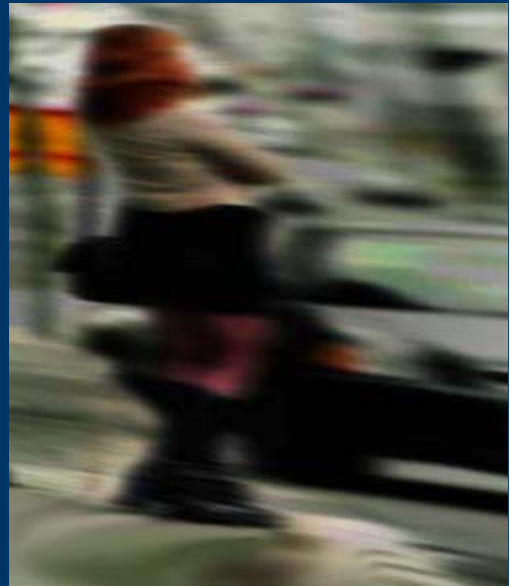




Renewed Hope

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Renewed Hope is the book you are reading. It was written as a short and easy-to-read book.

Finding Hope has the same theme as *Renewed Hope*, but it covers the topic in much greater detail. It is also available on the website for free downloading.

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Chapter 1: **Lost Hope**

Krista lived most of her early life with only her mom because her dad was almost always in prison. Her dad and mom were not married, but for some reason, Krista's mom always let him come back whenever he was released from prison.

When Krista was in early grade school, her mom decided to get her GED and then go to a community college to become a Licensed Practical Nurse. It was a hard time for them because her mom had to work full time as well as attend classes. But she finally received her LPN and was able to get a good job.

Krista's mom began to earn more money and they were able to do more fun things together. Krista began to change too. Several teachers took an interest in her and encouraged her in her studies. She began to do well in school, and she especially liked to study about animals and nature.

With her mom's encouragement, Krista began to dream about going to college and then medical school. She decided that she wanted to become a doctor, and several teachers told her that she had the ability to succeed.

During her seventh and eighth grade years, Krista was on the school honor roll.

Then everything changed in the summer before she went into the ninth grade. Her dad was released from prison, and again her mom let him come to their apartment to live. Several weeks later, her dad began molesting her while her mom was at work, but Krista was afraid to tell her. After school started, she had trouble studying, she was angry and sad all of the time, and her best friend at school didn't want to be around her any more.

Toward the end of the school year, a school counselor found out what was happening and told Krista's mom about it. Krista's mom was so angry at her dad that Krista thought she might kill him. Instead, Krista's mom told his parole officer, and her dad was sent back to prison.

But Krista felt dead inside. She stayed in high school for another year, but started doing crack cocaine and then meth. By the time she was 19, she had a baby girl, but since she couldn't care for her on her own, the State took the baby away. She earned her "living" and got her drugs with sex.

Krista thought about suicide a lot.



Aaron and his two older sisters grew up on a large family farm. Aaron enjoyed farm life, and everyone in the family assumed that he would work with his parents and eventually take the farm over when they retired.

The farm did well, and Aaron was able to pay for flying lessons while he was still in high school. By the time he was in college, he had built an airstrip on the farm and owned his own airplane. He thoroughly enjoyed aviation, though he did not want an aviation career. Nonetheless, he became active in volunteer search-and-rescue operations, flying his own plane.

Aaron also did well in school. After high school graduation, he had no difficulty getting into the agriculture program at the state university. When he finished his bachelor's degree, he wanted to complete a master's degree that would complement his work in the farm business.

But he needed a break from school and decided to enlist for a single tour of duty in the Army. His dad was a retired officer and had encouraged Aaron to join.

After his training as a medic, he was deployed to a war zone. The fighting was far more intense than he had anticipated. He was often close to enemy fire, and was frequently in extreme personal danger. Close to the end of his tour of duty, the troop carrier he was riding in hit a roadside bomb. Aaron lost his right leg and several fingers on his right hand. He also had a serious head injury from flying metal.

Following a long recovery, he was discharged and came home. Not only was he physically unable to work, but he also no longer had the mental skills to manage the farm business.

He could no longer certify as a pilot, and was forced to sell his plane. A master's degree in business was impossible, and his family clearly understood that Aaron would not be able to take over the farm after his parents retired.

Aaron was moody and often made angry comments to his parents. The climate in the home became tense. Aaron fully understood his personal loss, and often complained about his unfulfilled dreams of school and his loss of flying.

Aaron's dad began to change, too, as he felt responsible for having encouraged Aaron to join the military.



Sue was in her early 60s. She worked as a quality inspector in an electronics manufacturing plant. She was well liked, and she enjoyed her work.

Sue enjoyed the outdoors and hiked nearby mountain trails as often as she could. She also frequently did volunteer work. She had good health and anticipated an enjoyable retirement which would allow for day trips in the outdoors, volunteer work, and traveling. Even though she did not have a high salary, Sue had been careful with her money, invested wisely, and was planning on a comfortable retirement.

However, an hour into one Monday morning's shift, Sue's world completely changed. She had just placed a

parts container on a stocking shelf when a forklift operator hit the back of the shelving unit. A package fell from the top shelf, hitting the back of Sue's head and glancing off her upper back. Though she fell and was briefly knocked unconscious, the injury did not seem to be serious. However, the forklift operator was eventually fired because his mandatory drug test had been positive.

Sue was given the week off with pay, but was cleared by her doctor to return to work the following week. When she returned to work, however, she still didn't feel completely well, but assumed that she would fully recover soon.

Two weeks later, however, she still did not feel well and it felt like an electric shock was going from her neck to her right hand. She immediately made a doctor's appointment and was referred to a neurologist. Surgery was eventually scheduled, but it did not help. Four months after the surgery she was forced to take an early retirement. In time, she developed extreme pain and was put under the care of a pain specialist. Many treatments were tried, yet the pain always grew worse.

