

## **HELL? NO!**

Pastor John-Paul (PJP) is the senior Pastor of Solid Rock at Market Common located in the beautiful Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Solid Rock is a multi-cultural and inter-denominational church. Basically, we are a bunch of imperfect people who love to serve a perfect God. Our church is filled with love, laughter, great music, deep Word, and lots and lots of fun!

As you read this booklet, we pray that your eyes are opened to an entire new realm that will one day, hopefully, be the place you will spend all of eternity. Heaven is real and it's filled with people who are cheering you on as you fight the good fight of faith. Use this booklet to gain 100% confidence that you will live for all of eternity in the Kingdom not built with human hands, but prepared for you with the hands of God, Almighty- the Maker of Heaven and Earth! Today starts your preparation for something more important than a vacation, more important than your next house, and more important than retirement. All of eternity is waiting on you!

**Solid Rock At Market Common**

**803 Howard Avenue. Myrtle Beach, S.C. 29588**

**[www.solidrockmb.com](http://www.solidrockmb.com)**

**843-781-5683**

## HELL? NO! (Heaven? Yes!)

Chapter One - Heaven is Real!	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Chapter Two - What in Heaven is Going On Up There?	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12
Chapter Three - Judgment Day!	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	17
Chapter Four - What in Hell Do You Want?	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	22
Chapter Five - Will You Live in Heaven or Hell?	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	26
Chapter Six - Amazing Grace	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	31
Chapter Seven - Angels and Demons	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	36
Chapter Eight - Why I Chose Christianity!	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	40
Chapter Nine - Live Like You Were Dying!	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	45
Chapter Ten - Preparing for Eternity	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	48

## INTRODUCTION

Imagine that you are part of a NASA team preparing to go to Mars. You spend years training on how to get to Mars. For over two years you use simulators and crazy scenarios with your fellow astronauts as you learn all about the trip to Mars. Every week it seems that NASA creates a different test that allows you and your team to develop the skills needed to withstand any and all circumstances that could come up during your ride on an incredibly large rocket ship to this uninhabited planet. These eight hundred days of listening, growing, researching, testing, and preparing were all very necessary to you and fellow astronauts who greatly desire to have a successful trip to the red planet. It seems you have finally grasped the magnitude of what is going to occur on the launch date. You asked every question you could think of and soaked in every ounce of wisdom that a person could receive on traveling to Mars. Now it's time for the big day. The launch date has been set, and the time to take off is coming near. You are extremely excited and nervous at the same time. You've anticipated this day for quite a while, and it's finally coming to pass.

As you and your fellow astronauts strap into the giant rocket, you begin to respectfully nod and smile as if to say "good luck" or "I'm proud about what we are going to accomplish." Just as everything on the ship is ready for take off, the countdown begins. 10...9...8...7... With 5 seconds left until blast off, one of your fellow astronauts looks over at you and screams loudly due to the engines that are running, "What do you know about MARS?" You scream back at the same decibel level while trying to smile, "I have no idea. I know nothing about Mars; I guess we'll find out when we get there."

Could that story possibly be true? Not the part about you being on a NASA space travel team, but the part about a group of astronauts who spend two years preparing for the trip to Mars without ever learning anything about the destination itself.

It seems that we spend every week at church learning how to handle our present conditions and circumstances and how we can be overcomers in this life. Don't get me wrong; we need to live a victorious life right now. We should have joy today, peace in our relationships now, and be financially stable. We should enjoy where we are right now.

What I'm getting at is this: we spend our lives dealing with where we are now, without ever studying where we're going to spend all of eternity. We celebrate when someone we love makes the decision to "get on the rocket ship" hoping to spend eternity in Heaven, but we don't put much effort in our life after the decision.

I wonder how many of us have gone on a vacation without ever planning anything. You know as well as I do that every family vacation we've ever taken has had many, many hours spent on preparation for that five day adventure. Think about this: we spend months planning out every detail of where we are going to spend a week of our lives, but hardly any time is spent learning about where we are planning on spending all of eternity.

So tell me, are you ready for this adventure to start? Are you ready to experience a different realm? Are you ready to start preparing your current life for a trip that will last long past billions of centuries? I'm ready! I'm not just ready to dive into this booklet; I'm ready for the place that I'm going to spend all of eternity in a city not created by human hands. I'm ready to spend countless millenniums with the One Who prepared a place for me long before I was even born. He didn't just prepare this place for me in Disney World, or on an exotic island in the Bahamas. The Master Builder himself made the home that I will have the pleasure of living in, and He knows me better than I know myself. Therefore I can't wait to see what He has in store for me.

## CHAPTER ONE - HEAVEN IS REAL.

### WHY HEAVEN?

In this first chapter we will tackle some complex questions about the place called Heaven. Why is this important? What are the applications behind learning about the beautiful city of Heaven? There are several answers to these questions. I believe that the more we talk about death and the life after death, the more we are reminded how short this life is. The more we think about how short this life is the more we want to witness to the unsaved. It seems that when we are focused on just “this life” and all that we face on a daily basis, the more self-centered we become. When we know that Heaven is real and that our future is eternal, the more obedient we become to the Creator of Heaven. Every single one of us should live every day on earth as if it were our last. When we are Heaven minded, it causes us to forgive more quickly, love bigger, and serve wholeheartedly. When we are focused on the sweet by and by more than the nasty here and now - we will hopefully make better decisions in life. We may even become more intentional while on earth.

### THE MAGIC KINGDOM

Speaking of Disneyland...If you had 1,000 tickets that would allow any person to have the privilege of living in the Magic Kingdom for as long as they wanted to, with everything they desired being provided for them, what would you do with those tickets? Each one of those tickets is good for one person. Free food, free rides, free room and board, and any other expense you can think of is all covered by simply having just one of those tickets. Would you call every friend, every family member, your neighbors, and co-workers, and offer them each one of your 1,000 tickets? Or would you keep it to yourself and possibly just give one of the tickets to the three or four members of your immediate family?

If you have any love in your heart for anyone other than yourself, you would be calling, emailing, texting, and even visiting 999 people, and offering them one of those tickets. Most likely every bit of passion inside of you would come out in your negotiation tactics to convince these people of how awesome it would be to live in the “Magic Kingdom” with no worries or cares about finances or anything else. Your entire family could live together for joyous years and exciting decades of riding rides and meeting new people who are already there, while at the same time having every need met...all because of your special tickets. People would surely thank you over and over again for inviting them to this lifetime of happiness.

Now if you had tickets to somewhere that was better than the Magic Kingdom, and these tickets didn't just last a lifetime, but they would last more than a lifetime. One of these tickets would be for each person for all of eternity. Oh, and by the way, you wouldn't just have just 1,000 of these tickets; you would have an unlimited supply. If you had THAT kind of ticket available, what would you do?

In this first chapter I have 20 questions and answers that paint a Biblical picture of Heaven itself. There are many questions that didn't make the list - either because I didn't want to spend the time proving it, or I didn't have a concrete answer for it. So I will give you my quick “maybe” answers to some of these questions hoping to provoke research on your part and see what God tells you after your mind and heart have been opened to this eternal home called Heaven.

### QUESTIONS THAT DIDN'T MAKE THE LIST

Will there be sports in Heaven? I believe most likely there will be.

Will there be new inventions in Heaven? I believe we will continuously invent new things, and we will continue to grow and learn.

Will we use the bathroom in Heaven? Not sure about this one. We will have Heavenly bodies and we will eat, but what happens after that - I'm unsure of.

Will there be marijuana in Heaven? I believe so, but I'm not sure what we will do with it.

Are there extinct animals in Heaven, like the fire breathing reptile that God and Job discussed? I believe so!

Will we drink coffee in Heaven? I hope so!

Does Adam have a belly button? Your guess is as good as mine.

Will we pick our nose in Heaven? My good friend told me, “If not, then it ain't Heaven!” I wasn't sure how to respond to that statement other than a good laugh.

The easiest way for me to answer our top 20 questions on Heaven is to use one verse from the Bible to prove all of my answers. I'll have other scriptures to back up my conclusions, but most of the theological answers will be from one passage in Revelation. Let me give you an example of how this will work.

**Acts 7:56** *“Stephen looked up and saw Jesus standing at the right hand of the Father...”*

From the scripture above we can see a few things about Heaven through the eyes of Stephen. God was kind enough to allow this disciple of Christ to physically see the place to which he was about to go. Through this simple scripture we can see that Heaven has stable, physical structures. Jesus stood! We know through scripture that Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father, but if we know Stephen saw Him standing, then not only are there physical structures to stand, but there is time also. It takes time to stand up from a sitting position.

We also see that Heaven is above the earth (we will talk about this later in this chapter). Evidently Jesus can see what is going on from the location of Heaven because Jesus stood up to welcome Stephen knowing that he was being stoned to death. We can also make the claim that we will know who people are even when we see them in their Heavenly bodies because Stephen knew it was Jesus at whom he was looking. God could have allowed Stephen to see Moses, Elijah, or King David, but Stephen saw and knew Jesus.

## **20 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT HEAVEN**

Before we begin to dig into the particular scripture that we are using as our main scripture for Chapter One, let me tell you how important it is that you never base your beliefs or absolutes on ONE scripture. God's heart is the entire Bible. You cannot read one email or one Facebook post from me and think you know all about me. In the same way we can't take one scripture on salvation, and use that one scripture as our ticket into Heaven for eternal life. I greatly suggest you study every single Bible scripture on salvation before you gamble your entire life on it.

**Revelation 6:9-11** *“I saw under the altar, the souls of those who had been martyred for proclaiming God's Word and had been faithful in witnessing. They shouted in a loud voice, O Sovereign God, holy and true, how long until You judge and avenge our blood of the people on earth who killed us? Each of them was given a white robe and were told to sit back and wait patiently a little while longer...”*

This scripture is about a group of martyrs who died and went to Heaven, and we are able to learn a lot about what is going on in Heaven through John the Revelator!

**1. Is Heaven a real physical place?** In our main scripture (above) we read about an altar that's in Heaven, we read about some robes, and God even told the martyrs to “sit.” The only way that an altar can be in a particular place, the only way people can wear robes and then have the choice to sit or stand rather than float around would be if that location (Heaven) were a real physical place.

**Genesis 1:1** *“God created the Heaven and the earth.”*

If earth is real, then Heaven is real. The same Author who wrote about earth is the same Author who writes about Heaven. Jesus mentions Heaven 70 times in the book of Matthew alone. Fifty-four out of sixty-six books in the Bible mention Heaven.

**Hebrews 11:10** *“Abraham was looking forward to the city which has fixed foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”*

Notice that the city of Heaven has “fixed foundations.” The foundation of a place is very important. Why would there need to be “fixed foundations” if the city was a spiritual place and not a real, physical location? It is so very interesting to me that Abraham grew up in a country of idol worshippers and evil people who wanted nothing to do with the One true God. Yet deep in Abraham's soul he heard from God. Abraham felt the calling to leave that place of ungodliness and look for the city created by the Creator Himself. The Biblical definition of Heaven is the city where God dwells, angels live, and where saved people go when they die.

**2. Do believers go to Heaven immediately after they die?** According to our main scripture, the martyrs went to Heaven when they died.

**Ecclesiastes 12:7** *“...then the dust [out of which God made man's body] will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.”*

**II Corinthians 5:8** *“...to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.”*

I've heard so many Pastors try to discuss the possibility that we are “asleep” after we die, and then later we are awakened by God during the rapture. However, my personal research points to the fact that as soon as a believer dies, he or she stands before God for the first judgment which is the judgment of faith. This judgment determines whether or not we go to Heaven or Hell and will be discussed in later chapters.

**Luke 23:43** *“Jesus said, I promise that today you will be with Me in paradise.”*

This is my favorite scripture pointing to the time in which we will be with God after we die on earth. The thief on the cross didn't pray the sinners' prayer, he didn't walk down the center aisle of a church during altar call time, nor do we know of any good deeds he did in his lifetime. In fact he had committed such awful crimes that he was dying on a cross. I personally wouldn't know of a more emotionally and physically painful death than hanging on a cross next to the One who is hanging on a cross for me. The best part about this so called sinner is that he simply turned to Jesus and said, “Remember me in Your Kingdom.”

This proves that salvation is a heart issue above all else. After the thief says that to Jesus, Jesus doesn't tell him that one day they will be together. Jesus doesn't say that after the rapture takes place they will get to hang out. Jesus looks at this man with the most loving eyes you could ever imagine and says, “TODAY you will be with Me...” Can you imagine any greater words to hear from Jesus Himself while experiencing the most painful day of your entire life?

**3. Will we have physical bodies in Heaven?** The martyrs in our Revelation scripture could see, speak, and hear. This implies that they had eyes, ears, and vocal cords. I don't know about you, but it sure would be weird to be able to see and hear and talk and not have a head or a body. The martyrs shouted with passion which implies emotions and volume levels. The martyrs heard God speak back to them.

All of the above information also tells us that we have brains and times of processing up in Heaven.

**Job 19:25-27** *“For I know that my Redeemer and Vindicator lives, And at the last He will take His stand upon the earth. Even after my [mortal] skin is destroyed [by death], yet from my [immortal] flesh I will see God, Whom I, even I, will see for myself, And my eyes will see Him and not another! My heart faints within me.”*

**I Corinthians 15:48** *“As is the earthly man [the man of dust], so are those who are of earth; and as is the heavenly [Man], so are those who are of heaven.”*

**Philippians 3:21** *“He will change our weak mortal bodies and make them like His own glorious body...”*

The encouragement I want to give those of you who are wondering what age you will look like in Heaven is that we will have Heavenly bodies. I can't imagine what that will look like, but according to Luke 24:39 Jesus ate food in His resurrected, Heavenly body. This tells me that our bodies must have stomachs, teeth, throats, etc.

Psalms 78:25 talks about food of angels. Revelation 2:7 says we can eat from the tree of life in Heaven.

Revelation 21:6 says that we will drink liquid.

**Revelation 19:9** *“God will bless everyone who comes to the wedding feast of the Lamb.”*

I also believe that we will have healthy emotions in Heaven. Galatians 5:22, Luke 6:21, 15:7 and Revelation 21:4 are all scriptures that point to that theology.

**Psalms 2:4** *“God sits in the Heavens and laughs.”*

If God takes time to laugh up in Heaven, I assume we will as well. Can you fathom what it will be like to hear God Almighty laughing?

Besides physical bodies with healthy emotions, we will never again sense disapproval. We will never feel insecure. We will never have thoughts of lust, worry, doubt, or disbelief. Anxiety will be no more. Never again will we be angry or fearful or bitter. Healthiness is all that we will experience.

**4. Will there be travel in Heaven?** Yes. The martyrs were told to “sit back and wait.” If they can move from the position of standing up to the position of sitting down, then why can't we move from one building to the next? When Jesus was in His Heavenly body, He disappeared in Luke 24:31 and then reappeared in verse 36 of that same chapter. This tells me that not only can we walk in our Heavenly body, but we can also go from one place to another in the blink of an eye.

In **Acts 1:9** Jesus defied gravity in His Heavenly body. **Psalms 104:3** talks about “riding on the clouds.” **Hebrews 11:5** tells us that Enoch was translated from earth to Heaven in his body. We know that Elijah was taken to Heaven in a whirlwind while at the same time some horses and chariots of fire were in the middle of the assist.

In **Acts 8:39** Phillip was translated from one city to another in his earthly body. If God can do that kind of traveling using someone’s earthly body, imagine what we will be able to do when we’re in the afterlife.

Besides all of that, if there are streets of gold and gates of pearls in Heaven, why wouldn’t we walk on those beautiful streets? Why wouldn’t we drive on the streets of gold, or fly over the beautiful city? Is there any sin involved in machines that are used for transportation? Don’t we walk for enjoyment sometimes? Have we not been given intelligence to create tools and desires to run and jump and fly? Who knows, maybe we can hang-glide over the city of Heaven!

**5. Will we wear clothes in Heaven?** I hope *you* will!!! **Revelation 15:6** tells us that some angels will wear sashes. In Matthew 17:2 when Jesus was on the Mount of Transfiguration, the Bible says that His clothing became dazzling white. In our main passage the martyrs were given robes. I assume that they weren’t naked before that. What I like to think about is how robes were popular back then. Maybe we will get jeans, suits and ties, dresses, etc. Maybe some of you will get poodle skirts or bell-bottoms.

**6. Will we still have our individuality in Heaven?** In other words, will there still be males and females, blacks and whites, tall people and short people? Of course there will be. God loves variety. Not only is there no sin in the color of someone’s skin, or his or her height, or his or her ethnicity, but many areas of our individuality are sacred to God. The martyrs were “each” given a robe. Notice that they each had a particular robe. I doubt it was a one size fits all. I’m sure that Jesus had each of their robes perfectly sized and structured for their bodies. It was probably the most comfortable robe that they could ever have imagined.

**Revelation 5:9** “*I saw every tribe and language and people and nation...*”

I believe in Heaven we will be Heavenly beautiful, not culturally beautiful. While we will keep our cultural base, our individual bodies will be Heavenly beautiful. I don’t know exactly what that means or what it looks like, but I am very excited to find out.

**7. Is there time in Heaven?** Yes, there is time in Heaven. Time in Heaven is not the same as on earth. We will discuss this in the next chapter, but for now please realize that we measure time by the sun, the earth, and the idea that perhaps we will live until we are 85 years old. We judge time by the fact that we have to sleep for 8 hours every 24 hours, and many more ways. Time in Heaven is different.

When the martyrs asked the question, “how long until...” God responded with, “...wait patiently”. If there was ever proof that time exists in Heaven, it comes from God telling someone to be patient. That is my least favorite word on earth because every time it’s used it means, “I’m not getting what I want at this time.” At least that’s how I see it. Grins!

**8. Will we remember our lives on earth when we are in Heaven?** The martyrs had memories. They knew they were martyrs. They knew they had been killed for serving Jesus on earth. We will discuss this more in chapter 2.

**9. Can people in Heaven see what is happening on earth?** Not only did the martyrs remember that they were killed on earth, but they had deep concern for justice to be done. They knew that God had not yet dealt with the people who killed them.

When Elijah and Moses were brought down from Heaven to meet with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah knew that Jesus would soon make His exodus from earth. The two great prophets knew what was happening on earth.

**10. How will we be known in Heaven?** While we’re on earth, most people “know” us by the fruit we produce. In other words, we are known on earth by our job and where we work, the way we dress, where we attend church, how old we are, how many children we have, where we go to school, etc. We “know” people

on earth by what we see them producing in this world. In Heaven, we will be known by what our service to Jesus was like on earth. The martyrs were known in Heaven as men who had been killed for serving Jesus.

This is actually one of my favorite points. If there was ever a reason for you to get up off your selfish butt and start making your life count, it's this point. How you spend your time on earth will determine how you are known in Heaven for all of eternity. We will talk more about this in chapter 3.

**11. Will we know EVERYTHING when we get to Heaven?** The answer is No! We will not know everything when we get to Heaven (even though many people think they know everything NOW). The martyrs asked the question, "How long..." because they didn't know the answer. The exciting thing is we will be more eager to learn than we ever have been. We will understand things more clearly.

Not knowing something is not a flaw. For the rest of eternity we will have the privilege of learning new things. We will get to learn about what Martin Luther King, Jr. was thinking when he wrote his famous speech, "I Have a Dream." We will get to ask Abraham what was going on in his head as he was walking Isaac up the mountain. We will get to hear teachings given by John the Baptist and Billy Graham.

I can't even fathom how much more we will desire truth and knowledge when our minds have been cleared of all worry, fear, lust, or confusion.

**12. Will we see and talk to God when we live in Heaven?** The martyrs had a conversation with God, and God responded back to them. I'm sure this point hasn't hit you yet, but we will get to CONVERSE WITH THE FATHER. We will have audible conversations with the Creator of the Universe. We will sense His acceptance and approval of ourselves as we have discussions with the One Who is the definition of Intelligence and Love.

**13. Where is the present Heaven?** This is a fascinating question. Let's start with the fact that there was a place referred to as "paradise" where believers were waiting for the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus, in order to go to Heaven. This place was called Abraham's Bosom. I personally like to refer to it as the first Heaven. The location of the future or eternal Heaven is mentioned in the next question. Before I suggest where I believe the present Heaven is, let's look at some scriptures.

**Deuteronomy 26:15** "O Lord, look down from Your Holy place in Heaven and bless your people..."

**Matthew 6:9** "Jesus lifted His eyes and prayed, Our Father..."

**Ecclesiastes 3:1** "...a time for every purpose under Heaven."

**Luke 24:51** "Jesus blessed them, and was carried up into Heaven."

According to the scriptures we just read, it seems that Heaven is just above the Earth. Scientists at Yale, Princeton, and Stanford say there are ten unobservable dimensions with an infinite number of imperceptible universes. If that is even remotely true, then why can't we believe there are at least two dimensions in our universe that we just can't see with our physical eyes right now? These dimensions are Heaven and Hell!

