additionally, motivated by His love for you, God continually arranges situations and circumstances so you can discover the truth about Him and His will for your life. He longs for you to discover more and more truth and for you to be robed in the righteousness of Christ. He longs for you to learn how to be the victorious, new creature you can be through faith in Jesus. God has a created purpose for you, one only you can fulfill. That purpose is your God-given destiny if accepted. And Christ's life, death, and resurrection have secured everything you need to fulfill your destiny. How to discover your purpose is addressed beginning in chapter six.

As each of us seeks to grow in our new spirit beings, we will be transformed.

Transformed by the Love of God

When a person places his or her faith in Jesus, their spirit is completely regenerated. Your ability to communicate with God is open as never before. Plus, you have the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit to guide you. John 14:17 and 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 are just two passages in Scripture that state whenever a person chooses to repent from sin and place their faith in Jesus as their personal Savior, God causes the Holy Spirit to *indwell* the believer. Every believer mysteriously receives the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Triune Godhead (Ephesians 1:14). The

indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our eternal inheritance through faith in Christ.

There remains a problem, however. We are still living in our earthly bodies in this fallen world and experience natural carnal desires. Our body will do whatever our mind allows even if those actions are not consistent with the will of God. That is why the apostle Paul stresses the importance of *renewing our minds*. We renew our minds by replacing the carnal, earthly thoughts of our *unregenerate* self with the life-giving truths of God's written Word. As we do this, our bodily lusts and desires will be put under submission to our new spirit in Christ. Those who know and love Jesus will want to keep His commands, knowing that keeping His commands will transform us more and more into His image.

Everything good is from God. If you want to experience the abundant, victorious life Christ died to provide for you, simply place your faith in Jesus. Perhaps you'd like to do that now? If so, in your own words, simply agree with God about your natural, sin-born condition. Thank God for sending Jesus and declare you are willing to repent. Acknowledge you are placing your faith in Jesus as your personal Savior and Lord. With just these simple words expressed from a genuine heart, you can be confident your redemption is sure. When anyone places his or her faith in Jesus, their name is written in the *Lamb's Book of Life*, also referred to as the *Book of Life*, along with all the others who have placed their faith in Jesus. The Bible reveals the Lamb's Book of Life is the record of the ones who will enter the "holy city, Jerusalem" (Revelation 21:10) and who will live forever in heaven with God. This is cause to celebrate!

Sealed by the Blood of Jesus

The Old Testament animal sacrifice system was established by God to provide a covering for sin and was a demonstration of the *covenant* God made with man for all who obeyed and believed in Him and His promises. Christians believe this sacrificial system also provided a *type* of the ultimate sacrifice—Jesus, the promised Redeemer/Deliverer. That John the Baptist, who was a contemporary of Jesus, understood this is illustrated when he referred to Jesus as the *Lamb of God* (reference John 1:29).

Old Testament believers looked forward to the fulfillment of God's promise while New Testament believers look back to the promise fulfilled in Jesus.

Hebrews 9:22 states, “... without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.” Scripture reveals that once Adam and Eve confessed their disobedience, God covered their bodies with *animal skin*. Hence, God Himself shed the first blood to *cover* sin until the time of the promised Redeemer whose sacrifice would *cleanse* believers from sin.

God is unable to lie. God is unable to go back on His promises—His Word. He had declared without the shedding of blood there could be no remission of sin. And that's precisely why Jesus came to this earth—to become the supreme and final sacrifice, shedding His blood, sealing the fulfillment of the promise of God to provide reconciliation forever.

Rest in God's Covenant

J. I. Packer wrote, “God's love is an exercise of His goodness toward individual sinners whereby, having identified himself with their welfare, he has given his Son to be their Savior, and now brings them to know and enjoy him in a *covenant* relation”¹ (emphasis added).

A covenant is a binding agreement or contract. In terms of Scripture, a covenant as instituted by God is a contract. In the Bible, a covenant is an agreement between God and His people in which God makes promises to His people and, usually, requires certain conduct from them.