Because the forklift driver had been using drugs, Sue was given full workmen's compensation benefits. Even so, she knew her money would soon be gone, so she talked to an attorney about initiating a lawsuit. Most of all, she felt like her life had been destroyed. She seldom left her house except for medical appointments. She

could no longer drive, and the pain became so intense that she couldn't sleep.

Since she lived alone, her niece arranged for a visiting home nurse to help her. A year later, however, her condition was so bad that she was put in an assisted-care facility. Very soon, she was being given so much prescription pain medication that she slept many hours during the day.

Because of her chronic pain, her addiction to pain medications, the loss of her house, and all she had been looking forward to in her retirement, she became severely depressed and was then put on a high dose of antidepressants as well.

Sue no longer wanted to live. But she could not take an overdose of pills because the assisted-care facility controlled all of her medications.

Chapter 2: **How Was Hope Lost?**

Why is there so little hope in our world? The stories of Krista, Aaron, and Sue in Chapter 1 are not true stories. Yet, these same things happen every day to people all around us. In fact, hopelessness may be a part of your life, too.

In this chapter, we want to tell you why there is so much hopelessness in our world. Later, we will tell you what Jesus has done for us in order to give each of us real hope.

But first, we need to explain how God originally designed us to live.

God designed us to be holy

Before God created the universe, he had already decided on the best way for human beings to live. He wanted to make them with the ability to reach their full potential in order to live completely satisfying lives.

But it may surprise you to learn that the very best way for us to live is to be holy. Holy is what God is. He has no fault, hatred, greed, or desire to hurt or take advantage of others. Because God is holy, we can fully trust him to do what is always best for each of us. (Of course, sometimes what is *best* for us is not what we

always want! Many people can tell of difficult experiences which they later realized made them a better person.)

This is what God said in the Bible:

[God] chose us in [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and without blemish before him. (Ephesians 1:4)¹.

Can you imagine living in a world where everyone was completely holy and could be described as being *without any blemish or fault before God*? Because they were holy, they would always treat each other with respect. People would never be taken advantage of, treated unfairly, or racially profiled. That would certainly make everyone's life worthwhile, giving them the best opportunity to reach their highest potential. Can you imagine living a life without hatred or any desire to get even with others? Imagine wanting others to profit from

¹ Bible references (the address for verses in the Bible) are given in parentheses after each quotation. The first word is the name of the book. If you look in the index at the front of a Bible, you will find the name of each book and its page number. The first number after the name is the chapter number. The numbers after the colon (:) are the verse numbers. A few books in the Bible have two (or three) parts. This is indicated by a 1, a 2 (or in one case, a 3) in front of the book's name. For example, there are two books named 1 Peter and 2 Peter. In one case, there is 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John. When long quotations are used in this book, the quotation will begin with the Book name, chapter and verse citation, and will continue with chapter and verse citations before each verse. The full reference will again be given at the **end** of the complete citation.

something just as much as you want to profit from it yourself, and being able to trust people completely. But most of all, can you imagine being holy and without fault before God, loving him so much that you would want to be holy because that is what he wants you to be?

There is a problem, of course. None of us are able to be holy, nor do we even *want* to be holy. In Chapter 4, we will tell you what Jesus has already done so that we can be holy, and also *want* to be holy.

Why is there so much hopelessness?

There is so little hope today because we are trying to live in a way that is different from how we were designed to live. For example, the human body was not designed to use meth, crack, alcohol, ecstasy, and marijuana. When we use these drugs as substitutes for the way we were designed to live, hopelessness often results. How many hopeless people do you know who are struggling with addictions?

But there are many other worse examples than substance abuse. In fact, some of humanity's greatest problems come from such things as greed, injustice, and trying to gain power over others. Human beings were not designed to take advantage of other people in order to become rich, nor to mistreat other ethnic groups so that the rich and powerful could have all of the advantages. We were not designed to destroy the environment so that we could build businesses for our

own profit, leaving others with an impoverished and broken world.

There is so much hopelessness today because we are living differently than we were designed to live.

The beginning of hopelessness

In this book, we will allow God to speak for himself. In order to do that, we will quote the Bible itself rather than trying to summarize what it says. This is what the Bible says about the time when hopelessness began:

Genesis 1:27 God created man in his own image. In God's image he created him; male and female he created them. 1:28 God blessed them. God said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." 1:29 God said, "Behold, I have given you every herb yielding seed, which is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree, which bears fruit yielding seed. It will be your food.

3:1 Now the serpent was more subtle than any animal of the field which Yahweh² God had made. He said to

² Yahweh is the name of God which is given in the first part of the Bible (the Old Testament). The actual English translation of his name into English would be, *I Am*, because God gave his name to Moses as *I Am Who I Am* (Exodus 3:13-14). When the sound of his name in the original language of the Old Testament is written in English letters, it is *Yahweh*. When the Bible was first translated into English over 400

the woman, “Has God really said, ‘You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?’” (Editor’s note: Satan—also known as the Devil—appeared as a beautiful serpent.)

3:2 The woman said to the serpent, “Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat, 3:3 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’”

3:4 The serpent said to the woman, “You won’t surely die, 3:5 for God knows that in the day you eat it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

3:6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit, and ate; and she gave some to her husband with her, and he ate. 3:7 The eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked. They sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. 3:8 They heard the voice of Yahweh God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of Yahweh God among the trees of the garden.

years ago, the capital letters “LORD” were substituted for God’s name. Most English Bibles have translated the Old Testament in the same way since. However, the public domain translation we are using (*The World English Bible* [WEB]) uses God’s actual name.

3:9 Yahweh God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?”