**Colossians 1:16** "Through Christ God created everything in heaven and on earth, the seen and the unseen things, including spiritual powers, lords, rulers, and authorities..."

Notice that even the things we cannot see are real and were created by God. Just because we can't see it with our natural human eyes, doesn't mean it isn't real and exists right now.

**14. Where is Eternal Heaven going to be?** This is an easy answer.

**Revelation 21:10-12** "He showed me Jerusalem, the Holy City, coming down out of Heaven from God and shining with the glory of God. The city shone like a precious stone, like jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall with twelve gates and with twelve angels in charge of the gates. <sup>16</sup> The city was perfectly square, as wide as it was long. The angel measured the city with his measuring stick: it was fifteen hundred miles long and was as wide and as high as it was long. <sup>21</sup> The twelve gates were twelve pearls; each gate was made from a single pearl. The street of the city was of pure gold, transparent as glass."

If you calculate the square miles of this CITY, it would come to the average amount of two hundred million square miles. Assuming that there will be stories or floors in this city, if each floor were an average of twelve feet high, that would be about six hundred thousand stories high.



**15. Will believers who commit suicide go to Heaven?** This question is very dear to my heart as I'm sure it is to yours. I have had several friends take their own lives, and the answer to this question plagues me on a regular basis. I don't know the correct answer, but I have a pretty good guess. I am going to simply remind you of Samson. Samson lived a pretty rough life. Toward the end of his life he was suffering awful consequences for his disobedience to God and ended up as a blind slave grinding at the mill as a prisoner of his enemies. We all know the story of how Samson killed himself along with the Philistines, and we also know that Hebrews 11 gives reference to Samson being with Jesus in Heaven.

What does this mean? I think it means that God intentionally doesn't answer this question in the Bible with a black and white concrete answer so that many people don't take their own lives and give up what God may have for them to do on earth.

The apostle Paul said in **Philippians 1:21-24** *"For what is life? To me, it is Christ. Death, then, will bring more. But if by continuing to live I can do more worthwhile work, then I am not sure which I should choose. I am pulled in two directions. I want very much to leave this life and be with Christ, which is a far better thing; but for your sake it is much more important that I remain alive."*

**16. Will there be marriage in Heaven?** Yes! There will be marriage in Heaven, but only one. We will be married to Jesus. The bride of Christ will be united with her groom. (Ephesians 5:31-32, Matthew 22:30)

The institution of marriage between husband and wife will end, but deep relationships will be forever, and they will be better in Heaven than they were on earth.

The relationship that you and your spouse have together on earth will be a better relationship when you get to Heaven. If you are wondering about sex, just remember that God created sex. While there most likely will not be sex in Heaven, I'm sure that God has a way for an even better gratification to occur there. God could have a special high 5, wink of an eye, or a kind of food- that produces a greater *feeling* in Heaven than sex provides on earth. Please don't ever forget that the highest form of loving God is to love people.

Another question that goes along with this same point is, **\*Will we want to be with anyone besides Jesus?** Yes, we *will* have a desire to hang around other people.

In Genesis 2:18 the only thing that God said was not good BEFORE the CURSE was for man to be alone. It's interesting to me that Adam wasn't alone; God was with him. This tells me that there is something very powerful about a woman. God put something inside a woman that is so unique to what a man desires that God Himself was not enough.

We are also told that we will sit and feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This means that there is nothing wrong with *wanting* to talk to someone or hang out with someone other than Jesus. The presence of God will be everywhere. Just like on earth when the Holy Spirit goes with you while you are playing with your children or in a small group at church, God's presence will be with you in Heaven. Think about this: one million years from now you will still be making new friends in Heaven, and because we won't run out of time, we will never have to give up any old friends.

**17. Will we be tempted to sin in Heaven?** Let's look at some scriptures before we dive into that question.

**Revelation 21:4** *"there will be no more death..."*

**Romans 6:23** *"the wages of sin is death..."*

**Matthew 13:41-42** *"The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth..."*

If we are unable to die, then we can't sin, because the result of sin is death. Adam and Eve had a tempter in the garden. In Heaven, there will be nothing to tempt us.

**Revelation 21:27** *"nothing impure will enter Heaven."*

**Romans 6:7** *"anyone who has died is free from sin. Jesus died once and He will never have to die again."*

**Hebrews 9:26-28** *"for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him."* **Hebrews 10:10** *"And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all..."*

If you're wondering about Lucifer, he was an angel. Jesus didn't give His life for angels. So stop worrying that you're going to get kicked out of Heaven after you arrive there. You get to stay in Heaven forever. Actually, if you study the original Greek language in the New Testament, you will see that you are bound for Heaven after you give your life to Christ. You HAVE to live in Heaven for all eternity!

**18. Will our pets be in Heaven with us?** I love answering this question. People love their animals, and I have had many people ask questions on this subject. Let's start by making the following truth statement- Animals are NOT created in the image of God. Animals are not equal to humans. Jesus did NOT die for animals. No matter how much you love your pet gold fish, your little guppy cannot get saved. However, God loves animals very much and they have a specific purpose.

**Proverbs 12:10** "A righteous man has kind regard for the life of his animal, but even the compassion of the wicked is cruel." **Genesis 1:25** "So God made the wild animals of the earth according to their kind, and the cattle according to their kind, and everything that creeps and crawls on the earth according to its kind; and God saw that it was good (pleasing, useful) and He affirmed and sustained it." **Isaiah 65:25** "Wolves and lambs will graze together; lions and oxen will feed on straw. Snakes will eat only dirt! They won't bite or harm anyone on my holy mountain. I, the Lord, have spoken!" **Luke 12:6** "...not one sparrow is forgotten in the sight of God."

Animals were created to serve God and serve us. Jesus used a fish to gather the gold coin that paid for His taxes. God used a whale to taxi Jonah from one location to another. Elijah was fed by ravens every day for three years because our God always provides.

There ARE animals in Heaven.

**Revelation 8:13** "I saw an eagle flying in Heaven, and I heard it crying with a loud voice..."

**Revelation 19:11** "Then I saw heaven open, and there was a white horse."

We can read about horses from Heaven that came to earth in order to assist in transporting the great prophet Elijah up to Heaven, as well as Heavenly horses that God allowed the servant to see.

**II Kings 2:11** "Elijah and Elisha were walking along and talking, when suddenly there appeared between them a flaming chariot pulled by fiery horses. Right away, a strong wind took Elijah up into heaven."

**II Kings 6:17** "Then he prayed, "Lord, please help him to see." And the LORD let the servant see that the hill was covered with fiery horses and flaming chariots all around Elisha."

So, will our pets be in Heaven? All creation awaits the coming of Jesus. God makes all things new, and He loves us more than we love ourselves.

**Romans 8:19** "...all creation (nature) awaits expectantly..."

**Revelation 21:5** "See! I make all things new."

**Matthew 7:11** "...how much more will your Father in Heaven give good things to those who ask..."

I believe that the very fact that it would please you for your pet, Fluffy, to be in Heaven is a good enough reason for God to make your pet *new* in the city which He has prepared just for me and you.

**19. Will animals talk in Heaven?** This question comes totally from my heart alone. I have never heard anyone ask this, but as you will soon read, it is a very legitimate question. Let me ask you this: did animals talk before the fall of man? Before sin ran rampant throughout the earth, it seemed to be very normal for animals to speak.

**Genesis 3:1** "The serpent was more crafty than any animal...and he said to the woman..."

Notice that not only did the serpent speak, but it was also crafty. The snake wasn't just crafty, but it is being compared to other animals as we are told that it was "MORE crafty" than any other animal.

When the snake spoke to Eve in the garden, not once do we read that Eve was shocked that the snake actually spoke. She never ran back to Adam saying, "Honey, one of the animals spoke to me."

**Numbers 22:28-29** "Then the donkey said to Balaam, "What have I done to you? Why have you beaten me these three times?" Balaam answered, "Because you have made a fool of me..."

In the above passage the prophet and the donkey were conversing. Even though this was after the fall of man, sin had not yet covered the earth as I think it did later.

**Revelation 5:13** "and I heard every creature in Heaven sing..."

In Revelation 5:13 the scripture tells us that every creature in Heaven is singing. Can you imagine hearing your German shepherd singing harmony to the world renowned song, "Shout to the Lord"?

## **20. Do babies and children and stillborn babies and aborted babies who died on earth go to Heaven?**

Jeremiah 1:5 tells us that God's call on our lives was there before we were even born.

**Ecclesiastes 6:3** *"You may live a long time and have a hundred children. But a child born dead is better off than you, unless you enjoy life..."*

This next scripture brings question number 19 and question number 20 together.

**Isaiah 11:6-8** *"Wolves and sheep will live together in peace, and leopards will lie down with young goats. Calves and lion cubs will feed together, and little children will take care of them. Cows and bears will eat together, and their calves and cubs will lie down in peace. Lions will eat straw as cattle do. Even a baby will not be harmed if it plays near a poisonous snake."*

Remember when David's little baby died? The response that this mighty man of God gave touches my heart and gives me assurance that all little babies who die have gone and will go immediately to Heaven.

**II Samuel 12:23** *"Now that he is dead, I cannot bring him back. I shall go to him, but he cannot return to me."*

**Mark 10:14** *"Jesus said, Let the little children come to Me, because the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these."*

There was a five-year-old little girl named Ashley who was hospitalized due to a very unique disease that had no cure. When she heard that she was going to die, she immediately started crying just as any person, adult or child would do. Ashley loved Jesus and wanted to be with Him in Heaven, but she didn't want to leave her family. So the entire family went outside the hospital room into the hallway, and one by one they began to enter the hospital room with Ashley until the whole entire family was with her.

Once the family was all together with Ashley, her mother said, "Ashley, this is what Heaven is going to be like. First, you're going to go ahead of us, and then one by one we are each going to follow you until we are all together once again."

The only thing that would have made that analogy better would have been if someone represented Jesus and was in the hospital room with Ashley from the very beginning. They would have had to find someone who was full of unconditional love and peace. This person would have had to have the warmest smile you could imagine. They would also have had with them all of Ashley's saved relatives who had already passed away along with the Bible characters that she heard about in Sunday School.

One more very important quality in that hospital room analogy would have to be that the hospital room Ashley was in was the most breathtakingly beautiful place in existence with solar systems ready to explore. Oh, and don't forget, a few talking animals as well.

In Job 1: 2-3 the Bible says that Job had 7 sons and 3 daughters, and owned 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 1,000 cattle, and 500 donkeys. You know the story of Job; he lost everything that he had in a matter of a few months. By the time we get to the end of the book of Job, after he prays for his friends, the Bible tells us how God blessed Job's life by giving him twice as much as he had before.

**Job 42:12-14** *"The Lord blessed the last part of Job's life even more than he had blessed the first. Job owned 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 2,000 cattle, and 1,000 donkeys. Job also had 7 sons and 3 daughters."*

Wait a minute. If God promised Job double for all the trouble he went through, wouldn't God have to give him 20 children in the end? We see how faithful God's promise was by giving Job double the animals. If God can bring twice as many animals into Job's life, surely He could also double the amount of children that Job lost. Or did Job not lose any children? If God promised double, and we know that God cannot lie, then when God gave Job 10 children at the end of his story, this means that he didn't LOSE the previous 10 children: THEY SIMPLY MOVED.

If one of my children moves to Charleston, S.C. from our home in Myrtle Beach, I'm not losing that child, they are just moving. When Job's first 10 children passed away, he didn't lose them, they simply moved. Job's first ten children moved to Heaven. So toward the end of Job's life when God blessed him with double, 10 more children means that Job ended up with 20 children in total.

Let this passage comfort you knowing that if you had a child who passed away at an early age, you didn't lose that child, he/she simply moved to a place that was prepared for them by the hands of our Ever-living God, the Creator of both Earth and Heaven!

Rest assured that every desire you could ever have will be fulfilled in Heaven. I hope that I get to spend all of eternity with you. God Bless.

## CHAPTER TWO - WHAT IN HEAVEN IS GOING ON UP THERE?

At Christmas time we all get invited to parties. Parties are so fun! If you're a popular person then you probably get invited to several parties around the holiday season, and sometimes those parties overlap each other.

Picture yourself leaving a fun-filled office party in order to attend another party. A person whom you greatly respect is overseeing this second party. A wonderful mentor from whom you have gained so much knowledge over the years personally invited you to this backyard BBQ Christmas party. This person exhausted their resources to pour into you for years and years of your life. You can't wait to see them and just say "Thank you" for all that they have helped you to accomplish in your life.

As you pull up to their home, you immediately notice that their *home* is actually a huge mansion. When you open the door of your car and step out onto the front lawn, the smell of BBQ fills the air. The closer you get to the privacy fence surrounding the backyard, the louder the laughing and celebrating becomes. When the gate opens up, you see flowers and decorations everywhere; there are dozens and dozens of picnic benches filled with people who seem to be the happiest people you've ever seen. The closer you get to the crowd of other invitees, the more you begin to recognize a lot of them. In fact you know ALL of them.

Over to the left you see your best friend from second grade. At that same table are your youth leaders who supported you during those crazy teenage years. At the next table is a relative of yours from over 100 years ago. Another relative appears and then another. How in the world do you recognize these ancestors of yours whom you have never met before?

**Matthew 17:1-5, Luke 9:29-34** *"Jesus took Peter, John, and James up the mountain. While Jesus was praying, the appearance of His countenance became altered and His clothes became dazzling white...Suddenly the three disciples saw Moses and Elijah in Heavenly glory talking about Jesus' exodus...There came a cloud and overshadowed them..."*

Peter KNEW Moses and Elijah simply by seeing them. How did he know them? Moses and Elijah lived over 1,000 years before Peter. Not only that, but Moses and Elijah knew that Jesus was about to die! How did they know that? Moses and Elijah had been in Heaven while all of this was going on down on Earth. This beautiful passage reminds us that we will somehow *know* each person we meet in Heaven as well as to be able to see what is going on down on Earth.

In 2012 my PaPa passed away. He was a very unique man. His sense of humor was outstanding. When I visited him in the hospital just days before he passed, I told him what a great PaPa he was for me. I let him know that I loved him very much and was grateful to have had him in my life. The last thing I said was, "Put in a good word for me when you get to Heaven."

### WHAT ARE PEOPLE IN HEAVEN TRYING TO SAY TO US?

In Hebrews chapter 11, we have the "Hall of Faith"! This chapter gives us short references on the lives of some of our heroes of faith and what they accomplished. What's interesting to me about this is how the next chapter in the Bible begins. To understand the value of this upcoming point, you have to know that there wasn't any punctuation when the Bible was first written. The commas, periods, and quotation marks were all added years later. The chapter references make it easy for us to find a scripture, but it can also cause us to not see the big picture. In other words, I believe that Hebrews chapter 12 verse 1 is the final conclusion to Hebrews chapter 11.

**Hebrews 12:1** *"Therefore then, since we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses, strip off every unnecessary weight...let us run with determination the appointed race that is set before us." (Do you realize all these veterans are cheering us on? They are saying, "Get on with it! Start running and never quit!")*

Our life is described as an appointed race. This scripture paints a picture of a huge stadium up in Heaven with all of these saints of old as a great cloud of witnesses, looking down to us and cheering us on. The point I want you to see is: you're not running alone! Every person up in Heaven is encouraging us to stop wasting time, stay determined, and fulfill your God-given destiny.

My favorite sport growing up was soccer. I remember specifically Coach Bullard. This man thought I was the greatest soccer player in all of Myrtle Beach. He would cheer for me, encourage me, and tell me how talented I was. I can remember so many times hearing him yelling to me from the sidelines, "Go JP! Go

JP! You got it. Run boy, run! Shoot it! Score!" One particular time when I was on the sidelines and Coach Bullard didn't know I was standing behind him, I heard him telling some parents who were in the stands what an amazing athlete I was. I heard him say, "Do you see how fearless JP is? I've never seen a teenager who is able to react so quickly out there on the field."

Let me tell you something. It does something on the inside when I know I have someone who is rooting for me. When I heard my coach cheering for me, it caused me to kick the ball harder, run faster, push further. Every time he yelled my name I could feel my adrenaline rising, and I accomplished things out on that field that I wouldn't have normally accomplished without that voice being raised on the sidelines.

Imagine Noah calling your name. He says, "Heed the warnings of God. When everyone else was making fun of me and living in disobedience, I did what God told me to do. I built that boat and took care of those animals. I was scared. There were times I was confused. But the one thing I knew was that God told me to assemble an ark, and with His help, I obeyed. God saved my family, and we started a new world. Now I'm cheering you on from Heaven as you step out and obey the voice of our Father."

**Hebrews 11:7** *"By faith Noah heard God's warnings and obeyed."*

Has God ever given you what seems to be an impossible promise? I see this lady step out of the crowd, she says, "I know how you feel. All I wanted was a baby. God gave me the promise that I would one day conceive, but year after year and nothing happened. My name is Sarah. At first when God told me this desire of my heart would come to pass, I laughed. And I laughed. And I laughed. But for some reason, one day, something happened deep in my heart. I remember thinking how impossible it seemed in the natural, but it occurred to me that God is not a natural God. He is supernatural. So I went out on a limb, and I decided to believe."

**Hebrews 11:11** *"By faith Sarah received physical power to have a child even when she was long past the age. She knew God was true to His Word."*

"My encouragement from Heaven to you is Never Give Up Hope."

Many of us have had unfair things happen. People have mistreated you, turned their backs on you, and just about left you to die an emotional death.

"Don't be discouraged. I've been where you are. My name is Joseph. Hebrews 11:22 mentions me as one of these heroes of faith. I started out excited about my future. But my brothers became jealous of me, and they threw me into pit. Then they decided to do me a favor and sold me into slavery. As a slave I did my best to honor God, but one day I was accused of a crime I didn't commit, and I was thrown into jail. Can you believe that for thirteen years I served in the prisons of Egypt? At times I felt as if God had left me. At times I didn't think there was any reason to use integrity and honor God, but I used every ounce of faith I had and I remained *faithful in the small areas*.

I used my ordinary gift of organization while I served in the prison. I also had the gift to interpret dreams. Sometimes it felt useless. There were nights when the enemy would bombard me with thoughts of discouragement and hopelessness. Sometimes I wanted to stop helping other people, but deep inside I knew that our God is a faithful God.

One day the king of Egypt had a dream. He was so desperate to find out what his dream meant that he interviewed anyone and everyone who could interpret dreams...even me. I was in the dungeons of Egypt among the lowest of the low. When they summoned me to the palace and told me of the dream, God immediately gave me the interpretation. Pharaoh was so impressed that I went from the prison to the palace in a matter of minutes.

Twenty-three years after God gave me the dream that I would be put in charge of much, He brought it to pass. If you can hear me, I'm yelling at the top of my lungs (Genesis 50:20) 'What the enemy meant for evil, God used for my good.' If I hadn't been thrown into prison, I would never have been able to interpret Pharaoh's dream. Now I am a living testimony that *when you're faithful with little, God will trust you with much*."

My grandfather on my father's side of the family (Grand-dad) loved to give. He was a giver in life. He always had money in his pockets, and he would give to anyone and everyone. My Grand-dad was able to help finance many ministries on Earth while he was here. If there is anything he is shouting to me, it's "Give! Give! Give your life away. At the end of your life you won't be remembered for what you collected, you'll be remembered for what you gave. Don't let money be your god. Allow money to be a tool in which you help build the kingdom of God."

## WHAT ARE THEY THINKING ABOUT US- UP IN HEAVEN?

*1 Corinthians 13:12* "Now I know in part, but then I shall know and understand clearly, just as I have been clearly known by God."

In Heaven they see the big picture. If I can be a little blunt, please don't be offended, but Heaven doesn't care what YOU want. Heaven sees that our time on earth is limited, and we have a destiny to fulfill. We have lives to touch, ministries to grow, and friends and family to impact. If you have children, you know what it's like taking them to the pediatrician around flu season and getting them their flu shots. My kids hate shots. I hate shots. If you want to see a tantrum being thrown so violently that it makes you decide to just let your kids get the flu, then watch videos of my children when they were between 4 and 10 years old at the doctor's office getting their flu shots.

As the parent of five children I know that even though the shot involves some pain. It's only a few seconds of discomfort, but it will produce something positive that they need. I'm sure you always realize that a few seconds of a painful shot is much better than a week or two of the flu. In the same way a lot of the things that you and I find discomfoting and painful in our lives are just a few seconds of pain compared to the reward that is in our future.

How many times each day do we get discouraged, bent out of shape, uptight, anxious, and disturbed? We want Heaven to feel sorry for us as we throw ourselves a quick pity party, but all of Heaven sees is the big picture. Heaven is telling us, "Get up! Stop being so easily offended. Wipe yourself off and pursue your destiny. Stop letting those little annoyances steal your peace. Put your big boy (or girl) Underoos on and face life like a mature believer."