“Using covenants,” writes Matt Slick of Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry, “is how God communicates to us, redeems us, and guarantees us eternal life in Jesus. He does this because a covenant is a promise, and God's promises cannot be broken since they rest in His infinite, pure character. The Bible is a covenant document. The Old and New Testaments are really old and new covenants. The word ‘testament’ is Latin for covenant. All covenants in the Bible between God and man are originated by God and are an act of his grace.”²

Instituted by God, a covenant is not given so much to emphasize the *legality* of the agreement as much as it is to emphasize the *relationship* of the parties involved. And for this, we should be exceedingly grateful because, repeatedly throughout all history, humankind has failed to live up to our part of the covenant. Even so, God has never failed to deliver on His part.

There are some covenants or promises, such as the second coming of Jesus, that require nothing from us to ultimately enjoy the benefits of the promise. But there are other promises that do require satisfying specific conditions. The conditions for such promises are not obscure. They are plain and given to us in Scripture so we will know what we must do to receive the benefit. For example, if we want to be in right relationship with God the Father and enjoy all the good gifts extending from His love, the condition we must satisfy is to believe in and receive Jesus by faith as our personal Lord and Savior.

Study of the Old Testament is indispensable in a Christian's journey. Reading the Old Testament allows us to embrace the rich heritage of God's continual loving intervention in the lives of His beloved humanity—often

expressed in stern discipline and even judgments in a just response to the people's actions.

In Luke 16:16, Jesus made clear the *Law and the Prophets* were proclaimed until John the Baptist. The Law and the prophecies concerning the *Messiah* or the Christ heralded until the advent of Jesus. Jesus stressed He did not come to abolish the Law, rather to fulfill it. The Old Testament would always remain inspired and, moreover, Scripture was fulfilled which is not something to disregard.

As you learn more about the life and times in the Old Testament era, you will become exceedingly grateful you live in the New Testament era. In the New Testament, we learn Jesus' life, death, and resurrection have completely satisfied the debt of sin once and for all. His perfect existence means He has fulfilled all the Law and the Prophets, thereby concluding the Old Testament era of Law and ushering in the New Testament era of grace.

As He hung on the cross, Jesus' last words before declaring He was commending His Spirit to the Father, were "It is finished!" You and I are privileged to live in the New Testament era of God's grace with all glory and gratitude belonging to Jesus alone, Amen.

God is Faithful Even When We are Unfaithful

Of the many attributes of God, one pertinent at this point is God is *immutable*. He cannot change. He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. We need never fear God changing His mind or acting inconsistently with His revealed will and character. This one attribute gives me the supreme confidence to surrender my trust to Him with all abandon.

One of my favorite books in the Old Testament is Hosea because the story so perfectly reveals God's immutability in His love for us. The message of Hosea is of God's love motivating His overwhelming mercy for

His people. The story in Hosea reveals the repeated unfaithfulness of God's people with a number of images from family and nature. Israel is like a promiscuous wife, an indifferent mother, an illegitimate child, an ungrateful son, a stubborn heifer, a silly dove, a luxuriant vine, and grapes in the wilderness. Yet Israel's unfaithfulness and obstinacy are not enough to exhaust God's redeeming love. Recurrent themes include: 1.) the unfolding list of acts and attitudes that disappoint God; 2.) a picture of what people who reject God can expect to receive from Him; and 3.) evidences of God's love and grace toward people who do not deserve them.³

While the book describes the condition of God's people in the years 786-746 BC, the text is a depiction of how people repeatedly responded to God throughout all ages. God is represented by Hosea, the husband, whereas Israel, or God's people, is represented by Gomer, the wife.

Hosea, an Old Testament prophet, was known by all to be a righteous man of God. Yet, he was instructed *by God* to very publicly seek out and marry a *known* prostitute. So, he did. He married Gomer, a woman who was known for her innumerable adulterous liaisons. Through the prophet, God relays to us we are as a prostitute toward Him. In our relationship with Him, we often commit spiritual adultery.