3:10 The man said, “I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.”

3:11 God said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”

3:12 The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.”

3:13 Yahweh God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?”

The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

3:14 Yahweh God said to the serpent,

“Because you have done this,
you are cursed above all livestock,
and above every animal of the field.

On your belly you shall go,
and you shall eat dust all the days of your life.

3:15 I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring.

He will bruise your head,
and you will bruise his heel.”

3:16 To the woman he said,

“I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth.
In pain you will bear children.

Your desire will be for your husband,
and he will rule over you.”

3:17 To Adam he said,

“Because you have listened to your wife’s voice,
and have eaten of the tree,
of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not
eat of it,’
cursed is the ground for your sake.

In toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.

3:18 It will yield thorns and thistles to you;
and you will eat the herb of the field.

3:19 By the sweat of your face will you eat bread until
you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken.

For you are dust,
and to dust you shall return.”

3:20 The man called his wife Eve, because she was
the mother of all living. 3:21 Yahweh God made coats
of skins for Adam and for his wife, and clothed them.

3:22 Yahweh God said, “Behold, the man has
become like one of us, knowing good and evil. Now,
lest he reach out his hand, and also take of the tree of
life, and eat, and live forever...” 3:23 Therefore
Yahweh God sent him out from the garden of Eden,
to till the ground from which he was taken. 3:24 So he
drove out the man; and he placed Cherubs at the east
of the garden of Eden, and the flame of a sword

which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life. (Genesis 1:27-29, 3:1-24).

Chapter 3: **Why is Sin “Fun”?**

Have you ever known a really good liar? The kind of guy who could con almost anyone into giving him money?

Though this is a true story related by a former inmate, Cliff is a fictitious name.

Cliff was a con man working inside a low-security prison. He was using women as a source of money for his personal spending account.

Cliff had “scored” five women. (*Scored* is prison slang.) Each week, the prison scheduled five visiting times for inmates: one on Friday night, two on Saturday, and two on Sunday. The two visits on Saturday and Sunday were separated by the evening meal. Visitors from those two sessions would never see each other. Cliff arranged a specific visiting time each week with five different women. As long as they kept to their scheduled visiting times, each woman would never know that the other women existed. Cliff ended his visits with each of these five women with the caresses and kisses permitted between an inmate and his loved ones in this low-security prison. Cliff bragged of his exploits to his fellow inmates.

So how did Cliff connect with five different women? The rest of the story is speculation, but it would have

been simple. He might have already known one or more of these women, but it would have been safer for him to make new contacts with women who did not know him before he was incarcerated since they would not be able to find him after his release. He might have used an inmate pen pal website to advertise:

“I’m a serious, clean-cut guy who wants to start a new life. I’m 34 years old. I made one mistake and never want to repeat after I get out. I’m looking for a serious companion. There may be a future together for us.”

Then Cliff could pass himself off as having been a successful man working in the trades who made one mistake that put him in prison. He could then correspond with five interested women who lived close enough to the prison to visit him, making the rest of his scheme work. (Of course, they would need to be women who didn’t ask many questions.)

We can’t relate the women’s side of this story but we can assume that each of them thought they had found a man they could love, and were committed enough to regularly visit and send him money. Can you image a Hollywood drama showing these five women learning of each other for the first time while waiting at the gate on the day of his release? Each would have undoubtedly had the same expectation of building a romantic new life with Cliff as he transitioned back into society.

Since the end of this story is pure speculation, let's suggest how this con man might have avoided this conflict. On the day of his release, he might have arranged to meet the one woman who had agreed to let him move in with her. This would give him his "housing address" which would satisfy his parole officer. He could have easily dumped the other four by giving each of them a false release date two or three months later than his scheduled release. At some time, each of the other four women would come for a visit only to find that Cliff had already been released. He could hope that they would be too humiliated to cause trouble as he disappeared from their lives. (He would be protected because a parole office cannot give out the address of a released inmate other than that of a sex offender.)

The Father of Lies

Cliff was a good liar, but nothing as compared with the Devil.

So why do so many people think that holiness is undesirable? If God is absolutely powerful and loving, as the Bible tells us that he is, why doesn't it make sense for people to at least consider the benefits of God's holiness?

It is because the Devil wants all of us to believe that holiness is boring.

Sure, that which is contrary to holiness can bring moments of pleasure. The early highs from drugs and alcohol are exciting. But in the long run, the addiction which so frequently follows, the potential crime and resulting prison time, the broken lives, and the crushed hopes don't truly satisfy. Could anyone trapped in this kind of life honestly say that it is preferable to a life reflecting God's holiness when God's provision for that life would have resulted in a person reaching their full potential as a human being?

But drugs and alcohol are far from the only traps which encourage unholy living. One may get rich by taking advantage of others, or get physical pleasure by cheating on their spouse, or gain a public following by abusing power. No one would deny that wealth, controlling others with sexual exploits, or taking advantage of others' trust can be exciting. Yet, are any of these things better than the holiness God offers to those who follow him? In truth, most — though not all — of those who claim that a life of sin is preferable to holiness have never experienced holiness so as to make a comparison. (*Sin* is the Bible's name for anything that is not holy.) They have simply accepted the lie that a holy life would not be enjoyable.

Where did they get that idea? This is what Jesus said:

[The devil] was a murderer from the beginning, and doesn't stand in the truth, because there is no truth in

him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks on his own; for he is a liar, and its father. (John 8:44).

The reason that we have all been attracted to sin rather than holiness is that the Father of Lies, the Devil himself, has convinced us that sin is preferable to God's offer of holiness.