I'm sure that you have someone in Heaven right now whom you miss terribly. We like to imagine our loved one smiling down on us, trying to reach out and wipe our tears, or blowing us a kiss. But after our loved one reaches Heaven and sees how short our earthly life is, don't take this the wrong way, but they don't have time to miss you.

*James 4:14* "You do not know the least thing about your life tomorrow. You are a wisp of vapor which appears then disappears."

Have you ever put your crying child in the nursery at church during the one hour or so of worship service? Most of the time it's the mom who struggles with letting her little baby cry in the arms of a nursery staffer while debating on whether or not to go enjoy the adult service.

I have 5 children as I said earlier, and I can tell you two things about babies and the church nursery. One - you deserve to enjoy a church service for one hour every single week of your life. Two - no matter how badly your baby cries, he/she will never, ever remember those 60 minutes of sorrow that they suffered while in the hands of a loving church employee, with other babies, and in a room full of toys and colors and animal crackers. Yet the mommy thinks it's the most detrimental hour of her baby's life.

If your children are grown up, as some of mine are, you finally see the big picture. You are the mature adults who want to tell the new mommy, "Let your little angel scream bloody murder. Just drop them off, leave briskly, and enjoy time with other adults as you get fed the Word of God. Who cares if your baby turns red, poops his/her diaper, or crawls on a pile of Legos- IT'S ONLY 60 MINUTES!"

Your life on earth is like one hour in the nursery compared to all of eternity in Heaven. I believe that when our loved ones get to Heaven before us, and they experience GOD Himself and all that Heaven has to offer, they don't have time to think too much about you and me. They know that within the blink of an eye, we will be right there with them, enjoying traveling from solar system to solar system and sitting down to eat dinner with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We all know God has a great plan for our lives, but too many times we feel insecure, not special, below average, or not good enough.

"I killed a man. I ran from God. Then when God told me about the great plan He had for me, I made excuse after excuse. My name is Moses. I told God how badly I messed up, but He wouldn't listen. I told God that I couldn't speak well, but He didn't care. I told Him I was scared and unsure of myself, but He didn't converse with me much about that. Finally, after I discovered that He wasn't going to budge, I submitted my life to Him and it turns out He knew exactly what He was doing.

Not only did I get to speak on behalf of the Creator of the Universe, but He chose ME to lead His people out of slavery and into freedom." *Hebrews 11:27* "By faith Moses left Egypt taking all the Israelites with him across the Red Sea to dry land." "Now I'm standing up in the grandstands in Heaven and cheering on all the people who think they don't have what it takes to do what God has called them to do."

Years ago the football team with the worst record ever made it to the playoffs, had home field advantage, and beat the world champions. When asked how they could overcome such incredible odds and win such an amazing victory, they said, "We owe it all to the crowd that was cheering us on!"

Friends, we have home field advantage. There are no critics in our crowd. They are 100% for us. They're shouting your name saying, "Go! Go! Go! V-I-C-T-O-R-Y!"

"I'm cheering on everyone who's made mistakes. My name is Rahab, and I was a prostitute. I did such bad things. I felt trapped in a world that was filled with chaos and demonic activity. I didn't see a way out. I thought I was going to die in this evil world that I grew up in. I figured that I deserved whatever horror was coming my way. Nobody could have made worse decisions than I made in my life.

One day out of the clear blue everything changed. These spies snuck into my country and started telling me about this God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I dared to believe. I decided to hide them in my home from my own countrymen. It's so funny how a lifetime of horrible choices can all be turned around by one Godly decision. Those missionaries who told me about God came in to take over my country, but they spared my life."

**Hebrews 11:31** *"By faith Rahab was not destroyed along with those who refused to believe..."*

"From that day forward I was a changed woman. I received God's forgiveness, and He had the audacity to put me, a former prostitute, in the lineage of His Son, Jesus Christ."

I love cheering for my kids. When they play sports, I scream so loudly that you can hear me above every other parent on the sidelines. I've been asked to quiet down several times over the years by the referees. By faith we need to hear the roar of the crowd. By faith we need to see our loved ones standing up and cheering us on. By faith we need to see Moses, Joshua, Esther, Sarah, Daniel, David, and all the other heroes telling us to forgive quicker, give larger, and love unconditionally!

**Romans 8:18** *"I am sure that what we are suffering in this present life cannot compare with the glory that will be shown to us."*

It really bothers me when I hear people complaining. Complainers usually focus conversation on themselves and their negative circumstances (which we all have). Complainers wonder why nothing is changing for them. It's because complaining only makes matters worse, but praising God in the midst of our negative circumstances is what causes God to show up and show out in miraculous ways. I know this because there are two men who are cheering us on, reminding us about a time when they were doing the right thing, and the wrong thing happened to them. Their names are Paul and Silas.

"One day we were preaching about Jesus, not hurting anyone. In fact we were actually giving people hope and helping people who were lost. The government officials didn't like what we were doing, and they threw us in prison. If that wasn't bad enough, they beat us with lead whips and chained us up in the deepest, darkest dungeon. With blood pouring down our backs after doing exactly what God told us to do, we didn't complain. We didn't murmur. We weren't even telling everyone how bad our lives were."

**Hebrews 11:36** *"...were made fun of and beaten with whips, and chained in jail."*

"As we sat in that prison, chained up, bloody and in pain, we began to sing about our God. It was very interesting how it started. I heard Paul start to hum. At first I didn't know where it was coming from. I never would have guessed that he had the energy to make any sound other than moaning and groaning from the whips. But then I heard it again. Paul got louder and louder, and I began to recognize the tune."  
*When I think about Jesus and what He's done for me... When I think about Jesus and how He set me free - I could shout! Shout! Shout! Shout all night!!!*

"The guards thought Paul was crazy. To be honest with you, I wondered if he had gotten hit in the head during one of those whippings. But I figured he knew what he was doing, so I joined along in harmony."  
*When I think about Jesus, and what He's done for me... When I think about Jesus and how He set me free - I could dance! Dance! Dance! Dance all night!!!*

The strangest thing began to happen. The louder we sang, the harder the guards laughed. But we sang, and we danced, and we shouted praise to God, and at 11:59 pm something weird took place. The prison began to shake. The jail cell shook harder and harder until the door fell right off. The guards ran toward us, and just as soon as they got to our cell, this huge angel appeared.

I'll be honest with you; at first, I was a little taken aback. One of the guards peed his pants, but the other one asked Paul about salvation. Before I knew what was happening, the chains that had bound us were laying on the ground. Paul and I, with our newly saved convert (prison guard #2), were dancing our way

out of the dungeon and into freedom. Now we're shouting from the grandstands in Heaven, telling all of you that when it looks dark, when it looks like it's over, don't complain. Don't give up. Don't throw in the towel. PRAISE GOD until the chains fall off, and you see the freedom in sight that you know God has promised you."

I have a friend named John Ross. He moved to Heaven a few years ago. This man battled the demon of cancer for eight years. He went in and out of comas, had hundreds of tests, dozens of chemotherapy rounds, and was in and out of hospitals for almost a decade fighting different sicknesses and diseases all caused by his cancer. During this time, he remained faithful in our church and served in every way he could, week after week, year after year. Even while John was on constant morphine, he would sing in the choir, serve as an usher, and basically do anything we needed him to do.

By faith I can hear John saying; "Don't let anything stop you from serving God, not even the pain and agony of cancer! Look that demon in the face and tell it to be gone in the Mighty Name of Jesus!"

The last man to step out of the crowd says, "Noah may have been scared, Sarah may have doubted, Joseph had some unfair situations, Paul and Silas were mistreated, but I got them all beat. I was DEAD! My name is Lazarus.

I was in the grave already starting to stink. I was buried. Life seemed over for me. My situation looked impossible, done, finished, caput. But my two sisters just would not give up."

**Hebrews 11:35** *"through faith women received their dead relatives raised back to life."*

"When my sisters rolled away the stone, I heard Jesus call my name. 'Lazarus!' I thought I was hearing things. But His voice came through to the grave once again, 'Lazarus!' I sat right up. I said to myself, 'Jesus? Are you talking to me?' The voice came through loud and clear the third time, 'Lazarus, come forth!' I pulled off those nasty cloths, I stood straight up, and I walked out of that tomb. You should've seen the look on the faces of those town people!

I am shouting from Heaven telling you to keep pressing forward and believe that God can resurrect dead dreams! Fulfill your destiny while you have the time. Spend every day as if it were your last."

What do you hear them saying from Heaven today? Can you hear the crowd cheering you on?

I would like to close this chapter with one scripture that will tell you the greatest way you can "bless" those in Heaven (for a lack of a better word).

**Luke 15:7** *"I tell you, there is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine people who do not need to repent."*

Do you want your loved ones to rejoice at a level that is higher than any other level? Yes, there is singing and rejoicing and dancing and laughing up in Heaven. However, it is very clear as to what we can do on earth to give those in Heaven something to celebrate at such a high level that it surpasses anything else to cheer over. We can LEAD SOMEONE TO JESUS.

Everything tied to your destiny involves leading people to our Lord. Why is this? It is because that is the only way that the people on earth will ever get to go to that place called Heaven.



## CHAPTER THREE- JUDGMENT DAY!

Judgment day will be the worst day and the greatest day of your life if you have a relationship with Jesus Christ. I didn't say "if you believe in Him", nor did I say, "If you KNOW Him." I'm sure you know who you spouse is, and you believe that he/she is real, but being married to someone involves having a relationship with that person.

**II Peter 3:11** *"You should serve and honor God by the way you live, looking for the day when God judges everyone."*

**Hebrews 9:27** *"Everyone has to die once, and after that be judged by God."*

According to the scriptures above: Will unbelievers be judged by God? Will believers be judged by God? The scriptures use the word "everyone." Will rich people be judged? Will Africans who lived without electricity and running water be judged by God? Will people with mental retardation be judged? Will intellectual professors and doctors be judged? Will God judge EVERYONE?

The answer to the above questions is, "YES!"

Will we be judged based on our faith, or will we be judged based on our works? YES!

There are two judgments in your future and my future. The first judgment is the JUDGMENT OF FAITH. This determines whether we go to Heaven or Hell. This first judgment is based solely on our faith.

**Ephesians 2:8** *"For it is by free grace that you are saved through your faith. And this salvation is not because of works (anything you have done) but it is the gift of God."*

This scripture confirms that Hitler could be in Heaven along with Mother Teresa. Now, of course, we can look at the fruit of Hitler's life and pretty much assume that he never had a relationship with Jesus. However the thief on the cross simply looked over to Jesus and said, "Remember me." Jesus responded by telling the man who was hanging on a cross for his bad behavior and poor choices, "Today you will be with Me in Paradise."

Think about this: that man never walked an aisle, never said the sinners' prayer, and by the way he died, we can assume that he lived a very bad life. This is the power of God's grace and incredible mercy.

**Titus 3:5** *"He saved us because of His mercy, not because of any good things we have done."*

The millisecond you die, you will be either in the presence of God or in the presence of Satan. That will be your first judgment. The Judgment of Faith will immediately determine WHERE you spend all of eternity.

In Matthew 20:1-16 we read about the parable of the laborers in the vineyard. It is basically the story of a construction company owner. This boss needed to hire some help one day. He started by hiring a few men at 9 A.M. and told them he would pay them \$100 if they would work until 5 P.M. that same day. They agreed and began working.

After lunch the construction owner hired a few more men for the same deal. He told them if they worked until 5 P.M. he would pay them \$100. They, too, agreed and began working. Then around 4:45 P.M. a very lonely, lazy, undisciplined man showed up on the construction site asking for help. The construction owner told him, "I see that you have wasted your money, wasted the entire day, and you look as though you're a lazy bum. Nevertheless, I'll pay you \$100 if you will work for me until 5 P.M. today."

Jesus said that Heaven was similar to that story. Whether you spend your life serving God or you call out to Him while hanging on your cross, Salvation is a free gift and is the ONLY way we can get to Heaven.

I know what you're thinking: "Well then why the heck am I serving at my church, tithing, and forgiving stupid people? Why am I going out of my way to obey God week after week?" The answer is because our faith determines WHERE we spend eternity, but our works determine HOW we spend all of eternity.

The second Judgment Day is the Judgment of Works. This is the final judgment for all people, believers and non-believers.

**Ecclesiastes 12:14** *"God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil." I Peter 1:17* *"He judges all people according to each man's work. So you must honor God while you live on earth."*

This is where many Christians argue about grace versus works. They say, "Why do we need to have a second judgment if you're already in Heaven or Hell?" The answer is because it MATTERS how we live on earth. The way we treat people, the way we spend money, the level to which we serve our local church, how

quickly we forgive someone who offends us, all determines WHAT our eternity in Heaven or Hell is going to be like.

First, let's look at the unbelievers' judgment of works; this is called the Great White Throne of judgment. This second judgment for unbelievers determines what Hell is going to be like for them for all of eternity.

**Revelation 20:11-15** *"Then I saw a great white throne and the One Who sits on it. Earth and heaven fled from His presence and were seen no more. I saw the dead, great and small alike, standing before the throne. Books were opened. Then another book was opened, the Book of Life. The dead were judged (sentenced) according to what they had done, as recorded in the books. Then the sea gave up its dead. Death and Hell gave up the dead they held. And all were judged according to what they had done according to their **motives** and works. Then death and Hell were thrown into the lake of fire. (This lake of fire is the second death.) Those who did not have their name written in the book of life were thrown into the lake of fire."*

The unbeliever who gave to charities, volunteered at soup kitchens, was faithful in his/her marriage, and worked diligently at his/her job, but never gave his/her life to Jesus, will not receive the same punishment in Hell as Adolph Hitler. We must never forget that God is a just God.

**Matthew 11:22** *"I assure you that on the Judgment Day of God it shall be more tolerable (less suffering) for Tyre and Sidon than for you! People of Capernaum, do you think you will be honored in heaven? You will go down to Hell!"*

The above scripture is very important. In order to fully understand it we must bring up the fact that Tyre and Sidon rejected Jesus Christ, but Capernaum REALLY rejected Jesus. In other words just as the scripture said, all those in Tyre, Sidon, and Capernaum went to Hell, but God was more TOLERANT of Tyre and Sidon. Basically this proves that there are degrees in Hell. And by "degrees" I don't mean Fahrenheit.

**Romans 2:5** *"But you refuse to repent. You have a hard and stubborn heart, and so you are storing up wrath on the day of wrath when the Day of the judgment of God will be revealed."*

This scripture is dealing with people who have refused to acknowledge their need for Jesus Christ, and therefore they are going to Hell. While they were on earth, they were storing up wrath. Basically, the Day (which is capitalized because it is referring to a specific named day/time) of second judgment for these people who refuse to repent is going to be worse than others due to the fact that they have stored up wrath.

Trust me when I say you do not want to ever see the Great White Throne of Judgment.

Now we can look at the Believers' judgment of works; this is called the Judgment Seat of Christ. We will already be in Heaven because of our relationship with Jesus while on earth, but this judgment will determine what ALL OF ETERNITY is going to be like for us in Heaven.

**II Corinthians 5:10** *"We must **all** appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one may receive his pay according to what he has done in his bodily life, both good or evil - considering his purpose and  **motive**, and what he has achieved, been busy with, and given himself and his attention to accomplishing."*

The most important word in that scripture is the word "motive." It's great that we attend church, serve our local body, give, tithe, lead, sing, worship, smile, greet, teach, but my question to you is: Why do you do those things? We can do tons of good things in our bodily life (as the scripture says), but if our motives are impure or selfish, we will never see any eternal rewards.

**Matthew 6:1, 6** *"Do not do good deeds in order to be seen by men; otherwise you will have no reward. <sup>6</sup>your Father, Who knows what is done in private, will reward you openly."*

Why do you do what you do? Do you wear masks to cover up who you really are and what you really think? Remember, Jesus got most upset with the religious people, the Pharisees. Jesus called them pretenders and hypocrites. It was because they did all the right things on the outside, but they did it for the wrong reasons, so they never received any reward. The Pharisees tithed their income, they prayed long prayers, they attended church, but they did it to look good in front of people and to make others think highly of them. This is why they never received any eternal rewards for all their service.

**Matthew 23:27** *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, pretenders, hypocrites! You are like white graves, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of death."* How do you act when you don't get your way? Are you looking for something in return when you give and serve?

I knew a lady once who loved to sing in church. She would lead worship, sing solos, and learn new songs constantly. I thought for sure that she had a bank account up in Heaven that was overflowing. But one

day when we asked her to sing in the choir and let someone else use that microphone, you would've thought I had asked to sacrifice her first-born child. She was so upset. She stormed into my office and later told me, "I will never sing in your church again if I can't sing on a microphone."

The reason this saddened me so much was because I knew about all the time and energy she had spent over the past two decades singing, leading, learning new songs, singing solos, etc., and all of that time she spent getting to church early and practicing was all a waste. The only reward she ever got was what people thought about her and the compliments she received. Because her motives were impure, she never received any eternal rewards. Her bank account in Heaven for all of her singing at church was overdrawn.

**I Corinthians 3:13-15** *"the work of each one will become [plainly, openly] known when the Day of Christ (judgment) exposes it. On that Day fire will reveal everyone's work; the fire will test the **character** and real quality of the work each person has done. If any man's work survives this test, he will get his **reward**. But if it is burnt up, he will lose everything [all **reward**] though he himself will be saved."*

Why we did what we did will be revealed to all of Heaven. Every person we helped, every friendship we developed, every "thank you" card we wrote, every time we sang in the choir, or gave in the offering will be brought up before our Lord Jesus, and every good thing we did for the wrong reason will burn up, and we will see no reward.

Where you spend all of eternity is dependent upon whether or not Jesus is your Lord, but HOW you spend all of eternity is also dependent upon how you lived on earth. For those of you who have a 401K, a savings account, or a retirement plan, you realize that the future always comes. Wise people know how to plan for their future.

**Proverbs 16:2** *"the ways of man are clean in his own eyes, but the Lord judges our motives."*

Sometimes we've worn a mask for so long that we forget to ask God to help us with our thoughts, our motives, or our attitudes. We have a mask for work, a mask for home, even a mask for church. The religious masks are the worst kind. We've come into church and gotten so used to lifting our hands, singing, giving, serving, etc., that we forget why we even do it. Don't go another day doing the right thing but having the wrong motive on the inside. It's a waste of time to live one way on the outside, with something totally different going on inside. Hypocrites will soon find out that their eternal bank account is empty. God wants to reward us.

**Revelation 2:23, 26-28** *"I am He Who searches minds (the thoughts, feelings, and purposes) and the [inmost] hearts, and I will give to each of you a reward according to what you have done. I will give authority over the nations to everyone who obeys My commands by doing the works that please Me, to the very end."*

**Matthew 16:27, Revelation 22:12** *"Listen!" says Jesus. "I am coming soon! I will bring My rewards with Me, to give to each one according to what he has done."*

**II Timothy 4:8** *"the victor's crown of righteousness will be given to me on that Day for being right with God and doing right..."*

**Revelation 2:10** *"be loyally faithful unto death and I will reward you with the crown of life."*

It's not enough to just do the right thing; we have to be right with God if we want to see His rewards. Also, notice that there are different crowns in Heaven as rewards for doing certain things here on earth.

Will every Christian receive the same reward in Heaven? The answer is No! The believer who tithes, witnesses, builds healthy relationships, submits to authority, etc., will receive GREATER rewards than the believer who complains, has a bad attitude, is self-centered, steals the tithe, holds on to offenses, etc.

**I John 2:28** *"Abide in Christ. Then we will not hide in shame on the Day He comes."*

Why would any BELIEVER hide in shame? It is because they will realize on the Day of Judgment that they wasted their destiny on earth.

What is the easiest and most enjoyable path to receiving eternal rewards? That is an excellent question and my answer for you may not be what you were expecting, but please continue reading until the end. The easiest and most effective and enjoyable way to receive eternal rewards in Heaven is by joining a healthy Bible-based church on earth and giving yourself to that local ministry.

**Luke 19:11, 17** *"The Kingdom of God will be like this...Well done My excellent servant. Because you have been faithful in a very little thing, I will make you governor over ten cities."*

The more excellent our service is NOW in the Kingdom of God, the more we get to serve when we arrive in Heaven. On earth we use the word "work", but God uses the word "serve." Serving Jesus on earth

and in Heaven is very important. The more excellent we are now, the more faithful we are now, the more we will get to serve for all of eternity.

I remember one time when I was little and my parents sent me to a soccer camp. I loved soccer and I was a very good player. I'm still really good, I'm just a lot older. Anyway, that week was a very exciting week for me, not because I got to play soccer, but because I made a lot of friends and goofed around most of the week. I played pranks on people; I made tons of hilarious jokes; I even messed with the soccer camp counselors. It was my week to reign as the biggest jester they had ever seen.

At the end of the week, on our final day, we all gathered in the big auditorium. I'll never forget walking into that room and seeing trophies up on a table near the stage. After everyone had entered the big room, the soccer coaches began calling out names and handing out trophies.