The story of Hosea reveals God's unconditional love and faithfulness, illustrated in contrast to the sinful harlotry of His people—who are so easily enticed away from Him by the things of this world, thereby committing spiritual adultery.

God initiated His covenant with people He knew were unfaithful. He knew we would reject Him in preference for our own ways—repeatedly. But even when we are unfaithful, He remains faithful to His part of the covenant.

If you've known betrayal in a loving relationship, then you know the deep pain of the heart. God is a feeling being. When we reject Him, He is

not unfazed. We read in Scripture that God experiences grief at the actions of His people. While humans find expressing anger or severing a relationship with a person who betrays us acceptable, this is not how God responds. His love for His own far outweighs every other emotion, and so, His love motivates all He does.

God's mercy does not mean there are no consequences for our choices contrary to God's will. Rather, His mercy simply means we don't get the full consequences we deserve. There are still consequences for our choices.

Distinguishing Love from Approval

The distinction between God's love and God's approval is important. Just as earthly parents withhold good gifts from disobedient children, God will discipline us. Discipline does not mean love has been withheld. Quite the contrary, good parents and our good God discipline us *out of* love. Hebrews 12:6-11 reveals:

For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives. It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it

yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Many people find certain promises of God to seem unduly restrictive and, therefore, conclude *God must be a killjoy*. Nothing could be further from the truth. God ordained several different week-long feasts to celebrate different holidays. God created humanity with the ability to laugh and have fun. God created humanity with the joy of sex in marriage. When humanity seeks to enter any activity in a manner inconsistent with God's instruction, the activity becomes perverted. For example, God instructed that sex is to be enjoyed within the confines of marriage, not to be a killjoy, but as a matter of protecting us. Sexually transmitted diseases, birth defects, and long-lasting emotional and spiritual problems are the consequences of having sex outside of marriage. Another example is keeping the Sabbath day, which is Sunday in the New Testament era. God knows precisely how He created us and what is best for our health—body, soul, and spirit. Keeping the Sabbath is to set aside the day to rest from our daily work-related activities and make a point of being focused on God in the assembly of fellow believers.

As already stated, everything God does is motivated by His love for us. All His *restrictions* are for our good, even if they don't seem to be to us. Jesus said, "You are my friends if you do what I command you" (John 15:14). Another way to say this is "If you really know Me, then you will love Me, and keeping my commandments will be your first choice, because you know I only want the best for you, at all times."

If a person genuinely or properly knows God, they can't help but choose to love Him and embrace all His ways. We desire God and His love because we have a great need for Him and all He offers. He is our Creator,

and we are fashioned in His image. He desires a relationship with us, so we are created to desire a relationship with Him.

In the next chapter, you will read real-life examples of lives and circumstances amazingly transformed by God's love and grace.

PART TWO

EMBRACING LOVE

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

John 3:16

End of Preview. Order direct from author and get a 15% discount. Use BPDC at checkout. Visit the web site at www.pamelachristianistries.com

About the Author

Pamela Christian's ministry began in the early 1990s serving as Teaching/Director for Community Bible Study, an independent, international organization. This was followed by invitations to speak across the country for various organizations, which she continues to enjoy with great enthusiasm to this day. Her initial writing work included the development of workbooks for her retreats and conferences. This soon expanded to publication in book compilations, magazines, and several e-books.

Her speaking and writing career translated perfectly into other media, including hosting talk-shows on Christian radio, television, and voice-over work. Pamela earned a certificate in apologetics from Biola University. Her first passion is to help others in matters of faith. Her favorite pastimes are food, family, and friends. Weekends, when she's not speaking or writing, you'll find her cooking and entertaining—expressing her second passion for food, wine, and travel.

Pam and her husband live in Orange County, CA, with their two grown children and families living nearby. To book Pam to speak or to learn more, visit www.pamelachristianministries.com.