The Devil, who is also known as Satan, is also described as "the god of this world" or "the evil one":

Be sober and self-controlled. Be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, walks around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the Good News of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn on them (2 Corinthians 4:4). When anyone hears the word of the Kingdom, and doesn't understand it, the evil one comes, and snatches away that which has been sown in his heart (Matthew 13:19). Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles [evil tricks] of the devil (Ephesians 6:11). [The Lord's servant] may recover themselves out of the devil's snare, having been taken captive by him (2 Timothy 2:26).

There is, however, another lie that Satan often uses. If he cannot convince a prospective victim that God's holiness is not enjoyable, then he will create a counterfeit religious experience which will have many rules that must be kept. But he doesn't do this only to

“pagans” living in a jungle. He also deludes people in the same kind of churches where one would also expect to find holiness. Satan may convince some church members that holiness is attained through Christian rituals, or certain kinds of behavior, or vows to a religious life rather than by knowing God and obediently following that which God knows will be the most satisfying for them.

Nor is God’s holiness found in just one of the three branches of Christianity (Catholic, Protestant, or Orthodox) while Satan’s lies are being taught in the other two. In many cases, some people in all of these groups will be living holy lives while others in the same churches will be following Satan’s lies and zealously trying to earn God’s approval through their own self-righteousness. (We are not saying, however, that every one of the hundreds of denominations or church groups teach truth. Some do not accurately teach what the Bible says, and others do not even use the Bible. One group has even translated a new version of the Bible incorrectly in order to give it the appearance of teaching their own doctrine. Another group has added the writings of a latter day prophet as being more important than the Bible itself.)

But Jesus came to earth as a man. He finished his work of teaching when he was about 33 years old. He then allowed himself to be executed by the Romans — and three days later he came back to life. He did all of

this in order to give us hope. In Chapter 6, we will find out how we can personally have this hope. For now, however, carefully read what one of Jesus' followers wrote in the Bible:

1 John 3:7 Little children, let no one lead you astray. He who does righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. 3:8 He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. To this end the Son of God was revealed, that he might destroy the works of the devil. 3:9 Whoever is born of God doesn't commit sin, because his seed remains in him; and he can't sin, because he is born of God. 3:10 In this the children of God are revealed, and the children of the devil. Whoever doesn't do righteousness is not of God, neither is he who doesn't love his brother. (1 John 3:7-10).

Chapter 4: **The Real Jesus**

Our hope rests entirely on Jesus because he is perfectly holy. He died for us and came back to life so that he could give his holiness to us. In this chapter, we want to find out who Jesus really is.

Because there are so many different ideas about Jesus, we want to let the Bible speak for itself. Since the Bible is God's written message to us, we believe that it is true and can be trusted.

Jesus is God

Jesus often told the people who listened to him teach that he was equal with God. We know that they understood what Jesus was saying because of their reaction to him:

John 10:22 It was the Feast of the Dedication at Jerusalem. 10:23 It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in Solomon's porch. 10:24 The Jews therefore came around him and said to him, "How long will you hold us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."

10:25 Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you don't believe. The works that I do in my Father's

name, these testify about me... 10:30 I and the Father are one.”

10:31 Therefore [the] Jews took up stones again to stone him. 10:32 Jesus answered them, “I have shown you many good works from my Father. For which of those works do you stone me?”

10:33 The Jews answered him, “We don’t stone you for a good work, but for blasphemy: because you, being a man, make yourself God.”

10:34 Jesus answered them, “...10:36 do you say of him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ‘You blaspheme,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God?’ (John 10:22-25, 30-34, 36).

Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you such a long time, and do you not know me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father. How do you say, ‘Show us the Father?’ (John 14:8-9). [Jesus speaking to the Father said] “The glory which you have given me, I have given to them; that they may be one, even as we are one” (John 17:22). For this cause the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill him, because he did these things on the Sabbath. But Jesus answered them, “My Father is still working, so I am working, too.” For this cause therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the Sabbath, but also called God his own Father, making himself equal with God (John 5:16-18).

John 8:19 They said therefore to him, "Where is your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither me, nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also."...8:23 He said to them, "You are from beneath. I am from above. You are of this world. I am not of this world. 8:24 I said therefore to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am he, you will die in your sins."...8:28 Jesus therefore said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and I do nothing of myself, but as my Father taught me, I say these things. 8:29 He who sent me is with me. The Father hasn't left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him." 8:30 As he spoke these things, many believed in him... 8:56 [Jesus said] "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day. He saw it, and was glad." 8:57 The Jews therefore said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" 8:58 Jesus said to them, "Most certainly, I tell you, before Abraham came into existence, I AM." 8:59 Therefore they took up stones to throw at him, but Jesus was hidden, and went out of the temple, having gone through their midst, and so passed by (John 8:19, 23-24, 28-30, 56-59).

Other writers also stated that Jesus is equal with God:

Philippians 2:6 [Jesus], existing in the form of God, didn't consider equality with God a thing to be grasped [held], 2:7 but emptied himself, taking the

form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men. 2:8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, yes, the death of the cross. 2:9 Therefore God also highly exalted him, and gave to him the name which is above every name; 2:10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow... 2:11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:6-11).

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” (Revelation 1:8). “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, the Holy One, to receive the glory, the honor, and the power, for you created all things, and because of your desire they existed, and were created!” (Revelation 4:11). “We give you thanks, Lord God, the Almighty, the one who is and who was; because you have taken your great power, and reigned” (Revelation 11:17).

Jesus is the Creator

Several writers in the Bible tell us that Jesus is the Creator. The Apostle Paul wrote:

For by him [Christ—who we also know as Jesus] all things were created, in the heavens and on the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through him, and for him. He is before

all things, and in him all things are held together (Colossians 1:16-17).