Can you believe I NEVER GOT A TROPHY? Me! The greatest soccer player in the room! I was the fastest, the strongest! I could defend. I could score. I was an incredible athlete, but I never received a reward. If I had ONLY KNOWN that there was going to be trophies. If I had only known that they were planning on calling out individual names in front of everyone. If I had only known that they were recognizing the kids who had used their skills to the best of their abilities, I would have done things much, much differently that week.

Can I tell you something? There are going to be rewards one day. God is planning on calling out names. He is going to make sure all of Heaven knows who remained faithful and excellent in their service on earth. God will announce the rewards to everyone who refused to waste their destiny on planet earth, and who spent their limited amount of time wisely, doing all that God called and planned for them to do.

**Matthew 6:19-21** *"Do not store up riches for yourself on earth where moth and rust destroy. Instead, store up treasures for yourselves in Heaven...For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*

The Bible teaches us that where we put our treasure shows where our heart is. Did you know that God's heart is for YOU? This is why He puts His treasures in a place that is being stored up for you.

Where is your heart? Where do you put your treasure?

We seem to make decisions every single day as if we are going to live until we're 90 years old. The way we spend money, the amount of time we spend with our loved ones, the level of diligence we have in our work: is all based on the subconscious thought that we are going to be here for a long time. The truth is that we are going to live long past 80 or 90 years old; we are going to live forever. So stop making choices every day that are based on this short earthly life. Stop saving up treasures where moth and rust destroy, and start creating your Heavenly bank account! That is the only account that will last for billions and billions of millennia.

Feel free to take your family on a field trip one day to a local junk yard. Show them all the TREASURES that men neglected their kids for. Show them the treasures that caused divorces. Show them the treasures that children cried for, and families went broke over, and people worked 60 hours a week to earn. Take a good long look at all the earthly treasures that moth and rust have destroyed, and then ask yourself, "What is more important, this life or the next?"

What are you doing that will last for eternity? What decisions have you made in the past month, or what decisions are you going to make this week that will affect you for the next billion years? Or are you so concerned with today and this earthly life that your Heavenly bank account is in the negative?

On our upcoming Judgment Day, will anyone be judged differently?

**James 3:1** *"We should not all try to become teachers, for you know that teachers will be judged by a higher standard and with greater severity than other people. ...teachers shall receive a stricter judgment."*

**1 Peter 5:1-4** *"I want church leaders to watch over their sheep willingly in order to please God... not because you have to, but from a real desire to serve. Be an example...and when God appears you will receive the crown of glory."*

It seems to me that we Pastors and leaders will be judged by a higher standard than others. Well now, how many of you want to lead a small group after hearing that?

My last question and final thought for this chapter is: Which one of US will be the GREATEST in Heaven? What I mean is out of all of us, Pastors, leaders, worship and youth Pastors, deacons, Bishops, etc.: Who is going to be the greatest? Is that an arrogant question? Didn't the disciples ask Jesus the same thing? Is it wrong for me to ask? That question may or may not have crossed your mind at some point during this chapter, but I think it's a valid question. The reason I think it is okay to ask that question is because the Bible gives us a clear answer.

Who will be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?

**Matthew 23:11-12** *“The greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven is the greatest servant who humbles himself.”*

Notice that the one who humbles himself the most on earth will be the one whom God promotes the most in Heaven. God judges a Christian’s works based on how HUMBLE (teachable, easily correctible, submissive, willing to change, servant oriented) he was in RELATION to how much truth was presented to him.

Think about the man in an African tribe who only got his knowledge of God through a one-time missionary versus the American believer who had access to the Internet, TBN, Pastors and teachers, all who could explain the Word of God and the heart of God so easily. Is God going to judge both of those men the same? Is God going to ask the African tribe member why he didn’t tithe? Is God going to ask the African tribe member why he never ministered to the widows or served in his local church?

God is going to judge each person based on how HUMBLE he or she was in relation to how much truth was available to them. Let me ask you a question: What is your excuse for not studying the Bible, serving in your church, giving in the offering, helping the needy, using your gifts and talents to build the body of Christ? You may not like those questions, but I can promise you that one day you will be asked the very same thing, not by me, but by Almighty God.

**Isaiah 66:1-2** *“The Lord says: Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool. I created the whole universe but the only thing I am looking for is a humble man who obeys My Word.”*

## CHAPTER FOUR- WHAT IN HELL DO YOU WANT?

How difficult is it for us to understand that APART from Jesus Christ we are wretched sinners who are vile and disgusting in our thought life? Without Jesus we are filthy, dirty scumbags. Before Jesus saved me, I was the nastiest, most deceptive fornicator and liar. Before God came into my life and saved my soul, I was continuously evil and angry and jealous and insecure. I'm thankful that I know who I am in Christ, but I am more thankful that I know who I am apart from Christ. Because knowing who I am apart from Christ helps me to have a deep desire to never leave His side.

I'm sure that was more information than you expected at the beginning of this chapter. The reason for all of the above was to help you understand the power behind having knowledge of Hell. We ALL need to know what Hell is like and how painful and sad it is for those who will spend all of eternity there. It's not just enough to know how great it will be to live in Heaven; we also need to understand what happens if we DON'T make Jesus the Lord of our life. Just like in chapter one I have a few questions and answers that will help you understand what Hell is like, so you do whatever it takes not to go there.

### 1. IS HELL REAL?

II Peter 2:4, Luke 10:15, Psalm 55:15, Amos 9:2, Is 14:15, Numbers 16:30. All of these scriptures not only talk about Hell, but they point us to believing that Hell is in the center of the earth.

The same book that teaches us about Heaven also teaches us about Hell. If we believe that Heaven is real, according to the Word of God then we should also believe that Hell is real. Hell is mentioned 167 times in the Bible.

Jesus preached about Hell 33 times in three years. This is an average of once a month. Jesus preached about Hell MORE than He preached about Heaven. Why would Jesus, the man who loved people and was full of compassion, preach about Hell once a month? It's because He didn't want ANYONE to go there.

### 2. WHY DID GOD CREATE HELL?

Before mankind was created Heaven was full of angels. The most beautiful angel was named Lucifer. Lucifer was the worship leader in Heaven. The goal of this beautiful angel was to reflect all praise and glory onto God Almighty. One day up in Heaven the Bible tells us that Lucifer had a THOUGHT. This thought had something to do with wanting to take worship away from God and place it on himself. As quickly as that thought came, just as quickly God threw him out of Heaven and down into Hell.

**Isaiah 14:12** *"Satan was thrown down from Heaven."* Not only did Satan get kicked out of Heaven, but somehow he was able to deceive 1/3 of all the angels into rebelling against God and following him.

As a side note, I would love to encourage all of you who have children that have gone astray. Please don't ever take blame for the decisions made by someone else. There is no excuse for anyone to turn their back on God. God was the perfect parent. The angels didn't live in the projects; they lived in the most beautiful place in existence. The angels had the greatest Father you could imagine. They were never mistreated, yet 1/3 of the angels rejected God and left Heaven forever. This tells me that even if you or I are perfect parents, our kids will still grow up to make the decisions they want to make. Yes, we can make life easier for them, but we are not responsible for their final choices in life.

**Matthew 25:41** *"...Go into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels!"*

I'm going to make a statement that I hope you remember forever. **Hell was not created for you, but Heaven was (John 14:2).**

### 3. WHY DOES GOD SEND PEOPLE TO HELL?

God doesn't send people to Hell. People reject God and go to Hell. When we were born we were given a free-will. Our free-will is selfish and prideful. Our free-will is self-centered and ungodly. Our human nature DEFAULT is Hell.

**Romans 1:19-21** *"that which is known about God is evident to them and made plain in their inner consciousness, because God [Himself] has shown it to them. Ever since God created the world, his invisible qualities, both His eternal power and His divine nature, have been clearly seen through the things He has made (His handiworks)...So that people have no excuse at all."*

Notice the scripture that tells us how God speaks to every single person's conscience. In other words everybody gets a chance. Some people are so prideful and selfish that they ignore the still small voice until they have become desensitized. They would rather believe that they came from a monkey than spending one day of their lives researching and asking questions in order to use less intelligence and energy to believe the truth about God.

People reject God and choose the world over the Creator of the world on a daily basis. God even tells us, "Everyone who seeks will find. Anyone who knocks, the door will be open." Don't you see that EVERYONE and ANYONE can find Jesus if they simply try?

#### **4. HOW COULD ANYONE REJECT A LOVING GOD?**

It's easy for us to think, "If I could see Heaven, then I would believe in Jesus and give my life to Him." Well, Satan saw Heaven. He lived there. He had the perfect relationship with God, and lived in the perfect environment, but he rejected God.

"If I could walk and talk with God, then I would gladly serve Him the rest of my life." Adam and Eve walked and talked with God daily, yet they turned their backs on God and believed the lies of Satan himself.

The Bible says in **Isaiah 5:14** "*Therefore Hell has enlarged...*" Notice that Hell has enlarged due to necessity, NOT by design. People continuously rebel against God and refuse to accept a FREE gift.

#### **5. WHY WON'T GOD APPEAR TO PEOPLE AND TELL THEM ABOUT HELL?**

"If God would simply visit my son, or my uncle, or my friend, face to face, and tell him or her about Heaven and Hell, THEN that loved one would get saved and turn his or her life over to God." Not true! It's a heart issue.

God DID appear to mankind! His name was Jesus. We rejected Him so completely that we killed Him on a cross. Yet all He did was love, heal, teach, and give His life away.

"If Jesus would reign over the entire world and we could see His ultimate power and omniscience, THEN people would believe!" Wrong again, my friend.

**Revelation 20:8** "*After the thousand years are over, Satan will deceive people into following him...*"

Jesus IS going to reign. Not just for a few years, but for a thousand years. This is called the Millennium Reign. Sometime in the near future the entire world will see the Reign of Jesus Christ, and yet even after all that, Satan will still deceive people into following him.

This is the reason that I have to remind you, if someone is in Hell, God gave him/her every chance He could give, yet his/her heart simply did not want to serve Him. From the beginning of time to the end of time, all God has ever wanted was a family. And do you know what God gets once the world has burned up and all is finished and over? He gets a family!

#### **6. WHAT IS IT LIKE IN HELL?**

I once read about this family that was trapped in a burning car and unable to escape. The witnesses said that they had never heard screams and sounds like the ones they heard that day. They had no idea that those painful cries could come out of human vocal cords. What is Hell like? Hell is HOT! In Hell you will still have a physical body with physical pain.

**Matthew 10:28** "*...destroy both soul and body in Hell (Gehenna).*"

On earth if we are ever in severe or unimaginable pain, we have a mechanism in our bodies that causes our bodies to shut off, and we pass out. I'm sure you've heard of people who have passed out from pain. Or you have watched videos of someone who sliced their finger, or who were in an accident, and they didn't intentionally pass out. Their bodies simply couldn't handle the pain, and they shut down.

Well, in Hell that mechanism is taken out of your body. You will constantly and continuously feel that pain for millennium after millennium.

There is no light in Hell. On earth light helps us with mental stability. Even blind people can sometimes see light and dark. Being able to see outlines of objects allows us to remain stable.

**Matthew 8:12, 22:13** "*...thrown into outer darkness (blackness), where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*"

In Hell you will never SEE anyone. In Hell you will never talk to any person. There are degrees and parts of Hell where some people will spend all of eternity in the utter and complete BLACKNESS. Doesn't

this make you want to run as far away from Satan as possible and grab hold of Jesus and say, "Help me to never leave Your side and always remain in Your light?"

In Hell you will never FEEL any physical object. There are parts of Hell and degrees of Hell that many people will be in for all of eternity in which they will never sit down, touch anything or anyone, and never walk or lay down. In Revelation chapters 9, 11, 17, and 20 the Bible tells us that Hell is a bottomless pit or abyss.

In Hell you will never REST. Resting keeps us emotionally stable. I get so tense when I watch a movie that involves training for the Marines. I can't stand the parts where they make the soldiers stay up all hours of the day and night with no sleep. You can see the emotional pain and mental instability when someone goes just a few days without any rest at all. Even though I'm referring to movies, I'm sure you are aware of what this is like. Well in Hell there is no rest, ever!

**Revelation 14:11** *"The smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; they have no pause, intermission, rest, or peace..."*

In Hell you will never have an ounce of hope! Hope is what keeps us moving forward in life. When we are in pain, physically, mentally, or emotionally, the reason we continue going forward is because we have hope that the pain we are suffering will disintegrate at some point.

**II Thessalonians 1:9** *"they will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, separated from the presence of the Lord..."* I feel certain every person in Hell has had this thought, "After I have been here for ten billion centuries, I won't have one less second to be in this place." All hope is taken away from them.

When someone commits suicide, it's because Satan has deceived them into believing something that is true in Hell, but a lie on earth. That deceptive thought is: "There's no hope for me." The devil is a liar. While we are on earth, there is ALWAYS hope.

## 7. WHAT ARE PEOPLE IN HELL SAYING TO ME?

Wouldn't it be cool if we could talk to someone who is in Hell and hear what it's like for him or her? Well we can. The Bible gives an account of a man who is in Hell.

**Luke 16:19-31** *"There was a certain rich man who clothed himself in fine linen and feasted every day. There was also a beggar named Lazarus covered with sores, hoping to be fed by the crumbs from the rich man's table. The poor man died and was carried by angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man died and went to Hell. Being in **torment**, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus at his side. He cried out, Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am **tormented** in this flame. Abraham answered, 'Remember that in your lifetime you had everything good and Lazarus had everything bad. Now he is comforted and thou art **tormented**. Besides all that there is a deep pit between us and no one from either side can cross over.' The rich man said, 'Then I beg you father Abraham, send Lazarus to my house where I have five brothers, that he may testify unto them, so they will not come to this horrible place of **torment**.' Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the prophets to warn them.' The rich man said, 'No, that is not enough. But if someone were to rise from the dead and go to them, then they would repent.' Abraham said, 'If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.'"*

Notice the word "torment" is in that scripture several times. If you could talk to any person in Hell right now, they would scream this to you... "PLEASE DON'T LET ANYONE COME HERE!!!"

Just like the man in the scripture above, I'm confident that every person in Hell has thought, "I hope my kids don't come here. I hope my spouse doesn't come here. I hope my friends don't come here." The good news is: maybe while they're in Hell, they'll think of you. You're a believer, right? You are a Christian. You serve Jesus. Maybe the people in Hell who know you would scream out to you, "Please tell my children about this place. Please let them know how easy it would be to avoid this place. Please tell my friends about Jesus."

But then they may think, "They probably won't tell my family about Jesus. They didn't tell me. We talked about football, the news, the President, but they never told me how easy it would be to go to Heaven and spend all Eternity with God Almighty."

I realize that this may have been a tough chapter for you. I realize that it's not easy hearing about Hell, and that there may be loved ones and friends whom you once knew, but they're dead now, and that wherever they are, it's too late. There's nothing that can be done about those who have already passed, but there's a lot that can be done with those still in your life today.



While we are on the subject of Hell, I have to share with you one last insight. We will call this our *Bonus Point!*

### **8. Bonus Point - Hell is like Gehenna, the valley of Hinnom.**

When Jesus preached on Hell, He used a Jewish word to describe eternal Hell that every person in the crowd understood more than they wanted to. Around 600 BC there was a continual fire in the Valley of Hinnom that was used for burning dead bodies of poor people. In that area if someone didn't have money to purchase a tomb or land in a graveyard, they would just get rid of the body by throwing it in the Valley of Hinnom. Because of this there was a continual smell of flesh burning.

King Manasseh and King Ahaz had both been known to deceive people into worshipping false gods, including Molech. Molech was an evil false god that King Manasseh worshipped so strongly and passionately that he and his people were deceived into sacrificing their own children in the fire of Gehenna. Jeremiah 7:31 tells us that they would burn their babies alive in the Hinnom Valley.

***II Chronicles 33:5-6** "Manasseh built altars to worship the stars. He burned his children (made them pass through the fire) in Hinnom Valley. He practiced witchcraft and consulted fortunetellers, mediums, wizards, and familiar spirits." They would force their own children to walk alive into the fire. They would even use whips to beat the children into this burning valley.*

***Mark 9:46, Matthew 13:42, 50** "...the fires of Hell (Gehenna) never go out. Where the worm [preys on the inhabitants of Hell and inflicts wounds] does not die and the fire is not quenched... there will be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth."*

The boys and girls would be so afraid and in so much pain that they would weep, wail, and gnash their teeth together until their teeth would fly out of their mouths while at the same time they were being burned alive BY THEIR OWN PARENTS!

Why would JESUS say all of this? Why would Jesus bring up such evil history? Why would Jesus describe in detail what the Valley of Hinnom was like? Why would Jesus communicate the past of King Manasseh and Gehenna?

The answer: Because Jesus didn't want ANYONE to go to Hell!

When I was 20 years old, I purchased my first house. It was the smallest house in the neighborhood, but I didn't care; it was a great house. Right across the street from me was the biggest house in the neighborhood; it was a two-story home with a big lot and a two-car garage. One night I was on my back porch really late, probably around midnight. I smelled the scent of smoke in the air. As I walked around to the front of my home, I could immediately see flames of fire coming from the large two-story home across the street. I ran into my home and called 911 (this was before cell phones). Then I ran back outside and across the street and began screaming the names of my neighbors trying to find out if anyone was inside the home. I yelled so loud that the surrounding neighbors all came out of their homes as well. The fire trucks and an ambulance showed up. It was all happening fast even though it felt like an hour. All of a sudden, the owners of the home that was burning to the ground pulled up in their car. Thank God they were not inside the house.

Of course, the owners of that home were crying hysterically as they watched their possessions turn into ash. They were glad to be alive, but the sight and sounds of this beautiful home crashing to the ground from a blazing fire would cause anyone to be an emotional wreck. The heat was so strong that I could feel it across the road in my own front yard. Thank God nobody got hurt, and their insurance built them an even better home once it was all said and done.

But the reason I told you that story was to say this: I seriously doubt that YOU would see your neighbors' house burning to the ground, and then go back inside of your own home and think, "Someone else will tell them. I'm sure God will send someone quickly to see if they are trapped in the house. Maybe I'll go inside my house, get on my knees, and just pray for them."

You would NEVER do that. You would run over to that burning home and do whatever you could to help rescue that family. Well, the good news is: your neighbors' house is not on fire. The bad news is: your neighbor COULD BE!

If your neighbors, your children, your friends, your family, or your co-workers do not have a relationship with Jesus Christ, the Son of God, according to the Bible, they will spend all of eternity on fire and in torment in the place called Hell!

## CHAPTER 5 - WILL YOU LIVE IN HEAVEN OR HELL?

There's a cemetery in Indiana with a tombstone that has a 100-year-old epitaph carved into it. It says: "*Pause, stranger, when you pass me by. As you are now, so once was I. As I am now, so you will be. So prepare for death and follow me.*"

A passerby scratched some additional words into the other side of the tombstone that read: "*To follow you I'm not content, until I know which way you went!*"

If I asked you point blank, "When you die, will you be in Heaven or Hell?" What would your answer be, and why? I'm sure, like most Christians, you would say that when you die you will be face to face with Jesus Christ in the presence of Heaven. You may even give me that all popular scripture reference, Romans 10:9. "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your **heart** that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."

So, let me get this straight: you are going to base your ETERNITY on one scripture? Did you read the part about believing in your HEART? Did you know that the same Bible that has Romans 10:9 in it also says in **Jeremiah 17:9** "*The heart is deceitful above all things.*"

Have you ever wondered whether or not there is more scripture than just Romans 10:9 to help us have more confidence on eternal life in Heaven? Don't you think it's a little bit weird to base the next billion millennia on one scripture? If your grown adult son or daughter lived anyway they wanted to, but told you not to worry because Romans 10:9 let them know that they are going to Heaven when they die, wouldn't you be a little bit concerned?

For years I battled salvation. Even up until the first few years of pastoring, I questioned whether or not I was going to Heaven. It was a constant fear in my mind that there was a chance I wasn't saved. I knew all about the Bible, I knew all about Jesus, but was I REALLY saved? I would sometimes wake up in cold sweats after having nightmares that my family made it into Heaven, but I ended up in Hell.

The good news is: We can know 100% whether or not we are going to Heaven.

**1 John 5:13** "*I write this to you so that you may know [with settled and absolute knowledge] that you have eternal life.*"

Notice we can have absolute confidence, and we will live in Heaven forever.

Have you ever sat down and read every single scripture on salvation? Or are you just gambling on Romans 10:9? That's a pretty big gamble if you ask me.

It seems like we spend more time studying and planning a trip to Disney World than we do Heaven. If we have a vacation planned to the Magic Kingdom, we'll call ahead and book a hotel, order tickets, plan our daily itinerary, decide ahead of time where we will eat, and we are disciplined to stick to that plan. But for all of eternity we just hope because we know all about Jesus that it's going to work out in our favor.