Get all the books in the

FAITH TO LIVE BY BOOK SERIES

Examine Your Faith!
Finding Truth in a World of Lies
(Revised 2015)

Renew Your Hope!
Remedy for Personal Breakthroughs
(Revised 2015)

Revive Your Life!
Rest for Your Anxious Heart
(2017)

To be sure you don't miss the release of all Pam's books, events and more,
sign up for her bi-monthly newsletter.

www.pamelachristianministries.com

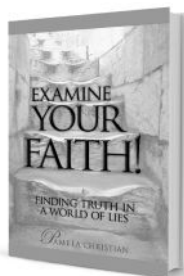
Pamela Christian Ministries

18032 Lemon Dr. #C206, Yorba Linda, CA 92886

info@pamelachristianministries.com

OTHER TITLES BY PAMELA CHRISTIAN:

First book in the Faith to Live By Book Series:



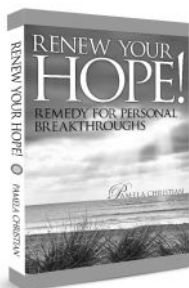
EXAMINE YOUR FAITH! FINDING TRUTH IN A WORLD OF LIES

Well-meaning people want to believe all roads lead to the same God and heaven. But wanting something to be true is far different from truth lining up with reality.

- What is truth?
- Is it relative or absolute?
- Is it personal or universal?
- What are the differences among the various religious faiths? Can they be blended?

This book will help you possess a confident faith that will sustain you in any life adversity.

Second book in the Faith to Live By Series:

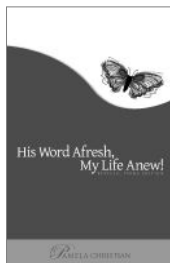


RENEW YOUR HOPE! REMEDY FOR PERSONAL BREAKTHROUGHS

This book provides the answers that can change your life, your circumstances, and your future.

- Learn the fullness of what Christ offers you
- Uncover the deceptions that have prevented you from moving ahead
- Discover Christ's authority and power that God wants you to operate in
- Take hold of the abundant, victorious life Christ died to provide you

You can have confident hope. You can have personal breakthroughs. Why wait a moment longer when this book places the answers in your hands?



His Word Afresh, My Life Anew!

Those interested in the history and origin of the Bible and learning an inductive method for independent Bible study will enjoy this workbook. The A-F-R-E-S-H method allows in-depth and applied study of God's Word.

- **Paperback:** 86 pages
- **Language:** English
- **ISBN-10:** 1456541153
- **ISBN-13:** 978-1456541156

TO ORDER COPIES OF THIS OR ANY OF PAM'S BOOKS:

If you liked this book of Pam's, you'll like others to keep or to give as gifts. Order at the website www.pamelachristianministries.com, or use this form to order by mail.

Name: _____

First and Last

Shipping

Address: _____

Street and Suite/Apartment number if applicable

City, State and Zip

Phone

Number: _____

Area code and number

Email

Address: _____

Please be sure to provide a phone or email address in case we have any question about the proper fulfillment of your order.

| TITLE | RETAIL | QUANTITY | TOTAL |
|---|---------|----------|---------|
| <i>Examine Your Faith! Finding Truth in a World of Lies</i> | \$16.99 | _____ | _____ |
| <i>Examine Your Faith! Study Guide</i> | \$7.99 | _____ | _____ |
| <i>Renew Your Hope! Remedies for Personal Breakthroughs</i> | \$16.99 | _____ | _____ |
| <i>Renew Your Hope! Study Guide</i> | \$7.99 | _____ | _____ |
| <i>His Word Afresh, My Life Anew!</i> | \$11.99 | _____ | _____ |
| TOTAL: | | | \$_____ |
| California residents add 8% tax | | | \$_____ |
| Add \$3.00 postage for each book* | | | \$_____ |
| GRAND TOTAL: | | | \$_____ |

**Shipping limited to the United States*

Please send this form with your check or money order payable to:

Pamela Christian Ministries
18032 Lemon Drive #C206
Yorba Linda, CA 92886