The Apostle John, the last of Jesus' twelve disciples to die, wrote five books in the Bible. (Two are short one-page letters and one is a longer letter. His two long books are called *The Gospel of John* and *Revelation*.) In the summary at the end of this chapter, we will read his description of Jesus as the Creator from *The Gospel of John*. Throughout the New Testament, Jesus is called "the Lord." The Apostle John also made the following statement in Revelation about Jesus as the Creator:

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come!"... "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, the Holy One, to receive the glory, the honor, and the power, for you created all things, and because of your desire they existed, and were created!" (Revelation 4:8, 11).

Jesus was completely human

Many passages in Scripture confirm this:

The Word became flesh [human], and lived among us (John 1:14). God was revealed in the flesh (1 Timothy 3:16). Since then the children [people] have shared in flesh and blood, he also himself in the same way partook of the same, that through death he might bring to nothing him who had the power of death, that

is, the devil, (Hebrews 2:14). Every spirit who confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit who doesn't confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God (1 John 4:2-3). For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who don't confess that Jesus Christ came in the flesh (2 John 1:7).

Matthew 1:18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was like this; for after his mother, Mary, was engaged to Joseph, before they came together, she was found pregnant by the Holy Spirit. 1:19 Joseph, her husband, being a righteous man, and not willing to make her a public example, intended to put her away secretly. 1:20 But when he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take to yourself Mary, your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 1:21 She shall bring forth a son. You shall call his name Jesus, for it is he who shall save his people from their sins."

1:22 Now all this has happened, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying,

1:23 "Behold, the virgin shall be with child,
and shall bring forth a son.

They shall call his name Immanuel";
which is, being interpreted, "God with us."

1:24 Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took his wife to himself; 1:25 and didn't know her sexually until she had brought forth her firstborn son. He named him Jesus (Matthew 1:18-25).

Jesus died to take away our sin

The Bible speaks for itself as it gives us information about the wonderful redemption Jesus provided for both humanity and all of creation.

Knowing that you were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from the useless way of life handed down from your fathers, but with precious blood, as of a faultless and pure lamb, the blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:18-19). Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God set forth to be an atoning sacrifice, through faith in his blood, for a demonstration of his righteousness through the passing over of prior sins (Romans 3:24-25).

Ephesians 1:7 In [Christ who we also know as Jesus] we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 1:8 which he [God] made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, 1:9 making known to us the mystery of his [God's] will, according to his [God's] good pleasure which he purposed in him [Jesus] 1:10 to an administration of the fullness of

the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things on the earth, in him [Jesus]; 1:11 in whom also we were assigned an inheritance, having been foreordained according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his will; 1:12 to the end that we should be to the praise of his glory, we who had before hoped in Christ: 1:13 in whom [Jesus] you also, having heard the word of the truth, the Good News of your salvation—in whom [Jesus], having also believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (Ephesians 1:7-13).

[The Father] delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the Kingdom of the Son of his love; in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins (Colossians 1:13-14). How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? For this reason he is the mediator of a new covenant, since a death has occurred for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, that those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance (Hebrews 9:14-15).

A summary of Jesus as God, Creator, Man, and Savior

The Apostle John also described Jesus in his book *The Gospel of John*. John wrote this book in about 98 AD, just shortly before he died. John used the title *Word* for Jesus, indicating that Jesus was God's spokesperson. This is how John began this book:

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 1:2 The same was in the beginning with God. 1:3 All things were made through him. Without him was not anything made that has been made. 1:4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 1:5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness hasn't overcome it.

1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, and the world didn't recognize him. 1:11 He came to his own, and those who were his own didn't receive him. 1:12 But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become God's children, to those who believe in his name: 1:13 who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. 1:14 The Word became flesh, and lived among us. We saw his glory, such glory as of the one and only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1-5, 10-14).

Can you imagine? The creator of the universe became a man in order to die for our sin. He did all of that so that we could become God's children.

Chapter 5: Is Hope Possible?

Wouldn't you be pleased if you could know without a doubt that you were "holy and without blemish [fault] before God"? Look at what you would have if God saw you as being perfect in Jesus:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ; even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and without blemish before him (Ephesians 1:3-4).

These two verses tell us that God will give us "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" when we are "holy and without blemish before him." Before any of us were even born, we had been designed to have the best possible life if we were holy. Satan (also known as the Devil) has lied to all of us, telling us that life would be better if we were not holy. But that is a lie! We were designed to be our best as human beings when we are holy and can live to our full potential — living with no fear that God will ever find fault in us. This holiness that Jesus can give us also guarantees that we will live forever with him.

That is real hope!

But I *can't* be holy

None of us has the ability to be holy by ourselves.

Even the Apostle Paul did not have the ability to be holy. But he discovered that Jesus could make him holy. He said:

Romans 7:15 For I don't practice what I desire to do; but what I hate, that I do. 7:16 But if what I don't desire, that I do, I consent to the law that it is good. 7:17 So now it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwells in me. 7:18 For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing. For desire is present with me, but I don't find it doing that which is good. 7:19 For the good which I desire, I don't do; but the evil which I don't desire, that I practice. 7:20 But if what I don't desire, that I do, it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwells in me. 7:21 I find then the law, that, to me, while I desire to do good, evil is present. 7:22 For I delight in God's law after the inward man, 7:23 but I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members. 7:24 What a wretched man I am! Who will deliver me out of the body of this death? 7:25 I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord! So then with the mind, I myself serve God's law, but with the flesh, the sin's law.

8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, 8:2 For the law of the

Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death. 8:3 For what the law couldn't do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God did, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh (Romans 7:15-8:3)

But I don't even want to be holy

Because of the Devil's lies, none of us even *want* to be holy. But there is still hope.

1. Jesus said he will draw everyone to himself. That means that he will do everything necessary for us to be saved from sin (to be redeemed). Jesus will even give us the desire to be made holy.

“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth [and die on the cross], will draw all people to myself” (John 12:32).