You don't have to remember the date! If I asked you when you got saved, if you said, "Maybe it was when I was 10 years old in summer camp. Or was it when I was 16 and walked the aisle of that old church? But I REALLY got saved when I was 24 and kneeled at the altar and said the sinners' prayer. Hmmmmmm, 10, 16, or 24? I pick 16. Yep! I definitely got saved at 16. Or 24? 16! Yes! 16."

The truth is that you may forget the DATE that you got married (once), but you can't forget that you ARE married. It would be impossible to forget the event that changed your life forever. The day that your spouse moved into your home would be a defining moment in your life that you will never forget. So let me ask you this, are you married? "Well, I think I'm married. I either got married when I was 16 or 24. I'm pretty sure it was when I was 24!"

By the time you get to the end of this chapter the same assurance you have right now about whether or not you are married is the same assurance I want you to have that you ARE saved and in covenant relationship with Jesus Christ.

### **Satan lies about Heaven!**

If you were Satan, wouldn't you lie to Christians about Heaven and salvation? Think about it: if you were the devil, and there was even a chance that you could deceive a person who attends church and talks about God, wouldn't it be to deceive them into THINKING they were going to Heaven when they really weren't? That would be the ultimate deception, and none of us is exempt from falling into the deceptive trap of the enemy.

So let me ask you again: are you going to Heaven or Hell?

**Revelation 13:6** “the satanic beast opened his mouth to blaspheme God and slander His dwelling place and those who live in Heaven...” Lucifer got kicked out of Disneyland (Heaven), and now he’s doing everything he can to keep everyone else from going where he can’t go. Satan will try to tell people that Heaven is boring. He will convince them that all they have to do is walk down the aisle of a church, and they will go to Heaven when they die. Lies! Lies! Lies! Just say a prayer, go to church regularly, and since you know who Jesus WAS, then you’ll go to Heaven when you die! I don’t know about you, but that seems to be a little too vague for me to base the rest of infinity on.

**There are more people in Hell than in Heaven.**

**Matthew 7:13-14** “Enter in the narrow gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction (Hell), and there are **many** people who enter through it. But the gate to life is narrow, and **few** people find it.” According to the above scripture, and simple mathematics, what is MORE- “many” or “few”? The answer is MANY. Jesus just said in that scripture that MANY enter into Hell and FEW people enter into Heaven. However, judging by most funerals, we think EVERYONE is going to Heaven. Preachers love to lie at funerals. I think that we get a pass to tell as many lies as possible in the 30 minutes that we talk about the deceased from the pulpit. “He was a good man. He came to church and really loved the Lord. We know that he is in a better place and is walking the streets of gold with the Lord Jesus Christ.”

“Really? That guy never tithed, never served in church, cheated people out of money, and treated different races as if they were second-class? THAT guy made it in to Heaven?”

“Well if that scoundrel made it into Heaven, then I KNOW I’m going to Heaven.” And so the deceit continues throughout the congregation. They see that the dirty, rotten scumbag businessman made it into Heaven so now our standards are even lower. Now we think everybody is going to Heaven.

## THE SALVATION TEST

It’s Biblical for people who THINK they’re saved to test themselves and see whether or not they are going to Heaven when they die. **II Corinthians 13:5** “Test yourselves and find out if you are really (saved) in the faith. If you pass the test, you will discover that Christ is living in you, otherwise you are counterfeits.”

Do you see that word, “counterfeits”? The flu shot is really a counterfeit of the flu. When we get the flu shot each year, it tricks our body into thinking we have a little bit of the flu. This is the way our body begins to fight it, and it builds up immunity toward the actual flu. Many people in the body of Christ have received a little bit of religion, or a counterfeit of salvation, and they think it’s the real thing. The counterfeit salvation tricks people into thinking they have the real thing.

Some people may be getting CONCEPTION confused with SALVATION (being born again). After conception there’s the pregnancy time, then there is the birth. Spiritual conception is the seed of the Word of God. This is when someone hears all about the Kingdom of Heaven. Conception is when God first tugs on a person’s heartstrings and lets them know that He is alive and well and real and wants to be a part of his/her life.

Pregnancy is what happens next. After the Word of God is planted in someone’s heart and life, they have to decide if they want to surrender all of who they are and all of what they have for a better and higher purpose and calling. Are they going to give God all of themselves? Are they going to surrender their will to His? Will they give what they thought was their money to God? Will they offer what they thought were their children and spouse to God with trust and confidence that He knows what is best? Will they become Disciples of Christ? Will they turn over their desires and ask God to put His desires into their hearts?

Unfortunately, pregnancy is the most difficult time. Conception is fun and easy. Birth is tough, but you see the results so quickly. Pregnancy is when most people abort the seed. They know God is real, they know Jesus died for them, but they’re not willing to turn their lives over to Him.

Birth, or Salvation, is when the seed of God’s Word has been planted in someone’s heart, and they have wrestled back and forth with what to do next. Then they decide that they DO want Jesus to be their Lord. They DO want Jesus to be in charge of their lives. At this point, the birth process takes place. Salvation has come, and they are now assured that they will enter into Heaven when they die on earth.

### **Salvation Test- Question #1: Have you called Jesus Lord?**

Many people think that because Romans 10:9 says to confess Jesus as your Lord that there is not much more to it other than that. "Just call Jesus, Lord, and you're saved." Sorry, but there's more to it than that. **Matthew 7:21** "Not everyone who calls me 'Lord, Lord' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven..."

I think the scripture speaks for itself. I hope that you or anyone you love isn't basing their entire eternity on the fact that they verbally call Jesus the Lord of their life.

### **Salvation Test- Question #2: Have you used Godly gifts to do great things for people?**

After all, when we see someone in church or on Christian TV who is using his/her gifts to build up the Kingdom, obviously they're saved. Could there be a chance that your Pastor ISN'T saved? Could there be a chance that the worship leader of your church ISN'T saved? Could it be true that your Sunday school teacher ISN'T going to Heaven?

**Matthew 7:22-23** "On Judgment Day, many will say to Me Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name and driven out demons and done many mighty works in Your name? But I will tell them openly, I never knew you; depart from Me, you wicked people."

Jesus doesn't FORGET. The scripture doesn't say, "I used to know you, but I don't anymore." No! The scripture says, "I NEVER knew you". This scripture tells us that MANY people who did a lot of good things for God THINK that they are saved, but will be shocked when Jesus tells them that they aren't allowed into Heaven. They preached, sang, served, gave, but never made Jesus their LORD. Basically, this scripture tells us that MANY people are deceived. They think they are going to Heaven, but they discovered after it was too late that they were never saved. It doesn't say they used to be saved, but changed their minds. It says they were NEVER saved. Grace gets us into Heaven, but the works we do for Jesus determine what eternity is like for us. Please never forget that it's all about the relationship.

There's a famous musical called "Fiddler on the Roof". The story behind this musical is about a family that grew up with many traditions, one of which is the idea of prearranged marriages. The daughters desire to marry men whom they love, while the parents were planning on choosing the "perfect" husband for each of their daughters. As the daughters try to explain to their parents the desire to marry a man whom they "love", the father begins to wonder if his own wife loves him. After all, their marriage was prearranged.

The father in the story begins to sing a song to his wife, saying, "Do you love me?" She responds with all the works that she did for him over the years. "I've washed your clothes, cooked your meals, cleaned your house, given you children, and milked the cow..." But again he asks, "Do you love me?"

My question is: If MANY people who did things for God on earth like prophesied, prayed, went to church, are going to Hell, how many MORE who just attend church are going to Hell? "Well, God, I prayed for people at the altar. I preached good sermons. I taught children's church every other week. I cleaned the church. I sang in the choir." God is asking us, "Do you LOVE Me?"

### **Salvation Test: Question #3 Do you believe in God?**

A lot of people think that because they believe in God or believe in Jesus, that they are going to Heaven. After all, Romans 10:9 does say something about "...believe in your heart..." but what does this mean exactly?

**James 2:19** "Do you profess to believe in the one and only God, but then complacently sit back as if you had done something wonderful? Even the demons believe, and it makes them tremble."

**John 3:16** "...whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life." What does it mean to BELIEVE in God?

I spent several weeks dwelling on John 3:16. After all, John 3:16 is probably the most popular scripture in the Bible. This is one of the main scriptures that we Pastors use to lead people into a relationship with Jesus. But what does it mean to believe in Him? If I asked you if you believe in the President of the United States, you would say, "Yes. Of course I believe in him. I've seen him all over social media. I saw him in person at a big rally. I know he is real because he helps run our country."

I'm not asking you if you believe that Jesus was a real man, or that God exists, I'm asking you, "Do you BELIEVE IN JESUS?" In other words, do you believe in Who He is? Do you believe in what He stands for? Do you believe in His message? Do you believe that everything He says is truth and life? Do you believe He is the answer? Do you believe in what the Bible says about His heart for you and me and for the entire

world? Do you believe His motives are pure? Do you believe His Word is true? Do you support His goals? Do you want to spend time with Him? Do you want to please Him? Do you BELIEVE in the ENTIRE message of Jesus Christ? Now if I ask you if you BELIEVE in the President of the United States, your answer may change. Simply believing that Jesus existed isn't the way to Heaven because even the demons believe.

#### **Salvation Test: Question #4. Are you good enough to get to Heaven?**

Obviously, we all know that there is no level of "goodness" a person can reach in order to get into Heaven, but sometimes we Christians need to be reminded of this. There was a "good" man in the New Testament named Nicodemus. Nicodemus believed in Jesus, he believed in God, and he attended church. Nicodemus prayed regularly, he tithed, he fasted two times a week (that's two more times than you or I fast each week), and he memorized the first five books of the Old Testament. Now, according to your standard of being good enough to get into Heaven, who is *better* - you or Nicodemus?

I think if we were being honest with each other, we would both say that Nicodemus is a much better "Christian" than we are. I mean how many Christians in America have ANY books of the Bible memorized? How many Christians in America tithe faithfully every single week?

**John 3:1-5** *"There was a Pharisee (Jewish leader) named Nicodemus, who came to Jesus at night and said, Rabbi, we know that You have come from God, for no one can do these miracles unless God be with him. Jesus said, I am telling you the truth; unless a person is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus said, 'How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter his mother's womb again and be born?' Jesus answered, I assure you, unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be surprised when I tell you, you must be born again."*

Jesus told a man who does all the good things mentioned above that he is NOT going to Heaven unless he gets born again.

If you really want your mind blown, let me ask you another question: Who was a "badder" Christian: you or a man who spent years putting Christians in jail and leading the stoning of those who were closely following the disciples of Jesus? Remember Saul of Tarsus? Saul was there while Stephen was being stoned to death, and God used him to write over half the New Testament.

The thief who was on the cross next to Jesus did nothing good in his entire life as far as we know. In fact, he was such a bad man that he was hanging on a cross next to our Lord. He didn't walk the aisle of a church, he didn't sing in a choir, he didn't teach Sunday school - yet he is in Heaven right now. So, are you good enough to go to Heaven? Guess what? It doesn't matter! Now that we have gone over the top four reasons that people THINK they are going to Heaven, let's find out how to actually GET to Heaven.

#### **HOW DO I KNOW I'M SAVED, JESUS IS MY LORD, AND I'M GOING TO HEAVEN?**

This is a very important question. Let me start to answer this question by reminding you that we are all born going the wrong way. We are born unsaved. We are born into sin. We are born bent toward the direction of Hell. We are born naturally selfish, self-centered, and on a path of total self-destruction. If you want proof of this, go to a local daycare and watch all of the little children playing. Do you have to teach children how to say "mine", or do they somehow learn this on their own? Children steal toys from each other, they cry when they don't get their way, and they want what they want when they want it. We have to TEACH our children how to be good and do the right thing; it doesn't come naturally. We are all born selfish.

I grew up in church. I knew about the right way, but no matter how hard I tried, I always ended up going the wrong way. I LIKED being selfish and sexually immoral. My DESIRE was to do the wrong thing.

I'm sure if I could go back in time and ask myself if I liked being ungodly and evil, I would say "No", but looking back to my past life from where I am now, it was obvious that I enjoyed every minute of my self-centered ways. I tried hard to be good and do the right thing. I walked the aisle of the church many times. I prayed over and over again. No matter how hard I TRIED, I always ended up satisfying MY own selfish desires. Before I got saved, it was my natural tendency to do wrong.

**The FIRST thing** I did that started me on my path to salvation was I asked Jesus to be in charge. I told God how messed up I was. I explained in detail that I was an evil man and every day that I spent in charge of my own life was a day wasted. I told Jesus that I could not change myself no matter how hard I tried.

**Matthew 16:24** “If any man wants to come with Me, let him deny himself (his own interests), take up his cross and follow Me. If you want to save your own life you will lose eternal life; but if you give up your life for Me, you will find life everlasting.”

I used to be the lord of my life, but my life sucked eggs. I wasn't good at being in charge. No matter what it may have looked like on the outside, I was miserable inside when I was in charge.

**The SECOND thing** I did was I allowed Jesus to change me at His pace, in His way, and in His timing. When He came into my heart He changed several things immediately; other things He has gradually changed me over the years. I also recognize that some things may stay in my life forever as I limp like Jacob and must rely on God's sufficient grace like Paul.

The number one thing Jesus did for me was He changed the polarity of my heart. He changed my DESIRES. Before I was saved, I wanted to please myself. After Jesus saved me, He changed the polarity of my will like a magnet's polarity can be changed. Now I WANT to please Him.

**Philippians 2:12-13** “...work out your own salvation with reverence and trembling (discover what it really means to be saved), because God is always at work in you, creating in you the power and desire to do His will.”

Before I got saved it was my default to live for me. After I got saved it became my default to live for Him. Now it is no longer a struggle to WANT to please Jesus. My question for you is: When did this happen to you? When did your desires change? If your testimony is, “I got saved but never changed,” that's a horrible testimony.

When we get saved, the responsibility of change is not on us, it's on God. Our responsibility is to give Him control of our lives and grow in our relationship with Him. How awful would it be to be married to someone who is constantly harping on you and telling you everything you're doing wrong and how much you need to change? God isn't like that. All He wants is an ongoing relationship that grows and develops and becomes more and more intimate. His job is to change us.

**II Corinthians 3:18** “because we continue to behold the Word of God, we are constantly being transformed into His very own image.” Now that I'm saved, **the fruit of my life shows that I love Jesus.**  
**Luke 6:46** “Why do you call Me Lord, Lord, and not obey Me?”

The more time I spend with Jesus, the more the fruit of the Holy Spirit comes out in my life. Now don't get me wrong, I can still disobey God. Just because I'm saved doesn't mean that I always do everything right, and I never sin. The truth is I have sinned many times since I've been saved and in many different areas, but it's a whole lot harder to be disobedient. Before I got saved I was naturally disobedient. Now that I'm saved, I'm naturally obedient. I have to work really hard to sin and disobey God. Just as a pear tree produces pears, we should produce the fruit of the Spirit. A pear tree doesn't have to struggle and work hard to produce a pear, it comes naturally.

The greatest fruit that can be seen from a saved believer is how much they serve and love the local church. Romans 12, I Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, and every New Testament book tells us that the best outward way to test how much we love Jesus is seen in how much we faithfully love and serve our local church family (the body of Christ). When people say that they are saved believers, but yet they don't serve faithfully in a local church, it's like telling God, “I love the face of your Bride, but her body is hideous and I want nothing to do with it.” The local church is the body of Christ. The local church is the heart of God. How dare we ignore what our Savior loves and claim that we love Him?

Have you ever had the thought; “I know I got saved back in the year \_\_\_\_\_, but I'm still scared that I could end up in Hell?”

**I Timothy 3:13** “those who serve in church well will gain great confidence in their faith in Christ Jesus.” Did you see that? The way we GAIN CONFIDENCE that we are going to Heaven and are in a healthy relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ is by serving in church WELL!

My prayer for you is that you will KNOW you're saved, allow GOD to change you daily, and gain CONFIDENCE that you will one day be in Heaven with me!!!

## CHAPTER SIX - AMAZING GRACE!

The only reason I'm still alive is because of God's amazing grace. The only reason I'm a Pastor is because of God's grace. The only reason I haven't killed myself is because of God's AMAZING GRACE.

I've heard so very many definitions of grace over the years. I'm sure if you looked online you would find hundreds of different writers and pastors describing the grace of God. I'm not a theologian, nor am I the sharpest tool in the tool box, but I think I have a phrase to define grace that sums up every other definition out there: Grace is unearned kindness and divine enablement!

Every day we have opportunities to mess up, make mistakes, and to outright sin. When this happens (and it does), we can either give up on our destiny, throw in the towel, live guilty and condemned, or we can receive the Grace that will empower us to continue forward in our purpose and give us strength to overcome the selfishness that plagues our lives.

One of my favorite stories in the Bible is about the prostitute named Gomer. She had to be pretty because her name wasn't the most attractive name a woman could have. God spoke to Hosea and told him to buy the prostitute off the streets and to marry her. Hosea was obedient. He fell in love with Gomer, and they became a happy couple. I'm sure there were some tough times here and there; after all, Gomer had a rough past. I'm sure they did their best to serve God and make the most out of life. Everything seemed to be fine and dandy until one day, for some unknown reason, Gomer decided to go back into prostitution.

Gomer left her godly husband and stepped back into a lifestyle that God had delivered her from. I'm sure that Gomer's actions embarrassed Hosea in front of everyone who knew them and especially those who knew their story. I'm sure people were calling Hosea and sending him texts saying, "I told you so. I told you she was trash. I knew she was gonna go back to that evil lifestyle."

Time went by, and Gomer became more and more used. Man after man purchased Gomer, abused her, and treated her like a slave. In fact, that's exactly what Gomer ended up becoming, a prostitute slave.

I'm sure Hosea thought, "I loved her. I treated her like a queen, and this is how she repays me? I'm probably better off without her! How could she treat me so badly?"

One day Hosea was walking downtown, and he saw a huge crowd of men surrounding the slave market. The slave market was where they sold the nastiest, used up, sex slaves. Hosea heard God speak: "Buy her back AGAIN!"

"Do what?" Hosea thought. God said, "Buy her back again." Hosea stood at the back of the crowd. He saw his ex-wife at the front of this sex slave auction block, covering herself up to the best of her ability. Gomer has dirt all over her, holes in her clothes, and a bloody lip from being beaten by the last man who purchased her.

Hosea thought, "Surely that wasn't the voice of God telling me to buy her back?"

About that time the men in the crowd started to bid on Gomer, only they weren't yelling out the normal bids that women usually were purchased for. They were yelling out the lowest amount of money possible. In our day it would probably have been dollar amounts such as 25 cents, 75 cents, maybe \$1.

As the men were yelling out their bids, there was loud laughter in the crowd. The most perverted jokes and one-liners were being screamed from one side of the crowd to the other. With Hosea's adrenaline pumping and God whispering in his ear, "BUY HER BACK!" Hosea started to feel in his pocket to see how much cash he had on him. He had five dollars, maybe six, in his wallet. Just before he opened his mouth to obey the voice of God, God spoke again, "Buy her back for ALL THE MONEY YOU HAVE!" Hosea said, "God, all I have is six dollars cash." God said, "Hosea, use your savings, your checking, your credit cards, your 401k, your stocks, bonds... I want you to spend everything you have to your name, down to the very last dollar you can get your hands on!"

"But God, why? The bids are under two dollars. That would be a waste of money", Hosea thought as he tried to reason with God. "I said to spend every single thing you have. Give it ALL for her. So Hosea pulled out his cell phone and began moving funds from one bank to the next adding up all the assets he had. After Hosea got the final figure and as the men in the crowd are still laughing it up, Hosea screamed the largest amount of money any auctioneer had ever heard. I can hear Hosea yelling it louder and louder and louder until the entire crowd is totally quiet. You could hear a pin drop. Gomer lifted up her head for the first time during this entire demonic event, not because she heard the amount offered for her, but because she recognized the voice.

Hosea yelled out the amount one last time, and the crowd began to part. Like the Red Sea, each man stepped further and further back from the center aisle of the auction. The closer Hosea got to his former bride, the more tears started to flow down Gomer's face. When Hosea got to the front of the crowd, the auctioneer told him, "You do realize that you are asking 500 times the amount needed to purchase this woman, right?"

Hosea paid the money that he bid for his sex slave former bride, picked her up in his arms, carried her back through the crowd, kissing her like the ending to the most romantic movie ever made, and the voice of God spoke. God says, "Hosea, you tell My people that THIS is what I did for them. I gave everything for them; even though they leave Me, even though they turn their back on Me time and time again, I will always buy them back."

I'm not sure if that's exactly how it happened, but that's what I envision when I read this Biblical story.

If we don't know how sinful we are, then we won't appreciate the power of God's grace. We are Gomer in this story. I am Gomer. Every single one of us is full of self-centeredness, selfishness, self-pity; we make life all about me, me, me. Yet God Himself gave everything, and continues to give everything for us to have the power to come out of the slave market and give Him our lives which He purchased at a very high price.