2. The Bible says that God can give us a will (desire) to do that which is best for us even when we do not naturally want to do the right thing.

For it is God who works in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure (Philippians 2:13).

3. God can then give us enough strength to do that which is impossible for us as human beings to do by ourselves.

I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I that live, but Christ living in me. That life

which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me (Galatians 2:20). Now to him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us (Ephesians 3:20).

None of us has the ability to be holy, nor do we even naturally desire to be holy. God allows each of us to either choose to follow him or to be disobedient to him. But if we want to follow him, he will give us the necessary strength to do so. What a wonderful hope!

In Chapter 6: *Finding Hope*, we will see that Jesus has done everything for us so that we can become “holy and without blemish [fault] before God.”

Before going to the last chapter, however, we want to let the Bible tell its own story of Jesus’ death and return to life. His return to life is traditionally called the *resurrection*.

Jesus is taken to the Roman governor

Matthew 27:1 Now when morning had come, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death: 27:2 and they bound him, and led him away, and delivered him up to Pontius Pilate, the governor.

Judas kills himself

27:3 Then Judas, who betrayed him, when he saw that Jesus was condemned, felt remorse, and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, 27:4 saying, “I have sinned in that I betrayed innocent blood.”

But they said, “What is that to us? You see to it.”

27:5 He threw down the pieces of silver in the sanctuary, and departed. He went away and hanged himself.

Pilate questions Jesus

27:11 Now Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, “Are you the King of the Jews?”

Jesus said to him, “So you say.”

27:12 When he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing. 27:13 Then Pilate said to him, “Don’t you hear how many things they testify against you?”

27:14 He gave him no answer, not even one word, so that the governor marveled greatly.

Pilate tries to free Jesus

27:15 Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release to the multitude one prisoner,

whom they desired. 27:16 They had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas. 27:17 When therefore they were gathered together, Pilate said to them, “Whom do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus, who is called Christ?” 27:18 For he knew that because of envy they had delivered him up.

27:19 While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, “Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.” 27:20 Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the multitudes to ask for Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. 27:21 But the governor answered them, “Which of the two do you want me to release to you?”

They said, “Barabbas!”

27:22 Pilate said to them, “What then shall I do to Jesus, who is called Christ?”

They all said to him, “Let him be crucified!”

27:23 But the governor said, “Why? What evil has he done?”

But they cried out exceedingly, saying, “Let him be crucified!”

27:24 So when Pilate saw that nothing was being gained, but rather that a disturbance was starting, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, “I am innocent of the blood of this righteous person. You see to it.”

27:25 All the people answered, “May his blood be on us, and on our children!”

27:26 Then he released to them Barabbas, but Jesus he flogged and delivered to be crucified. 27:27 Then the governor’s soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium [judgment hall], and gathered the whole garrison together against him. 27:28 They stripped him, and put a scarlet robe on him. 27:29 They braided a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and a reed in his right hand; and they kneeled down before him, and mocked him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” 27:30 They spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. 27:31 When they had mocked him, they took the robe off of him, and put his clothes on him, and led him away to crucify him.

Jesus is crucified

27:32 As they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name, and they compelled him to go with them, that he might carry his cross. 27:33 They came to a place called “Golgotha,” that is to say, “The place of a skull.” 27:34 They gave him sour wine to drink mixed with gall. When he had tasted it, he would not drink. 27:35 When they had crucified him, they divided his clothing among them, casting lots, 27:36 and they sat and watched him there. 27:37 They set up over his head the accusation

against him written, “THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

27:38 Then there were two robbers crucified with him, one on his right hand and one on the left. 27:39 Those who passed by blasphemed him, wagging their heads, 27:40 and saying, “You who destroy the temple, and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross!”

27:41 Likewise the chief priests also mocking, with the scribes, the Pharisees, and the elders, said, 27:42 “He saved others, but he can’t save himself. If he is the King of Israel, let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. 27:43 He trusts in God. Let God deliver him now, if he wants him; for he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” 27:44 The robbers also who were crucified with him cast on him the same reproach. (Note: one robber later asked for salvation. See Luke 23:39-43.)

Jesus dies

27:45 Now from the sixth hour [noon] there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour [3:00 pm]. 27:46 About the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lima sabachthani?” That is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

27:47 Some of them who stood there, when they heard it, said, “This man is calling Elijah.”

27:48 Immediately one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him a drink. 27:49 The rest said, “Let him be. Let’s see whether Elijah comes to save him.”

27:50 Jesus cried again with a loud voice, and yielded up his spirit. 27:51 Behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom. The earth quaked and the rocks were split. 27:52 The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; 27:53 and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection, they entered into the holy city and appeared to many. 27:54 Now the centurion, and those who were with him watching Jesus, when they saw the earthquake, and the things that were done, feared exceedingly, saying, “Truly this was the Son of God.”

27:55 Many women were there watching from afar, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, serving him. 27:56 Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

Jesus is buried

27:57 When evening had come, a rich man from Arimathaea, named Joseph, who himself was also

Jesus' disciple came. 27:58 This man went to Pilate, and asked for Jesus' body. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given up. 27:59 Joseph took the body, and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, 27:60 and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut out in the rock, and he rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb, and departed. 27:61 Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the tomb.

The tomb of Jesus is guarded

27:62 Now on the next day, which was the day after the Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees were gathered together to Pilate, 27:63 saying, "Sir, we remember what that deceiver said while he was still alive: 'After three days I will rise again.' 27:64 Command therefore that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest perhaps his disciples come at night and steal him away, and tell the people, 'He is risen from the dead;' and the last deception will be worse than the first."

27:65 Pilate said to them, "You have a guard. Go, make it as secure as you can." 27:66 So they went with the guard and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone.