Grace is free, but it wasn't cheap. Grace cost someone His life.

When was the last time someone gave you a gift and then asked you to pay for it? Can you imagine someone attending your last birthday party bringing you a bag with a neatly wrapped box on the inside? They place the bag on the "gifts" table and then as they greet you, they whisper in your ear, "I left the receipt in the bag so that you can reimburse me. Take your time. I don't need the money until next month."

If that happened, you would roll your eyes and think, "That person is coo coo for cocoa puffs." Why would you think that? Because a GIFT isn't supposed to cost the recipient anything; that's why it's called a gift.

***Ephesians 2:8*** "by free grace you are saved through faith; it was nothing you did, but a gift from God."

There's a big difference between something you earned and something that's free. When your boss gives you a paycheck at the end of the week, you don't jump up and down and thank him or her over and over again. Why? It's because you earned that money.

But if you were late every day, had a bad attitude, showed up when you felt like it, but at the end of the week your boss handed you a check for \$10,000, you would be ecstatic. Why? Because you don't deserve a penny of it, someone gave it to you as a gift. I'm sure you've heard the Bible scripture that says, "Love covers a multitude of sins." Well, I have a saying that lines up with that, "Grace covers a multitude of stupidity!"

I remember reading an article online about a 21-year-old kid from Georgia who was raised in church all his life. This kid knew right from wrong. When he turned 21, some friends took him out and got him drunk. Around midnight they were driving around and came across a 40-foot tall telephone pole on the side of the road. At that point the friends dared him to climb to the top of the pole.

Here this guy is, drunk as a skunk, climbing a pole in the middle of the night with his delinquent friends cheering him on. Just as he made it to the top of the pole, he lost his footing and fell off the pole backwards.

The poor kid went to church every Sunday his entire life, and now he's headed to a certain death. All of a sudden, somehow, the leather belt he was wearing got caught on a metal rod that was sticking out of the side of the telephone pole. His belt acted like a harness, caught him, and saved his life.

When this young man looked down, he saw his friends leaving. Now he's dangling off the side of the telephone pole, still drunk, and no friend in sight to help him down. After two hours of hanging 40 feet in the air, the fire department showed up, got out their ladders, and rescued him. The local newspaper headlines read, "Pants save drunk man from death!" THAT is what grace looks like to me. We don't deserve it, we haven't earned it, but God gives us grace every single day.

This does NOT mean we can do whatever we want to do. "Pastor J.P. said that I can get drunk and climb a pole and God's grace will be there to catch me!" Ummmmmm! No! Pastor J.P. said that we shouldn't try to see how much we can get away with, we should try our best to honor God; but when we do stupid things along the way, His grace becomes sufficient in our lives.



**Hebrews 4:16** “Come boldly and confidently to God’s throne where we may receive mercy for failures, and undeserved grace to help in time of need.”

You may as well stop fighting the call of God on your life. He won’t leave you alone. Wherever you go, He’s going to be there. You can try to drink Him away, stone Him away, run away, or climb away, but at the end of the day, God and His grace will be calling out to you, saying, “I have a destiny for you to fulfill!”

## WHAT ABOUT MY SIN?

**I John 1:9** “If we confess our sins He is faithful to forgive us and take away our sins.” The most powerful word in this scripture is the word “if.” Too many times we stop confessing our sins because we get immune to them. When we stop confessing our sin, we stop considering it as sin. When we stop considering it as sin, we accept it as a normal part of our lives, and THAT will destroy us.

How do I know if I’ve been forgiven? Well if I’ve confessed it. Once again the word that I want you to see is “if.” “If” I’ve confessed it; then I’ve been forgiven. I’m sure if you’re like me, it’s hard to believe that God could totally and completely forgive you of ALL the sins that you confess, but it’s true. The blood of Jesus IS that powerful. Watch this!

In the Old Testament before the blood of Jesus was shed for the remission of our sins, Noah got drunk AND naked. I’m sure for some of ya’ll that brings back memories from high school prom, but God wasn’t too happy with that.

In the New Testament - On THIS side of the cross- **Hebrews 11:7** “...Noah obeyed God, built a boat, and received the righteousness that comes by faith.” Prior to the cross Abraham impregnated his maid and ended up being a dead beat dad to his son, but on this side of the cross: **Hebrews 11:11** “Abraham trusted God to keep His promise.”

Moses murdered a man in cold blood, but on this side of the cross, the Bible says in **Hebrews 11:27** “by faith Moses saw God and held on to his purpose...” Samson was an adulterer; he had ungodly relationships with prostitutes. God had an incredible call on Samson’s life, and you would think that God would never forgive someone like him.

**Hebrews 11:33** “Samson subdued kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promised blessings...”

Before the blood of Jesus was shed, Lot caused great strife with his family. The Bible says that God HATES strife. Lot stole property that didn’t belong to him, and he committed incest.

**II Peter 2:7** “Lot lived right and was a good man...”

My favorite example of the power of forgiveness by Almighty God would have to be David. David committed adultery, he murdered a man, and all this AFTER God had promoted him time and time again. David wasn’t lost when he committed those sins. David dishonored God after God had blessed him more than any man we read about in the Bible. Can you believe that God could totally and completely forgive a man like this?

**Acts 13:22** “I have found David to be a man after My own heart, He does everything I want him to do.”

God called a former murderer and adulterer a man after His own heart that does EVERYTHING He wants him to do. It’s interesting that before Jesus gave His life as the ultimate sacrifice, the sinner would have to bring a lamb to be sacrificed to cover (not disintegrate) their sins. When the sinner would bring the lamb to the priest to be sacrificed, the priest never looked at the sinner; he looked at the sacrifice, the lamb. When God looks at you, He doesn’t see your sins, He looks at the sacrifice. God sees the blood of Jesus that is surrounding your life.

## DON’T GET YOUR POSITION MIXED UP WITH YOUR PERFORMANCE.

We are children of God not because we do right things, but because we believe in Jesus who DID right things. **Romans 4:2-3** “For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about.”

What does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed in God, and it was credited to his account as righteousness.” If we were righteous on our own, we wouldn’t need God. If we could change on our own or overcome sin on our own, then God would owe US something. God owes us nothing. God put righteousness in Abraham’s account all because he believed.

Imagine the person in your life who is the holiest person you know. This person is always kind, nice, and good. This person seems like the epitome of a disciple of Jesus. No matter how good a person this

“saint” is in your life, they have committed some kind of sin at some point, which means they are NOT righteous on their own. In fact even the very best Christian act they have ever done is like a nasty rag compared to the goodness of Jesus Christ. **Isaiah 64:6** “*We are all unclean and sin infected, and all our righteousness (best deeds) is as filthy rags.*” No matter how good a person we can be, there is still a difference between our righteousness and Jesus’ righteousness.

## **HOW AM I GOING TO GET TO HEAVEN?**

The day I believed, God took all of the righteousness out of His Son’s account and put it in my account. He took all of the sins in my account and put them in His Son’s account. The Son of God then became the sacrifice for me.

**Romans 5:17** “*those who receive God’s grace and free gift of righteousness will reign with Jesus Christ.*” I’m not saying God is pleased with us when we sin, nor am I saying that there are not consequences for our actions. What I am saying is: our righteousness is based on our position, not on our performance. Let me ask you an important question. Can an UNRIGHTEOUS man do a RIGHTEOUS deed?

Let’s say there’s a guy who does NOT know Jesus. This man travels to another city and makes a lot of money at a business meeting. After the meeting he takes a walk back toward his hotel, and he passes some kids playing with a soccer ball. They accidentally kick the ball in the street, and the businessman runs out in the middle of traffic and gets their ball for them. The next street down he decides to help an old lady across the street. Just as he gets to his hotel there’s a homeless man out front begging for money. This businessman gives him \$100, tells him to have a good night, and goes upstairs to his hotel room.

Did all of those RIGHTEOUS deeds make this unrighteous man RIGHTEOUS? Of course not! Let’s say there’s another businessman on a trip out of town. This businessman knows Jesus, attends church, and serves regularly. Unfortunately this Christian businessman lost a lot of money at his meeting. He is in a very bad mood and quite depressed as well. As he is walking back to his hotel he sees some kids playing on the sidewalk with a soccer ball. Just to be a jerk he kicks the children’s ball far out into the busy street.

On the very next block, he sees an old woman about to cross the road, and he shoves her so hard that she falls in a puddle. Just as he gets back to his hotel, there’s a homeless man out front begging for money. This Christian man, who is in a horrible mood, not only does he NOT give the homeless man any money, but he kicks him and screams, “Get a job, you bum!”

Do those UNRIGHTEOUS deeds that the righteous man did make him UNRIGHTEOUS? Of course not! Then why do we live that way? Why do we live like every time we make a mistake we lose our righteousness that comes from Jesus?

### **Only God’s grace can change us!**

**Galatians 3:2-3** “*Did you receive the Holy Spirit by obeying the law, or by hearing the Gospel and believing it? How can you be so stupid? You began by God’s Spirit; do you now want to finish in your own power?”*

There is no relationship on earth that will grow and develop if one of the two people is controlling, manipulating, mean, and always out to find fault. Our goal is to simply spend time with Jesus and allow Him to change us. The more we receive and give Him affirmation, the more we serve Him and allow Him to serve us, the more our relationship will flourish.

Several thousand years ago God came to the Children of Israel and said, “I want to make a covenant with you. There are two parts, My part, and your part. My part is: I will be your God. I will always be there when you need Me. I will give you peace, wisdom, strength, favor, and blessings. Whatever you need is what I will be for you. I will always love you and comfort you and protect you from your enemies. I will be a perfect God for you.

Your part is very important; you have to live a perfect life. You have to keep all of My commands. You can’t make any mistakes. You have to obey the law down to the minutest detail. You must do everything right.” The Israelites responded to God by saying, “Ok! Yes, we can do just what You have asked of us. We accept your covenant.” Do you know the Israelites couldn’t make it one day? Not ONE DAY!

A few thousand years later God comes to me, John-Paul, and says: “I want to make a covenant with you. There are two parts, My part and your part. My part is: I want to be your best friend. I will walk with you wherever you go. I will hold you while you sleep in the palm of My hands. I will love you, protect you, bless you, and show you My favor. I will be so very good to you. I will provide strength, wisdom, healing, and joy anytime you ask. I will be your God.”

I said, "Okay! What's my part?" God the Father looked at His Son Jesus and said, "Jesus, come here! I want to be in a relationship with John-Paul, but he's not perfect. So I need You to get off of Your throne where You are worshipped and adored, and go down to that place called earth. People won't treat You right, they will despise You and be cruel to You. I need You to go there and keep every single law. You must act perfectly. You can't make one single mistake. Everything You do and say must be in line with My Word. You cannot mess up not even once. In other words, Son, I need You to LIVE a sin free life for John-Paul.

But there's one more thing. John-Paul is going to mess up. John-Paul is going to break My law, and the wages of sin is death. If a person breaks one law, they break all the laws. So, Son, I don't just need You to live for John-Paul, I need You to DIE for John-Paul."

Jesus says, "Okay! I will do it!" God looks at me and says, "John-Paul, all I want to do is have a relationship with you," and I said, "Okay!" Here I am decades later. Do I still trust that what Jesus did for me was enough?

## CHAPTER SEVEN - ANGELS AND DEMONS.

If there's ever been a time when we need to be mindful of the spirit realm, it's now. Satan and his demons are real, and they are doing all they can to keep mankind from living in eternity with God the Father. The forces of darkness have launched an all-out attack on our families and our friendships, our finances, our schools, and even our health.

I'm sure you've heard the phrase, "some people are so spiritually minded that they have no earthly good." That basically means that there are people who talk and act so weird and have a fake spirituality that they don't know how to use Biblical applications that produce a practical life of blessings. I'm not trying to put fear in you by any means, but Satan is a wise schemer who has been studying you and is doing all he can to prevent you from fulfilling your God-given destiny. It's easy to live in fear when you turn on the news and hear about the violence in our schools, or the bombings around the world, or even the shootings that have occurred in local churches. However, just as there are demons, there are also huge powerful warring angels.

One time Elisha was in a cabin asleep and his servant woke him up and said, "Master, the Syrian troops have surrounded us." The servant was saying, "My boss seems like he's out to get me. My kids just won't do right. It looks like there's a black cloud following me around, and I can't seem to break free; I feel as though I'm being attacked from every side."

In ***II Kings 6:16*** Elisha said, "Have no fear; those with us are more than those with them."

Did you know that when Satan deceived the angels of God into rejecting the Almighty and leaving Heaven that one third of them rebelled out of the most beautiful place in the entire universe and began living in Hell serving the former angel, Lucifer? This means that if one third of the angels left Heaven to serve Satan that two thirds of them are still on our side. So there are two gigantic angels for every one measly demon.

Elisha was saying there are more angels on our side than there are demons against us, and on top of that, those fighting for us are much bigger and stronger than those who have come against us.

***II Kings 6:17*** "Elisha prayed, Lord, open his eyes that he may see. And the Lord opened the young man's eyes, and he saw the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire."

When God opened up the young man's eyes (spiritual eyes), he was able to see all the powerful angels on his side. If God allowed us to see in the spirit realm right now, we'd see tons of warring angels fighting on our behalf: protecting our kids, delivering the answer to our prayers, and fighting against minions and demons to bring us our miracle.

Years ago there was a family in Alaska who was heavily involved in cults and witchcraft. The father of this family was the leader of the cult. He told how one night he went to cast a spell on a man and curse his home just as he had done to many people over the years. But when he got to this particular man's home, his witchcraft couldn't penetrate the house. Normally it'd go right through the walls.

The cult leader looked through a window and saw the man whom he was sent to curse. He described this man as being very dark. All around this man were other people visiting the home who were, however, lit up like brilliant lights. After some more research the cult leader discovered that those people visiting this man's home were from the local church and were there for a Bible study. As long as those believers were in the man's home, his spells and demonic sorcery couldn't enter in that house.

The cult leader later came back to his own family and told them what had happened. The cult leader's daughter grew up, got saved, and became a disciple of Jesus. She has told this story over and over again to help people understand the power we have available to us through the Holy Spirit. This cult leader's daughter said that when her father came home that night and told them what happened, he looked at her as a young child and said if believers knew the power they had in the spirit realm, they would never be afraid again.

Please keep in mind that horoscopes and Buddha dolls and other non-Christian religious things can easily invite the wrong spirits into your life. ***Deuteronomy 18:10*** "Do not use witchcraft, fortunetelling, spells, sorcery, mediums or a consulter of the dead. These things are an abomination to the Lord."

I enjoy laughing about what my fortune cookie says after a good Chinese meal, but if I want to know my future all I have to do is open my Bible. Satan doesn't wear red underwear and hold a pitchfork. Lucifer is not an imp who sits on one of your shoulders trying to convince you to steal a cookie. He has an entire organization made of up of thrones, lordships, rulers, authorities, principalities and powers, evil and unclean

spirits, and many more types of ranking demonic officers. The Bible talks about Satan's army being like an army of locusts who devour everything in sight.

In Mark chapter 5 Jesus was casting out demons. **Mark 5:9** *"My name is Legion, for we are many. And he begged Jesus not to send them out of that region."*

Why does it say the word "legion"? Satan sends certain demons to certain parts of the world. There are specific principalities of darkness that attack your city and your country. I'm sure you know different parts of the globe and what they battle most. Some areas of the world are lazy, some love to fight, some are drug addicted, and other regions have more poverty or suicide. Why? It's because these demonic spirits don't break rank, and they know what their goal is for every person and every area that they attack globally.

**II Corinthians 2:11** *"Do not be ignorant of the schemes and intellect of Satan."*

Before you were born there were intellectual demons studying your family line to find your greatest areas of weakness. They long to tempt you in the areas that they have seen your bloodline fail in. If you battle drugs, the demons know just the person to bring into your life to get you hooked. If you are tempted to be greedy and love money more than Jesus, Satan knows what to put in front of you to get you off track. If you battle sweets and sugar, each time you drive by Krispy Kreme, don't be shocked if the "Hot" sign turns on just as you look in that direction.

Daniel 7:25 reminds us that demons love to attack the weary Christian. When we get slack, when we stop being faithful, when we get tired of serving God and begin going backwards, that's when demons love to attack.

Acts 20:29 reminds us that demons attack the sheep who are on the fringe of the sheepfold. People who attend church, but who never get involved need to watch out. If I were a sheep, I would get as close to the Shepherd as I could.

Once there was a bullfighter that was in a ring with a bull, and each time the bull would go after the bullfighter, he would hold out a red cape as a way of distracting the bull. With the red cape flapping in the wind, the bull would duck his head and attack that red cape with all of his might. As the bull was focused on the red cape, the bullfighter would smile at the audience, take his little dull sword, and stab the bull in the back of the butt. This took place over and over again. The more the bullfighter would stick this huge animal, the angrier the bull would get. The bull was fighting with all of his might; the only problem was the bull was attacking the wrong source.

Think about this: here is an incredibly powerful animal that weighs almost 1,500 pounds, yet he can't defeat a 150-pound man! There was a spectator in the audience watching this take place for the very first time. This man said something very profound about what he was seeing from the crowd. He said, "If that bull ever finds out who's really sticking him, then that man is going to be in a whole lot of trouble." When we finally realize that Satan and his minions are ultimately behind all the calamity we face in life, then he'll be in a lot of trouble as well.

**Ephesians 6:12** *"We don't fight against human blood, but against rulers of darkness and spiritual powers of evil in the supernatural sphere."* This scripture is confirming that your boss is not your problem. Your spouse is not your problem. The aggravating co-worker that you dread seeing each day is NOT your problem. The Bible just told us that the Devil and his army of locusts is the root of the ongoing trouble that we experience in our life. That's the bad news. The good news is that we are NOT alone in this fight.

In the Old Testament the people had different names for God from their Hebrew language. They would refer to God based on what He did for them, or how He revealed himself. One of the many names they had for God was Jehovah Sabaoth meaning God of the Military and Lord of the Angel Armies. In pictures we see angels as these cute little fat babies with wings floating on clouds and playing harps. For your information that is NOT what angels look like.

The Bible describes angels for us in great detail. The angels of God are incredibly strong. They have unbelievable power and are trained as warriors. When they appeared to people in the Bible the very first thing they would normally say was, "Don't be afraid." Now why would a servant of God have to tell someone not to be afraid of them? It's because angels are an intimidating sight. God's army of angels is majestic looking; they are clothed in armor and many of them carry a sword and a shield. The angels of God are not short and little with tiny wings; they are huge and mighty and always ready for battle.

**Psalms 46:7** *"The Lord of hosts, the God of angel armies protects us."*

I have a friend named Brian. This guy is a very intimidating man if you went by looks alone. As my friend, he is a very caring, kind, and giving individual. But if you were to hurt his wife, one of his children or

grandchildren, you better run as fast as you can. This incredibly large man has incredibly large fists, and he isn't afraid to use them. We laugh and joke around saying that Brian is my bodyguard. Imagine how confident and fearless you would be if a 300-pound man followed you around everywhere you went just to make sure that nobody messed with you.

The President of the United States has the Secret Service, a group of highly trained men, who follow him around protecting him. These agents watch everything he does. They stay close to him protecting him at all costs. Well we have secret agents assigned by God Almighty following us around everywhere we go. These agent angels don't get tired, they never take a lunch break, and they look forward to going to work each day.

In Isaiah chapter 37 ONE angel slew 185,000 enemy troops. In Daniel chapter six God sent an angel to close the mouth of a lion. In Daniel chapter 10 God used an angel to bring the answer to a prayer that Daniel prayed. In Acts chapter 12 God sent an angel to break Peter out of prison.

**Hebrews 1:14** *"Angels are servants sent by God to assist us."*

One time my Nana (my mother's mother) had lost a ring that she valued dearly. It wasn't an expensive ring, but it did have sentimental value. She got down on her knees (literally) one day and said, "God, You know I really love that ring. Would You please send one of your angels to help me find it?"

Before that prayer my Nana had looked everywhere for her ring, and it was nowhere to be found. After she prayed that prayer, she felt a little hungry. She went into the kitchen, opened up the refrigerator to make a sandwich, and there was her long lost ring. You may say that was a coincidence. That it just so happened her ring had been in that refrigerator, and happenstance allowed her to find it a few minutes after her prayer. But I also know that it could've been God's angel assisting my Nana. I prefer to believe the latter.

**Hebrews 13:2** *"Remember to be friendly and hospitable, some have had angels as guests unaware."* This scripture is referring to the time that Abraham served a few men who were traveling by his tent not even knowing that they were God's angels in the form of people. Just in case you're wondering, NO, I am NOT an angel.

Several years ago, I took my family on a vacation to Disneyworld. It was quite a time driving the big old conversion van that a friend let us borrow. This van had no air conditioning, one of the windows wouldn't roll up, the tires were dry rotted, and it sounded like a tank when we went over 50 miles per hour.