Jesus rises from the dead

28:1 Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. 28:2 Behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from the sky, and came and rolled away the stone from the door, and sat on it. 28:3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. 28:4 For fear of him, the guards shook, and became like dead men. 28:5 The angel answered the women, "Don't be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus, who has been crucified. 28:6 He is not here, for he has risen, just like he said. Come, see the place where the Lord was lying. 28:7 Go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has risen from the dead, and behold, he goes before you into Galilee; there you will see him.' Behold, I have told you."

28:8 They departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring his disciples word. 28:9 As they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, "Rejoice!"

They came and took hold of his feet, and worshiped him.

28:10 Then Jesus said to them, "Don't be afraid. Go tell my brothers that they should go into Galilee, and there they will see me."

The soldiers report to the leaders

28:11 Now while they were going, behold, some of the guards came into the city, and told the chief priests all the things that had happened. 28:12 When they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave a large amount of silver to the soldiers, 28:13 saying, "Say that his disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. 28:14 If this comes to the governor's ears, we will persuade him and make you free of worry." 28:15 So they took the money and did as they were told. This saying was spread abroad among the Jews, and continues until this day.

Jesus talks to his followers

28:16 But the eleven disciples went into Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had sent them. 28:17 When they saw him, they bowed down to him, but some doubted. 28:18 Jesus came to them and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. 28:19 Go, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 28:20 teaching them to observe all things that I commanded you. Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 27:1-5, 11-66, 28:1-20).

Chapter 6: Finding Hope

This chapter will explain how to become holy and without fault before God. The best way to explain this is to use quotations from the Bible itself. When necessary, we will give a short introduction, but we will depend on the Bible to supply the actual information.

Another reason we are quoting from the Bible is because we want to avoid introducing the beliefs of any one particular church group into this chapter.

The Bible uses many words that have specific meanings. For example, *salvation* (or *to be saved*) means *to be freed from the consequences of sin*. *Redemption* (or *redeemed*) means *to be purchased or bought back from sin*. For now, we will also use the words *holiness* and *righteousness* as synonyms. All three branches of traditional Christianity teach that redemption is dependent on Jesus' death and *resurrection* (coming back to life). It was Jesus' death and resurrection that paid the penalty for the sin of the human race so that any individual who chooses to do so might have salvation in Jesus. *Sin* is disobedience to God.

Finally, Jesus' name and titles need a brief explanation. His name was *Jesus*. He was also called by his title *Christ* which identified him as the promised

Savior the Hebrew nation was expectantly waiting for. *Son of God* is a title for Jesus meaning that he came from God and *Son of Man* is another title Jesus used for himself which means that he was truly a human being. *Savior* is the title which recognizes that he is the one who redeems all who choose his righteousness.

How can I be redeemed?

Many verses that have already been used in this book have identified the individual who is *redeemed* or *saved* as one who is a believer in Jesus. Verses such as, “Even as [God] chose us in [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and without blemish [fault] before him” (Ephesians 1:4), and “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1), have been quoted without any explanation as to how we come into this relationship with Jesus.

The following Bible verses will explain how one comes to know Jesus in this way.

Jesus is the only way to God

There is salvation in none other, for neither is there any other name [Jesus] under heaven, that is given among men, by which we must be saved!” (Acts 4:12). For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as

a ransom for all (1 Timothy 2:5-6). Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through me” (John 14:6). [Jesus said] “I am the door [of the sheep fold]. If anyone enters in by me, he will be saved, and will go in and go out, and will find pasture. The thief only comes to steal, kill, and destroy. I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly” (John 10:9-10). Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will still live, even if he dies. Whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25-26).

Again, therefore, Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12). Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will not be hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty” (John 6:35). [Jesus said] “I am the living bread which came down out of heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever” (John 6:51) ...that whoever believes in [Jesus] should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life (John 3:15-16). One who believes in the Son [Jesus] has eternal life, but one who disobeys the Son won't see life, but the wrath of God remains on him (John 3:36). “I [Jesus] said

therefore to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am he, you will die in your sins” (John 8:24).

“Most certainly I [Jesus] tell you, he who hears my word, and believes him who sent me, has eternal life, and doesn’t come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life” (John 5:24). The testimony is this, that God gave to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son [Jesus]. He who has the Son has the life. He who doesn’t have God’s Son doesn’t have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God (1 John 5:11-13). By this we know that we remain in him [Jesus] and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains in him, and he in God (1 John 4:13-14).

Grace, not good works, provides our relationship with Jesus

Grace is understood by all Christian traditions to be “God’s unmerited favor.” This means that someone has been given something from God which they did not deserve. Salvation can never be earned. We can never work for salvation nor get it by being good — God gives

it to individuals simply because they believe that Jesus' righteousness is all that they need to be "holy and without blemish [fault] before him." Repentance is also recognized by all three Christian traditions as "turning and going in the opposite direction." Sin is understood to be disobedience to God when an individual chooses to do as he or she pleases rather than obeying God. Thus, repenting from sin is universally understood by each of the three Christian traditions to mean turning away from disobedience to God and relying on Jesus' righteousness for salvation.

For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not toward God. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Now to him who works, the reward is not counted as grace, but as something owed. But to him who doesn't work, but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness (Romans 4:2-5). For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, that no one would boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared before that we would walk in them (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by

faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law, because no flesh will be justified by the works of the law (Galatians 2:16). Because by the works of the law, no flesh will be justified in his sight. For through the law comes the knowledge of sin. But now apart from the law, a righteousness of God has been revealed, being testified by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all those who believe. For there is no distinction, for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:20-23).

For him who knew no sin [Christ] he [God] made to be sin on our behalf; so that in him [Christ] we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21). For while we were yet weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man. Yet perhaps for a righteous person someone would even dare to die. But God commends his own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we will be saved from God's wrath through him. For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we will be saved by his life (Romans 5:6-10).