On the way home, as we were flying down the highway at 65 miles per hour, suddenly one of the back tires literally blew out, sending us onto the side of the road. Let me add that one of the darkest rainstorms I have ever seen was closing in on us fast. Have you ever looked up in the sky and seen an almost perfect line that separated the sun and beautiful white clouds from pure black? That's exactly what it looked like behind us.

I immediately jumped out of the van trying to find the proper tools to take the busted tire off and put the spare tire on. It seemed as though that huge van had everything BUT a spare tire. There were no tools, no jack, nothing. I got back in the van and informed my family that we were stuck in the middle of nowhere. This was years ago before we had cell phones, so all we could do was wait. We closed our eyes and asked God to send someone to help us out of this terrible situation.

Within five minutes, all of a sudden, a small pick-up truck pulled up behind us. The two men who got out of the truck were obviously foreign, most likely from Mexico or somewhere in South America. At first I was afraid. I had no tools or weapons, and I didn't know if these men are planning on robbing me or helping me. Before I could say a single word, they went to the back of their truck and pulled out all the tools needed to change my tire. I started telling them our situation and they completely ignored me. I asked if I could help and all they said was "No!"

I remember vividly that one of them stepped in a huge fire ant bed. I warned him about what he did, but again there was no response. My adrenaline was pumping because I was nervous for my family's sake. I remember thinking, "They can steal this van if they want to, but it ain't gonna do them no good."

I have never in my life seen someone change a tire so fast. It was like the Indy 500. They pulled up, fixed our van, and started putting up their tools. Realizing that they were there to help us, I started thanking them and offering to pay them with the last \$100 that I had left from our vacation. They remained silent, got back in their truck, and left. Obviously we never saw them again. I only have two options for who those men were. Option 1: They were two men sent by God to stop and help us on the side of the road at just the right time in just the right way. Option 2: They were angels of the Lord who were following closely to us making

sure nothing ruined our vacation. They were assigned by God to prevent a lot of heartache. Feel free to choose whichever option better fits your belief.

**Psalms 103:20** *“His strong and mighty angels are ready and able to fly at His bidding, quick to respond to the voice of His Word.”* This scripture tells us how to command these secret agents to work on our behalf; it says that they fly at His bidding in response to the Word of God! When we say, “Thank You Jesus for protecting my children” or “The Lord’s favor is surrounding me like a shield.” or “No weapon formed against me is going to prosper.” Those angels go to work. They say, “Did you hear that? Someone is using the Word of God.”

These angels fly out to protect our children making sure that they don’t get around the wrong influence. These angels start bringing the answers to our prayers and guard us like we are the most important person on the face of the earth. Well we ARE God’s sons and daughters. However, if we begin talking defeat, verbalizing our fears, gossiping about our neighbors, those angels sit on the couch and watch TV (probably “Touched by an Angel” or “Highway to Heaven”).

**Mark 16:17** *“...and in My name believers will force out demons.”* Don’t let oppression ruin your life. Stop allowing insecurities and worry to steal your joy. The forces of darkness have no chance of defeating our personally assigned angels. Our spiritual weapons are the Name of Jesus and the Word of God. Tell any demon trying to destroy your destiny, “You are no match for the angels of my God. Go back to Hell where you belong.” Don’t ever feel weird about taking authority over the enemy.

One time some guys in the New Testament tried to deal with some demons even though they weren’t saved and didn’t have the Holy Spirit inside of them.

**Acts 19:15** *“The demon said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?”* If a demon looked at you and asked you who you are, you better get on your knees and ask Jesus to come into your heart quick.

There was once a young lady named Myra who was a volunteer at a Teen Challenge in an inner city surrounded by the roughest part of town. She was alone one night finishing up some paperwork when several gang members came banging on the front door. These guys were shouting obscenities and threatening to drown Myra in a nearby river. This was one of the scariest moments in Myra’s life. Amidst all the fears going through her mind, she immediately felt this great sense of peace on the inside. With the gang members yelling louder and louder, instead of calling the police, Myra felt God telling her to open the door and minister to these crazy men. Knowing the danger that she could potentially face, Myra asked God to send one of His angels to protect her.

Myra very slowly went to open the door. When Myra opened the door and was about to speak to these lunatics about Jesus, the gang stopped shouting, turned around and walked away quietly. The very next night as Myra was about to lock up the Teen Challenge building, the same gang members came back. They began swearing and shouting. Myra turned toward them, and once again the gang turned around and walked away. Basically, this exact same thing happened one more night a few days later.

Several weeks went by and much to everyone’s surprise at Teen Challenge, the gang members, who had threatened to kill Myra, walked into Teen Challenge. Over the next few months Myra developed a friendship with these young men. One day after a group sharing session, Myra went to the group of former gang members and asked them what exactly happened those three nights when they wanted to hurt her, but instead walked away peacefully each time. Myra said, “What made you stop your threats and walk away?”

One of the guys spoke up and said, “We wouldn’t dare touch you with your boyfriend there beside you. That dude had to be 7 feet tall.” Myra said, “I didn’t have a boyfriend, and nobody was there with me.” Another kid spoke up and said, “Yeah, you did. We saw him. He was larger than life and wearing a white classy suit.”

**Psalms 91:2** *“I will say of the Lord, He is my Refuge, my Fortress, my God, and in Him will I trust. V3 Then He will deliver you from traps and diseases. He will cover you and protect you with His wings. V11 God will order His angels to guard you and protect you in all your ways.”*

“I will say...” and “He will deliver, cover, and send His angels to protect you in all our ways.” When the enemy attacks us, our first instinct is to fight with our natural power, but that’s the red cape trying to distract us. Do everything you can using natural wisdom, but never forget to add the name of Jesus to your commands as you tell the forces of darkness to flee and to give His angels charge over your life.

Heaven is waiting for you, but while you’re here on earth, recognize that the spirit realm is real, and Satan is after your destiny. But more importantly, God’s got your back and His angels are watching out for you every day that you put the Word of God on your mouth!

## CHAPTER EIGHT - WHY I CHOSE CHRISTIANITY!

This chapter is going to be very cerebral. I want you to pretend during the next several pages of this book that you are NOT a born again believer. Pretend that you never stepped foot in a church, never heard a Sunday school story, and never developed faith in Jesus Christ.

Let me ask you a very serious question, Do you know 100% what you believe on the inside is the truth? Have you researched all the worldviews from every tribe, nation, and tongue? Please allow me tell you why I chose Christianity as what I believe to be the truth.

**Colossians 4:6** *“Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”* This should be one of our main goals as believers. We can't beat Christianity into anyone, and we can't say we are disciples of Jesus Christ without knowing how to answer questions about our faith and the intelligent reason why we call ourselves Christians.

Once a husband told his wife that he thought he was dead. She said, “You're standing in front of me speaking to me. You're not dead.” The husband refused to succumb to her opinion. He told her over and over again in every way that he thinks he is dead. So his wife took him to the best counselors and professors she could find. They showed him charts, graphs, and read him all kinds of material trying to prove to him that he was alive and not dead. Finally, she took her husband to a doctor. The doctor told him, “Sir, only living people bleed.” The man still was not convinced. The doctor gave the man audiotapes, books, and lectures all trying to prove the point that dead men don't bleed.

Finally after several weeks of information from the smartest minds in the world, the husband agreed that only living people bleed. At that point, just to guarantee his submission, the Doctor pulled out a tack and pricked the husband in the back of the arm. When the doctor did this, blood began to squirt out of the husband's arm. The husband exclaimed, “Holy Moly! I guess dead people bleed too.”

My point is that sometimes people don't want to hear the truth. We can give them all the greatest knowledge and scientific facts and bring in the brightest minds in the world, but if someone is rebellious or full of pride, they won't admit the truth, listen to the truth, or believe the truth. In this chapter truth is our ultimate goal. I'm not trying to convince you of what I believe; I'm trying to show you the mathematical and scientific truth. Winston Churchill said, “Truth is so valuable it is often surrounded by a bodyguard of lies.”

How does a person TEST the truth? There are three main ways to test the truth of something. Logical consistency, empirical adequacy, and experiential relevance are the three tests that we use to find out if something is really and sincerely the truth. Let me try and describe each one of those tests to you.

Logical consistency is like historic truth. Has this truth claim proven throughout history to be what it says it is? Does the past show this to be true?

Empirical adequacy is scientific truth. Does this claim have medical science to support it?

Experiential relevance can be described as personal truth. Does this truth claim seem to be true in your own life? Can you yourself see this claim taking effect in your own life?

Let's use gravity as an example. Does history (logical consistency) show that gravity is real and has taken place in the world? Can science prove that gravity is real and affects our surroundings and our own lives just as people have claimed? Can you show that gravity is real? Can you throw something in the air and watch it come back down? Can you jump and let gravity take its course proving the claim that gravity is what we say it is? If gravity and what it claims to be has passed all three tests, then we can surely claim it to be true!

Let's use another example of something we believe to be the truth, yet it doesn't pass all three tests. Is the world flat, or is the world round? We believe it is round. In fact, if someone bet you \$10,000 on the correct answer, I assume that you would place your money on the world being round. Does history show that the world is round? Well we can't answer that 100%. For most of history people believed that the world was flat. It wasn't until a few hundred years ago that men and women traveled our world only to discover by their own beliefs that the world is round.

Is there scientific proof that the world is round? Are there satellites and astronauts that have used highly technical communication to prove scientifically that the world is round? Well, as far as we know, yes! However, is there any experiential relevance that can back up the claim that the world is round? In other words, can you personally tell me you have seen our world in the shape of a round circle, with your own eyes, from space? Can you show me that all the historical truth and scientific claims are true in your own personal experience? Do you know that all the scientists and astronauts have been 100% honest in their



findings? The answer to those questions is No! We honestly don't have any experiential relevance to back up the truth claim that the world is round, yet we believe it whole-heartedly. Isn't that amazing? We have no personal proof that the world is round, yet we would bet our lives on it. If I were able to put Christianity to the above three tests, would you believe 100%?

Besides the three tests that one uses to find whether or not a claim is indeed THE truth, there are also four questions that we have to use that must be answered for us to have a TRUTHFUL WORLDVIEW; or a worldview that is actually the truth.

**1. Origin.** Where does life come from? How did I get here?

**2. Meaning.** What gives life meaning? Why am I here?

**3. Morality.** How do I differentiate between good and evil? How do I define right and wrong?

**4. Destiny.** What happens when I die? Where do I go after death?

A worldview that fulfills a human being must answer those questions. Not to give out a spoiler alert, but Christianity is the only worldview that answers all of those four questions along with passing the three tests to discover whether or not it is the truth.

I'm sure you can study for yourselves and find out all the ways each worldview cannot pass the tests or answer all the questions, but I would like to give you just one or two reasons why I don't believe in some of the worldviews that have some of the largest followings.

**Buddhism:** Buddhists can't answer where they came from or how they got to earth. Honestly they can't answer the meaning of life either. Buddhists believe in reincarnation. They believe that they will continue to have rebirths one after the next until their karma has been paid back. My question is, if every birth is to make payment for the previous life's mistakes, where did the first birth come from, what was the origin? Not only that, but if each birth is to pay back the previous one, what were they paying for in their first birth?

The goal of every Buddhist is to cease desiring. They believe that their goal is to stop having a will and not want anything. They believe that the more spiritually mature they become, the less they will desire to see their children, have no want for pleasure, and never seek after anything. It's interesting that the quintessential expression of the Buddhist faith is the leader of the Buddhist religion, the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama has spent the past several years fighting for the liberation of Tibet. This pretty much tells me that he desires something pretty important. Doesn't that go against what he teaches?

How does Buddhism differentiate between right and wrong? Hinduism and Buddhism both believe in subjective morality. Subjective morality is basically allowing each person to decide on his/her own what is right and what is wrong. Hindus and Buddhists think that people are naturally good.

The problem I have about subjective morality is, what if someone thinks it is good to cut your head off and examine it for the sake of science? What if someone who is subjectively moral wants to take all the blood from your child's body in order to save thirteen people from a disease? In some countries they love their neighbors, in other countries they eat their neighbors; not because they think it's wrong, but it's just the way of life in that region.

**Hinduism:** Hinduism has no answer for origin as well. All Hindus believe in karma and reincarnation of the soul. They believe their destiny is that once a person dies, their soul will either go into another person or animal or insect. Hindus are polytheistic. This means that they believe in a variety of gods; however, subjective morality is what determines their choices.

**Islam:** Islam has no answer for origin either. They are big on nature and believe that there were millions of world rebirths. My personal problem with the Quran (which is the book of their religion and was written in 600 A.D.) is that it is the only historical document that denies Jesus Christ was crucified on the cross. Greek historians, Rome historians, pagan historical documents, and of course, Jewish and Christian historians all say Jesus died on the cross. The Quran makes a claim that is totally untrue. I hope you are seeing how easy it is to find fact and fiction using our original three tests and our four questions for finding absolute truth.

**Quran 2:256 (Muhsin Khan)** "There is no compulsion (being forced to believe) in religion." Notice how the Quran says that no person should be forced into believing something, yet if a Muslim wants to convert to Christianity, they get murdered. If there is freedom to believe, then there is freedom to disbelieve. Also, need I even remind you about the proclaimed destiny of the Muslim faith and their 72 virgins that a martyr receives?

**Evolutionism, Humanism, Pantheism, and Darwinism:** These four address NONE of our four tests for truth. These "isms" claim that we are time, matter, and chance. If we are simply metaphysical and have no soul, then tell me why it hurts you when you witness tragedy?

The possibility of the human enzymes (which are the building blocks of the gene which are the building blocks of the cell) coming together by chance without an intellectual and spiritual Creator is 1 in 10 to the power of 40,000. There is more of a chance of a printing press exploding and in the remains there is a dictionary put together perfectly from pieces of all the books that the printing press was duplicating. What is the origin of mankind based on the beliefs of Evolutionism, Humanism, Pantheism, and Darwinism? Do they claim that we came from apes? There is no evidence that supports the theory of one species mutating into another species.

These ignorant views also believe in subjective morality. Let me ask an important question concerning morality. Assuming that a person DOES know exactly what the right choice is when dealing with a moral subject, what scientific imperative tells you that you must be honest in your findings? Whether or not a scientist is going to be honest with his or her findings is a philosophical argument, not scientific.

**Atheism:** Atheists say that there is no God. The problem with that kind of view is that it is scientifically impossible to be an Atheist. In order to say something doesn't exist, you would have to have all knowledge.

Example: If I said, "There is no such thing as a city in Asia called Aynor," I would have to have all geographic knowledge of Asia. Another example would be if I said, "There is no such man on planet earth named Ronald Kaufman." If I said that, then I would have to know every single person on planet earth. That would be the only way I could prove that there is NOT a man named Ronald Kaufman.

For a person to claim that there is no such thing as God, they would have to have all knowledge. God knows everything, and if a person claimed that He doesn't exist, that person would have to know EVERYTHING. The smartest person in the world right now has less than 2% of all knowledge. When I say "all knowledge", I am referring to all math, all history (from every culture that has ever existed), all geography, all art, all people from every tribe and language (being able to dissect every word, vowel, adverb, and even conjugate every verb).

Right now, the smartest person in the world is supposedly a man named Kim Ung-Yong. Kim's I.Q. is 220. By the age of 2 years old Kim Ung-Yong could speak four languages fluently. Kim possesses LESS than 2% of all knowledge. Let's assume for the sake of finding the truth that you are smarter than Kim Ung-Yong. Is it possible that in the 98% of ALL KNOWLEDGE that you DON'T HAVE, that someone exists whom you know nothing about?

**Psalm 14:1** "Only a fool says in his heart, there is no God." Why would the Bible say that a fool says there is no God? Because it is completely, scientifically foolish to say someone does not exist when you don't know every single person in the universe. A foolish person says that there is no God; however, a very smart person can say, "I don't know if there is a God."

**Agnosticism:** Agnostics claim that they are unsure whether or not there is a God!

David Berlinski is a world-renowned physicist who is also a known Agnostic. Berlinski wrote a famous book titled, *The Devil's Delusion*. In this book, David Berlinski writes: "Has anyone provided proof of God's inexistence? Not even close. Has quantum cosmology explained the emergence of the universe or why it is here? Not even close. Have our sciences explained why our universe seems to be fine-tuned to allow for the existence of life? Not even close. Are physicists and biologists willing to believe in anything so long as it is not a religious thought? Close enough. Has rationalism and moral thought provided us with an understanding of what is good, what is right, and what is moral? Not close enough. Has secularism in the terrible 20th century been a force for good? Not even close to being close. Does anything in the sciences or their philosophy justify the claim that religious belief is irrational? Not even in the ball-park. Is scientific atheism a frivolous exercise in intellectual contempt? Dead on."

If you came to me and claimed that there is no such man on Earth named Ron Kaufman, I would have to ask you if you have met every single person in the world. You would most likely admit that you do NOT know every single person in the world; therefore, you cannot state that there is no such person as a man named Ron Kaufman. However, I can tell you personally that there IS a man named Ron Kaufman. I can confidently claim this to be true not because I know everyone in the world. For me to claim that there is a man named Ronald Kaufman, I don't have to know everyone in the world; I only have to know Ron Kaufman.

There is a man named Ron Kaufman because I know him, he is my friend, and we talk with each other. I can very boldly and confidently tell you that there is also a God, a one true God! I don't have to know everything in the world to claim that. I only have to know Him! There is a God. I know this because I talk to Him, I hang out with Him, and He is my friend.

**Christianity:** The answer to our four questions that are used to seek a true worldview can all be answered through Christianity.

**Is the Bible true?** The Bible is composed of sixty-six books that were written by forty-four men from 1,400 B.C. to 100 A.D. (over a 1,500-year time span). There is one single thread that runs through the entire Bible, and that thread is named Jesus. 99.6% of the entire Bible has been confirmed by historical documents from all over the world. The Bible is the best-selling book of all time. It should be very easy to disprove a book like this, with sixty-six internal books written by forty-four men between a 1,500-year time span, but it can't be done! Mathematically the odds that the Bible's sixty-six books are as congruent as they are can be computed as 1 in 10 to the 17<sup>th</sup> power. The Collusion factor itself is a miracle.

**Is Jesus is Who He says He is?** There are many, many prophecies that were spoken of men on behalf of God Almighty concerning Jesus. A prophecy (in Old Testament times) was simply put telling of the future. In the case of Biblical prophecy it was to tell about what God would do through Jesus. I would like to list just a few prophetic words that were given in the Scriptures, what those prophecies were communicating, and then ask the question, "How?"

II Samuel 7:12-13 tells us about a specific family that Jesus would be born into. How did Jesus arrange that? Micah 5:2 prophesizes the specific city in which Jesus' parents would give birth to Him, but yet they wouldn't be from that city. How did Jesus arrange to be born in a city in which His parents did not live? Isaiah 53:12 claimed that Jesus would die between two other men and on a cross. How did Jesus arrange His own crucifixion, and that it would take place between two other men? Psalms 22:18 tells us that the executioners of Jesus would gamble for His clothing; how did He make that happen? Zechariah 11:12-13 prophesied hundreds of years prior to the crucifixion of Jesus that he would be betrayed in advance and die on the same exact day that the Jews sacrificed a spotless lamb for their sins. Psalms 34:20 was a prophecy claiming that the executioners of Jesus would carry out the regular practice of breaking the victims' legs on the two crosses next to Him, but not His own. Matthew 16:21 told us the day that Jesus would come back to life. How did Jesus arrange to come back to life on the exact day that He said He would?

The mathematical odds of Jesus fulfilling just the prophecies I listed above are 1 in 10 to the 30<sup>th</sup> power. Jesus could've prophesied that He would rise from the dead spiritually. That would be an easy task to complete. There wouldn't have to be much proof available for someone to do something "spiritually." Jesus didn't say that He would rise spiritually, Jesus told the whole world that He would rise from the dead physically. Five hundred people claimed to have seen Jesus alive in the flesh AFTER He died on the cross.

**Where did God come from?** Many people love to ask this question: from where did God originate? The question assumes that God is affected by time, space, and matter.

**Genesis 1:1** *"In the beginning (time) God created the Heavens (space) and the earth (matter)."* God CREATED space, matter, and time. If my God was limited by the space continuum, He wouldn't be a God worth worshipping. The original question assumes that God is a being Who needed to be created.

**If God is all loving and good, why is there evil in the world?** To answer that question, we need to look at all four options that God had when He created the world.

**Option 1: No world.** God NOT creating the world was an option.

**Option 2: An amoral world.** God could have created a world where there is no such thing as good or evil. God could have made a world with no laws. No animal would eat another animal. A person couldn't do something good for another because there would be no measure of what good or evil is. There would be no right or wrong. People could kill each other or smile at each other and it would all be the same. An amoral world would be filled with people who could lie and cheat and steal, but without any morality, there would be nothing wrong or bad.

**Option 3: Pre-determined world.** A pre-determined world is a world where everyone always chooses good. The option of a pre-determined world was something God could have done, and all the people He created would be like robots only doing what they were programmed to do: the right thing. In this world there would never be any desire or passion because everyone would always choose exactly what God would make him or her choose.

**Option 4: This world.** This world that God created gives everyone a free will and the option to choose what each person wants to do. The only world (or option) in which love is possible is this world that God created. None of the other options above give room for free will and choice. If there is no world, then there are no

people. If the world we live in was an amoral world, then there would be no difference between love and hate. If our world was pre-determined, then that means that we would only love who God programmed us like robots to love. But that wouldn't be love because controlling someone to love something or someone else isn't real love.

God's supreme goal is for us to love Him and love each other. If God violates our free will, then He prevents us from CHOOSING to love. The only way your children will ever be able to love you, and the only world in which you can choose to love your children is the world God created for you and me. The only way you can know what it's like for a friend to encourage you or for your spouse to desire you is in the world God chose to create. The only world in which we can CHOOSE to love God is this world.

Why won't God stop the evil in this world? If He stopped all the evil, He would also stop all the love in this world. For God to violate a person's free will and force them to choose right over wrong would be like God forcing someone to love. Love isn't love if it is forced. Maybe the question that you're really asking is: **Why won't God stop all the evil in MY life?** Evil is basically disobedience to Almighty God. If you want God to stop all the "evil" things in your life, would you like Him to start with the amount of sugar you consume, or with the way you manipulate others? Maybe you can ask God to force you to start tithing your income so that His Kingdom can grow. If every Christian would CHOOSE to tithe and love God more than money, then world hunger would end in three months.

If you are going to choose what is evil and what is not, and what God should change and what He shouldn't change, then you have moved to a subjective moral view in which you are most likely the god in your life. When we use the word *evil*, we really mean the things that cause us pain. **Why won't God stop the things in my life that cause ME pain?** When we CHOOSE to love Jesus, we are also choosing to trust Him and believe that He has supreme wisdom to ultimately work everything together for our good.

There was once a farmer whose horse ran away. His neighbor came over to the property line and yelled at the farmer, "You sure do have bad luck; your horse ran away." The farmer smiled and said, "What do I know about luck?" The next day the farmer's horse came running back to the farmer's backyard and brought 20 horses with it. The neighbor looked over at the farmer and yelled, "You sure do have good luck!" The farmer replied, "What do I know about luck?"

The next day the young son of the farmer was trying to tame one of the new horses, and the horse kicked the boy and broke one of his legs. The neighbor saw what happened and screamed into the farmer's backyard, "You sure do have bad luck. If these horses hadn't come onto your property, your son wouldn't have gotten his leg broken." The farmer shrugged his shoulders and said, "What do I know about luck?" Several days went by, and some thugs came to the farmer's property looking for strong young men that they could kidnap and recruit into their gangs. They were about to choose the farmer's son, but saw that his leg was broken. They passed him by and went on their way. The neighbor watched this take place and was shocked at what he had seen. He yelled to the farmer, "You sure do have good luck!" To which the farmer replied, "What do I know about luck?"

My point is that I don't know why things have happened the way they have in your life, but I know that you will find out when you see God face to face. The day we arrive in eternity, we will see all the reasons why the horse broke the child's leg. We will see why God didn't stop the pulling of the trigger, or why world hunger continued. Maybe we will also see all evil that we could have prevented had we just obeyed the voice of God, or even obeyed His Word. We can spend all day pointing the finger at the evil from others and how it has affected this world and our lives, but I wonder how many acts of disobedience from our own free will have caused pain in humanity itself? Continue praying and sowing seeds of faithfulness. Never stop doing right, and do not grow weary in your Christian faith.

**Christianity is not a religion.** Religion is man's job to get to God. Christianity is all God went through to get to me. I simply have to receive what He did. **Romans 10:13** "*Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*" If you have not found Jesus, you have NEVER sought after Him.

Skeptics don't understand- with all these religions, why my perfect, Holy, all powerful, all loving God would only make one way for mankind to be in relationship with Him? That's not the real question. The question is not, "Why would such a good and perfect God only have one way for us to be in relationship with Him?" **The questions is:** "Why would such a perfect, all powerful, magnificent, Holy God give ANY WAY for us to be in relation with Him?" The fact that He has given us **A WAY** should be enough to cause us to scream at the top of our lungs, "Thank You Jesus!" Now, If you want to counter my worldview of Christianity you have to put your worldview to the same test.

## CHAPTER NINE - LIVE LIKE YOU WERE DYING!

I heard about this man who went to see his Doctor for his annual check-up. The next day he got a phone call from his doctor who told him that he had bad news and really bad news. "The bad news is you only have 48 hours to live." Upon hearing that, the patient screamed, "What's the REALLY bad news?" The doctor replied, "I've been trying to call you since yesterday!"

If you knew you only had a few days left on earth, what would you do? The truth is all of us are dying. Whether we leave earth 20 years from now or 20 days from now, none of us will be here forever. In fact every single person WILL live for all of eternity. The question is: Will they live in Heaven or Hell? When we woke up this morning, God gave us a present; the present is called "Today." Today is the most valuable commodity anyone could have; it's more valuable than money. A person can make more money, but they can't make more time. Once you spend today, you can never get it back. Queen Elizabeth said on her deathbed, "I would give my entire kingdom away for just one more day."

With this great gift comes responsibility. We can't waste this present by being negative, critical of others, or with a sour taste in our mouths. We shouldn't misuse this gift by being lazy, unenthusiastic, and always worrying about little things. Don't let today go by without making amends with your family, parents, or your children. The truth is we may not be here tomorrow. Even if you think that you're not going to die for many years, for all we know, Jesus could return today! **Mark 13:32** "No one knows the day or time when the Son of God will appear." **I Corinthians 15: 52** "It will happen suddenly, quicker than the blink of an eye..."

After that trumpet sounds, you won't have any time to forgive the people who caused you to be bitter. You won't have time to call your best friend and make sure they're saved. It will happen in the blink of an eye. Before you're finished reading this page in this book, we could all be in Heaven.

What will you have to show for the life God allowed you to live? What are you doing that is going to last for all of eternity? What rewards will God hand you in Heaven because of your service to Him on earth? Are you spending your time wisely? Are you making disciples of all people as requested by our Lord? Are you living like you were dying?

I remember once my dad told a story about this older couple he knew. The couple loved the Lord, they attended church regularly, but unfortunately the husband died of a heart attack when he was 65 years old. At the funeral the wife told how she constantly complained about her husband walking in their home with his dirty boots on. He loved to go hunting every Saturday. When he would return home that afternoon, he would walk in the house and back to their bedroom as he did every other day of the week. The wife would constantly nag him each time he did that wearing his hunting boots. The husband didn't purposely try to upset her; he would just forget from time to time that she didn't like him walking through the house with his hunting boots on. At the funeral the wife told how she would give ANYTHING to see those dirty old boots walking through their house, even if it was just one more time.

**James 4:14** "You do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are like a vapor, that appears for a moment, then disappears." We wait for Thanksgiving before thanking God for all He's done in our lives. We wait for Christmas to give gifts to those who are closest to us. We wait for Valentine's Day to tell that special person in our life how much we love them. You may think today is an ordinary day, but there's no such thing. Today is an extremely valuable gift.

I heard about this billionaire who had a disease that was incurable. He did everything he could possibly do to live, but the disease killed him. If you are reading this book, then please understand that you have something that a billion dollars couldn't purchase; you have today! The problem is not that life is too short; the problem is that we wait too long to begin fulfilling our purpose. It takes us too long to see the reason we're breathing during this little amount of time. Before we know it, we'll be in Heaven.

Most of life is pretty routine. This is why we have to learn to enjoy the little things. Enjoy the bike rides, the walks on the beach, and eating ice cream. Enjoy your children, your spouse, and your friends. Enjoy serving in church, spending time with Jesus, and even working. You have to work, so you may as well enjoy it.

When we read the Bible, we hear about these great exploits like Daniel in the lion's den, the three Hebrew teenagers in the fiery furnace, and Jonah getting swallowed by a huge fish, and we think, "Wow, they sure did live fascinating lives with one exciting event after another." The truth is most of their lives were pretty routine. They did the same thing day after day, just like you and me. Those big faith-filled stories we read about were just a few days of their entire lives. Moses hung out in the wilderness for 40 years doing the

same thing from morning to night and then over again. Noah lived to be 950 years old, and 949 years of his life were pretty ordinary. Learn to enjoy each day that God blesses you with. Please don't wait until you're perfect to start to enjoy serving God! I used to spend so much time trying to change myself, grow spiritually, and fix all my bad habits. Then one day I noticed a scripture in Ezekiel 44:18. It says, "While ministering within the Temple, they shall not gird themselves with anything that causes them to sweat."

What God showed me is that it isn't supposed to be hard to have a relationship with Him. We will always have some area to grow in. Once you overcome your current addiction to food, Facebook, television, complaining, alcohol, etc, there will be some other area you need to grow in. Serving God isn't supposed to be difficult or un-enjoyable; it is supposed to be a life-long journey. Jesus wants to spend each day with us. As we spend time with Him, He changes us in His timing and in His way.

Last week a friend of mine called me up from out of town and he was crying his eyes out. I asked what was wrong, and he began to tell me about an addiction he was trying to overcome. He said, "I spend every waking moment thinking about how to break this off my life. I've prayed over and over again. I have read book after book. I have called prayer hotlines. I have begged Jesus to heal me. I can't even sleep at night trying to think of ways to beat this off my life." I asked him if he was serving in his local church or part of a small group. He said, "No! I don't feel worthy to do anything until I break this bad habit."

I told him what I'm trying to convey to you. Stop focusing on all the areas that you need to change in, and start spending time serving God. Serve God when you're angry and when you're happy. Serve God when you're condemned and when you're feeling confident. Serve God when you're tired and when you're rested. Focus on serving God and building His kingdom, and let Him deal with the "problems" in your life.

**Philippians 4:12** *"I know how to be happy with little as with much. I can enjoy life in any and all circumstances."*

Friends, we are living in the good old days. Twenty years from now we're going to look back and say, "Remember when I was so uptight? Remember when I let little things cause me so much worry and pain? Remember when Pastor JP had a full head of hair?" It's funny to me that at funerals people buy expensive flowers for the deceased, and they stand up and say the nicest things about the person who passed away. I understand that is the respectful thing to do, but do me a favor and don't wait until I'm dead to buy me something. And if you have anything good you want to say about me, do it now while I'm still alive. It won't do either of us any good to buy me an expensive gift after I'm in Heaven. I believe that your family and friends feel the same way I do.

**Exodus 16:4** *"The Lord said, 'I will send bread down from heaven. Each day the people can go out and gather only enough for that day. That is how I will see if they obey Me.'"* God specifically told the Israelites to only gather up enough for one day. Many of them disobeyed God, and they gathered up more than they needed for one day. All of those disobedient Israelites got incredibly sick.

I believe the reason they gathered more than what God told them to was because they were afraid they wouldn't have enough for the next day. What's interesting is all the extra manna they collected rotted and spoiled after 24 hours.

A lot of people are doing the same thing today. They're trying to figure out tomorrow's concerns today. They spend too much time dealing with the fears and cares of this world and try to collect as much money as they can and as many worldly resources that are available today that they miss out on what God has for them right NOW. They miss out on their children's lives. They miss out on love and affection from their spouses. They're so caught up on the future that they fail to enjoy the present.

**Romans 5:3** *"Let us be full of joy now."* The Bible doesn't say to be full of joy after you lose weight, or after your kids grow out of diapers. The Bible doesn't say to be full of joy after you retire, or after your house is paid off. Why? Because we don't know what tomorrow holds; we may not even be here tomorrow, so why not be full of joy NOW?

In 2006 I told my father that I wanted to be a pastor and study public speaking. His response wasn't exactly what I thought it would be. My dad is a great man with great wisdom and experience. He has accomplished a lot in his life so his opinion of what I felt God was telling me to do weighed greatly on me. He told me that being a pastor wasn't what I should do. He went on and on about how I wouldn't succeed and how ministry is too rough. Long story short we got into a major fight that day, and it didn't end well. I ended up going into ministry and enjoyed the success God brought into my life, and I learned from the failures. But after that day in 2006, my dad and I didn't speak for many, many years.

Before that day we used to go out to eat a lot. Before that day we would enjoy a movie or two once a month. I often look back and wonder, "Why did I allow something that caused me pain to last long beyond when it should have? How many lunches and movies would I have been able to enjoy over those years if I had just been a little bit more mature?" I've also thought many times, "What would've happened in my heart if my Dad had died during those quiet years?"

The Bible talks about how we reap what we sow. Well, I have five amazing children, four boys and one girl. A few years ago one of my sons and I got into a big fight; some things were said which shouldn't have been said, and he left me that day very upset and bitter. We didn't speak for a few years, and the pain I experienced from that is overwhelming. I tried everything I could do to reconcile with him, and he just wouldn't budge. Several times a week I would think, "Does he know how much pain I'm in by not having a relationship with him? Doesn't he understand that I would do ANYTHING just to sit and talk with him like the best friends we used to be?"

Praise God, through a series of events, lots of prayer, and God Almighty doing what He does best—we are back in relationship together and we have had the most fun working together in ministry. Let me encourage you today. That person who you haven't spoken to because of some disagreement or wrongdoing, most likely they are in a lot of pain and just can't admit it. Are you prepared to see Jesus face to face today? Is there a piece of that strife-filled pie that you need to own up to? Is there anything you can do on YOUR part to bring reconciliation to a relationship that Almighty God ordained you to be in? I know my son couldn't begin to imagine what he was missing out on by not being in relationship with me. I longed to bless him, encourage him, and love him to the best of my ability.

If someone you loved only had today to live, what would you say to him/her and what are you waiting for? Your children don't have to do everything right for you to affirm them regularly. Your children don't have to make all the right decisions for you to show them love, to respect them, and to honor them. Guess what? Your parents don't have to do everything right for you to affirm them regularly. Your parents don't have to make all the right decisions for you to show them love, to respect them, and to honor them. You reap what you sow.

In I Samuel chapter 16, Samuel asked Jesse to line up all of his sons because God was about to choose one of them to be the next king. So Jesse brought out every child except David. Jesse thought, "There's no way it is David. David is too young; he's inexperienced. David's only good for taking care of sheep." Well, you know what happened? After some debate Jesse finally brought David out, and sure enough David was the one God chose to be king of Israel. My point is simple. Jesse had a king living in his house and he didn't even know it!

Do you have a queen living in your home? Don't wait until she goes off to college before you recognized what a blessing God gave you. Do you have a king living under your roof? Don't wait until he gets married and has kids of his own before you affirm the gifts and talents God Almighty put inside of him. Don't wait until someone is GONE before you realize the purpose they were supposed to have in your life.

**Ecclesiastes 6:3** *"You may live a long life, and have a hundred children, but if you don't enjoy them, you're better off dead."* I don't regret one single minute that I have spent with my children. I DO regret spending time with complainers, lazy friends who never wanted to grow, and people who just wanted to use my time to gossip and murmur. I don't regret lying in bed at 17 years old and giving my newborn son a chocolate milk bottle (only because I didn't know any better). I don't regret sitting around the dinner table and discussing how school went with each child for that day. I don't regret the family vacations or attending the school plays. Many people have been blessed with children, but they never take the time to enjoy them.

Before each Sunday morning service, our guitar players have to retune their guitars. They adjust the strings in order to remain on pitch. If they didn't do that, they would be playing the right chords physically; only the right chords wouldn't be what we would hear from their instruments.

In the same way, we have to retune our lives every single day. How? By reminding ourselves how precious life is. We have a responsibility to God to spend our days serving Him and appreciating life for the gift that it is. We have a responsibility to forgive the people who have hurt us, love the people whom God put in our lives, and give to the kingdom of God on a regular basis.

Make every day count. One day we will all face God, and He is going to ask us how we spent our days, and if we misused the time He granted us. None of us will have an excuse. Let me encourage you one last time: live like you were dying.

## CHAPTER TEN - PREPARING FOR ETERNITY.

*"All my bags are packed I'm ready to go. I'm standin' here outside your door. I hate to wake you up to say goodbye. But the dawn is breaking, it's early morn. The taxi's waiting, he's blowing his horn. Already I'm so lonesome I could die. So kiss me and smile for me. Tell me that you'll wait for me. Hold me like you'll never let me go. 'Cause I'm leaving on a jet plane, don't know when I'll be back again. Oh babe, I hate to go..."*

John Denver

I'm sure you have one of those long, orange extension cords somewhere in your home. If you pull it out, unwind it, and straighten it all the way out, it can become a symbol that prevents you from letting little things in life get you down. What I mean is, our life is like the length of that extension cord (Biblically it would actually be a never-ending cord). If you were to look at the plug part of the long cord, that little one-inch piece represents our earthly life, while the rest of the cord represents eternity. Isn't it funny how much energy we put into things that we want during that little one inch part of our lives? In reality our real life goes on and on and on, long past the one-inch plug. However, we spend so much time, money, emotional energy, and thought, all to what we want to gain during the 1 inch plug part of our lives when we should be focusing on what the rest of the extension cord is going to be like for us.

All we have is that one-inch plug part of the extension cord to prepare for the billions and billions of years that follow.

I once read a book that was written by a retired Hospice nurse. In this book she told story after story of the final regrets that people had just before they died. Most everyone basically said the same thing: "I wish I had the courage to see my dreams fulfilled and spent my life giving more. If I had life to do over again, I would have done much more for God."

Don't be another chapter in the book of final regrets. Let this be a wakeup call. This is the only chance you get. Are you spending your time wisely? Are you focused on the main things God has called you to do? Are you quick to forgive offenses? Have you told those closest to you how much you love them? Is there anything between you and God that needs to get settled today? Do you have peace on the inside? Are you prepared for eternity?

Good intentions don't get rewards. The longer we wait to obey God and do what He's called us to do, the harder it will be. Today is the day to ask God to help you get your life back in order. Put first things first.

C.S. Lewis said, *"Throughout history the Christians who did the most for the present world were those who thought most of the next world. Christians who have become ineffective are those who stopped thinking about the next world."*

I want you to receive your full reward, not half, not 3/4, but the FULL reward. Your destiny is bigger than any mistake you've made or hurt you've experienced. God's plan hasn't stopped because you messed up at some point in your life. Don't take this the wrong way, but you're not that powerful. You're not able to mess God up. If there is still breath in your body, God has something He wants you to do. Go forth in faith. Fight the good fight.

Imagine with me that you spent all of your life saving up for retirement. You purposely didn't stop working until your house was paid off. Every year you and your spouse would check your 401k, add up your savings account, and prepare for a comfortable retirement that would allow you to travel for the rest of your life on earth.

Imagine that the day you retire, your house catches on fire and burns to the ground. You lose everything that you ever had in that massive fire. When you call the insurance company, you discover that they went belly up and closed down. That same day your bank closes its doors, and you lose your savings and checking accounts. Something crazy and unheard of took place in America that day, and all the Social Security is gone. You officially have nothing left even though you spent your whole life working and saving towards a comfy retirement.

That's what it will be like for many people on earth who spend their life only focused on the here and now. These people were so selfish, self-centered, and fake, that there isn't going to be one reward for them



in eternity. They will step into eternity with nothing to show for their lives. Don't let that be you. Spend every single day for Jesus. Give Him your life and everything that you have. Don't live vague and thoughtless lives, but be determined to fulfill your God-given destiny.

You may have had the thought, "I just want to get to Heaven. I don't care about rewards, just get me to Paradise."

If we took an African tribe member who has no running water, no electricity, and no medical care, and we told him, "How would you like to live in America? We will bring you to America and you can live in a one-bedroom apartment your entire life. You have to ride your bicycle wherever you go, and you have to dig trenches for 8 hours a day, 6 days a week. You'll get running water, electricity, food, and healthcare. Would you still like to come to America?"

That African tribe member would be so very excited to leave his poor, disgusting circumstances and come and live in America even under those conditions. But think about how he will feel several years later when he is in America, living in his one-bedroom apartment, and digging trenches every day, while the rest of the people around him are driving cars, living in homes, and working at very enjoyable jobs. This African man would say, "Why didn't you tell me there was so much more than what I agreed to?"

I'm telling you now that there is so much more to eternity than just "getting there." You don't want to spend the next billion years living at the lowest level of Heavenly life when you could have so much more. You could have so much more IF you spend the life you have now in the way that will please God and allow Him to have blessings and rewards waiting on you in the city that is not made with human hands. The city of Heaven waits for you. What will Heaven be like for YOU? How will you spend eternity? As long as you're breathing, you can begin storing up treasures in Heaven. Don't get stagnant. Don't give up. Don't let anyone talk you out of the Heaven God has in store for you. Eternity is a vapor away. Before you finish reading this sentence, you could step into eternity with Jesus. Make today and every day count!

Is Hell even an option? Hell, no!

PJP