Therefore, among most who adhere to traditional Christianity, the generally-understood steps leading to salvation are:

1. **Recognition of personal sin.** For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23).
2. **Repentance from sin.** [Jesus said] “I tell you...unless you repent, you will all perish” (Luke 13:5). Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out (Acts 3:19).
3. **Trusting Jesus’ holiness to be all that is needed for one to be “holy and without fault before God.”** A righteousness of God has been revealed, [which is] through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all those who believe (Romans 3:21-22). The testimony is this, that God gave to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son [Jesus]. He who has the Son has the life. He who doesn’t have God’s Son doesn’t have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God (1 John 5:11-13). if you will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart, one believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Romans 10:9-10).

How is faith expressed in order for God to give salvation?

Everyone finds it hard to understand that simple trust (faith) — without doing good deeds — is all that is needed in order for Jesus to give us all of the righteousness that he requires. Therefore, a special prayer formula is not a necessary part of salvation. It is often true, however, that praying (talking with God) when acknowledging and repenting of sin and trusting in Jesus' righteousness, may help an individual to express these thoughts. We would encourage anyone who is taking this step to express it verbally to God. But it is not prayer itself — nor any other religious act — which makes that relationship with Jesus real. *It is the acknowledgement of personal sin and the need to change direction, coupled with faith in Jesus' righteousness as being all that is needed, which results in a salvation relationship with him.*

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law, because no flesh will be justified by the works of the law (Galatians 2:16).

Obedience to Jesus after becoming his child follows salvation. This obedience will involve carefully listening to Jesus' direction while reading the Bible and praying,

but it does **not** include following a list of rules. The Bible says:

1 John 2:3 This is how we know that we know [Jesus]: if we keep his commandments. 2:4 One who says, "I know him," and doesn't keep his commandments, is a liar, and the truth isn't in him. 2:5 But whoever keeps his word, God's love has most certainly been perfected in him (1 John 2: 3-5).

The cost of a relationship with Jesus

Jesus frequently warned his followers that their faith would cost them a great deal. That was true in the early history of Christianity. With the exception of the Apostle John, tradition says that all of Jesus' disciples besides Judas Iscariot died as martyrs.

For almost 2,000 years, believers in Jesus have been persecuted for their faith.

A life lived for Jesus will be costly, whether through severe persecution or merely as a result of the routine of daily faithfulness.

But it will be a satisfying life with purpose and new hope as you serve Jesus.

But now, being made free from sin, and having become servants of God, you have your fruit of sanctification [holiness], and the result of eternal life (Romans 6:22).



John 12:20 Now there were certain Greeks among those that went up to worship at the feast. 12:21 These, therefore, came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, "Sir, we want to see Jesus." 12:22 Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn, Andrew came with Philip, and they told Jesus. 12:23 Jesus answered them, "The time has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 12:24 Most certainly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit. 12:25 He who loves his life will lose it. He who hates his life in this world will keep it to eternal life. 12:26 If anyone serves me, let him follow me. Where I am, there will my servant also be. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. (John 12:20-26).



Luke 14:25 Now great multitudes were going with him. He turned and said to them, 14:26 "If anyone comes to me, and doesn't disregard his own father, mother, wife, children, brothers, and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he can't be my disciple. 14:27 Whoever doesn't bear his own cross, and come after me, can't be my disciple. 14:28 For which of you, desiring to build a tower, doesn't first sit down and count the cost, to see if he has enough to complete it? 14:29 Or perhaps, when he has laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, everyone who sees begins to

mock him, 14:30 saying, ‘This man began to build, and wasn’t able to finish.’...14:33 So therefore whoever of you who doesn’t renounce all that he has, he can’t be my disciple. (Luke 14:25-30, 33).

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5:17 But the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy, 5:18 and laid hands on the apostles, and put them in public custody. 5:19 But an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors by night, and brought them out, and said, 5:20 “Go stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.”

5:21 When they heard this, they entered into the temple about daybreak, and taught. But the high priest came, and those who were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. 5:22 But the officers who came didn’t find them in the prison. They returned and reported, 5:23 “We found the prison shut and locked, and the guards standing before the doors, but when we opened them, we found no one inside!”

5:24 Now when the high priest, the captain of the temple, and the chief priests heard these words, they were very perplexed about them and what might become of this. 5:25 One came and told them, “Behold, the men whom you put in prison are in the

temple, standing and teaching the people.” 5:26 Then the captain went with the officers, and brought them without violence, for they were afraid that the people might stone them.

5:27 When they had brought them, they set them before the council. The high priest questioned them, 5:28 saying, “Didn’t we strictly command you not to teach in this name? Behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man’s blood on us.”

5:29 But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men. 5:30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you killed, hanging him on a tree. 5:31 God exalted him with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins. 5:32 We are His witnesses of these things; and so also is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

5:33 But they, when they heard this, were cut to the heart, and determined to kill them. 5:34 But one stood up in the council, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, honored by all the people, and commanded to put the apostles out for a little while. 5:35 He said to them, “You men of Israel, be careful concerning these men, what you are about to do. 5:36 For before these days Theudas rose up, making himself out to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who

was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were dispersed, and came to nothing. 5:37 After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the enrollment, and drew away some people after him. He also perished, and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered abroad. 5:38 Now I tell you, withdraw from these men, and leave them alone. For if this counsel or this work is of men, it will be overthrown. 5:39 But if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow it, and you would be found even to be fighting against God!”

5:40 They agreed with him. Summoning the apostles, they beat them and commanded them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 5:41 They therefore departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for Jesus’ name.

5:42 Every day, in the temple and at home, they never stopped teaching and preaching Jesus, the Christ (Acts 5:17-42).